

## Message from the President

Ridgeley Williams  
Visitor Studies Association

With the election of a new Board to take place this year, it is an appropriate time to reflect on the state of the Association and to consider future options.

In the four years since the Association was created at the Ottawa meeting, membership has grown rapidly and diversified to include members from all over the continent and from many other countries. The 1994 total of 387 members reflects a 36% increase over the 1993 total. The annual conference has been a main focus of the Association during its short existence, providing an important forum for the community to discuss issues and present the results of visitor studies. The publication of the conference proceedings has become a significant publication in the field. Conferences have consistently attracted diversified audiences, not only new practitioners in the museum world but colleagues from related fields. Conference workshops have become useful and popular methods of professional development and training.

The Association is financially secure and enjoys a positive image and a loyal, enthusiastic membership. While steady growth can continue within the existing framework of activities, there are calls and opportunities to take on new expanded roles. Increasing the scope of VSA activities may involve some risks, including losing some of the informality that many members enjoy. One corollary of any change

would likely be a requirement to alter how the organization operates in terms of Board skills, effort and the need for staff.

It is important to plan our future before devising the requirements to get us there, and the purpose of these paragraphs is to solicit your advice on objectives for the future. Some of the changes that members have considered include:

- The development of an organization that exerts significant impact on the institutional community (museum management, funding sources, educational authorities) through the development of standards and ethical guides, training and certification of individuals, accreditation of organizations, lobbying resource agencies to include visitor studies as a mandatory condition of support, lobbying universities on curriculum content, etc.
- Adopting a more active role in improving exhibits and visitor experiences by publicly acknowledging excellence and criticizing the inadequate (through regular awards, endorsements, and reviews).
- Distributing information on the visitor studies field by producing reprints, a bibliographic survey, a magazine, a journal, self-help and training manuals, a central archives and data base of case studies and publications, an enquiry service, using a variety of media, regional conferences and professional development activities.

The VSA Board will be considering the future of the organization in the next few months. Please contact any Board member or me (at the address or phone listed below) with your advice and comments.

Ridgeley Williams, RR #1, 3676 Kettles Road, Richmond, Ontario, K0A 2Z0, Canada. Ph. 613-838-2826.

*VISITOR BEHAVIOR*  
Psychology Institute, JSU  
P. O. Box 3090  
Jacksonville, AL 36265-9982

NON PROF. ORG.  
U. S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
JACKSONVILLE, AL  
BULK-RATE  
PERMIT NO. 2