

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue contains the Preliminary Program for the 1995 Visitor Studies Conference to be held July 18-22 in St. Paul, Minnesota. This should prove to be an exciting conference with many topics of visitor studies discussed, conference participants from all over the world, and the usual fun-filled evening events in stimulating surroundings. Hope to see you all in St. Paul. A Conference Registration Form is enclosed in this issue for your convenience. If you receive another registration package in the mail, pass it on to someone else who may be interested.

We have another large slate of pre-conference workshops to offer this year. The Visitor Studies Association is concerned about professional development experiences and we hope these workshops provide the needed activities for you to acquire knowledge and skills in various areas of visitor studies. Please let us know if there are additional areas of interest.

Also in this issue is the first of what we hope will be many interviews by Arlene Benefield in a column titled, "Voices of Visitor Studies." Each issue will profile leading professionals in the field of visitor studies.

Steve Bitgood, Editor

The Natural History Museum, London Presents "Keeping the Visitor in Mind: Planning an Exhibition" September 12-14, 1995

A short course given by Dr. Roger Miles, former Head of The Natural History Museum's Department of Exhibitions and Education.

Internationally respected for his innovative approach to exhibition design and development, Dr. Miles's course will include topics such as...

- *selecting and ordering subject matter
- *choosing appropriate media of communication
- *running a successful exhibition team
- *planning exhibition layout and access

For further information and a booking form contact:

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Voices of Visitor Studies: Marilyn (Molly) Hood, Ph.D.

Interview by Arlene Benefield

This first column of interviews with the leading professionals in the visitor studies field provides the insights of a distinguished audience researcher whose work has helped to awaken the leisure world to aspects of the visiting, and non-visiting, publics of museums and other cultural institutions. Marilyn Hood's seminal article, "Staying Away. Why People Choose Not to Visit Museums" (Museum News, 1983) created the awareness that psychographics are more important than demographics when looking at audiences for leisure activities. Dr. Hood has been an active supporter of audience research in her role as director of Hood Associates of Columbus, Ohio. She was on the founding Board for the Visitor Studies Association, and has served as contributing editor of Visitor Behavior since the first volume.

Arlene Benefield: How did you become interested in visitor research?

Molly Hood: While studying communications at Ohio State University (with an emphasis in journalism and marketing), I developed a proposal for a membership survey at the Ohio Historical Society for a research methods class project. My professor suggested I offer to carry out the actual study for the Society, where I was employed as editor of special publications. The questionnaire generated considerable interest among the respondents, whose responses helped the Historical Society better understand its membership. The success of this venture led me to pursue a doctoral degree in educational communication which I received in 1981. My dissertation was a telephone study of a sample of the population in the Toledo, Ohio, metropolitan statistical area, to ascertain how adults make choices of leisure activities, including museum-going. Since I was particularly interested in learning why people do not visit museums, I used psychographic questions to probe their values, attitudes, opinions, interests, expectations, and satisfactions to better understand their leisure choices. When the results of this research were presented at the 1981 American Association of Museums meeting in Indianapolis, several museum directors encouraged me to publish my findings, since no one else was working in this specific sphere of audience research. In April, 1983, my article "Staying Away. Why People Choose Not to Visit Museums," was published in *Museum News*. Through subsequent research, which reiterates the basic findings of this study, I have aimed to raise the awareness of leisure institutions about their various audiences, the publics' differing motivations for visiting or not visiting, and the implications these factors have on exhibitions, programming, fundraising, publications, etc. Since 1981 I have presented audience

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