

Editor's Note

This issue marks the end of five years of publishing *Visitor Behavior*. A variety of subjects are discussed in this issue. Two articles (pages 4-9) deal with the meaning of facility names. Do people have specific expectations of what features and programs they will find based on the name of a facility? The answer from these results appears to be "yes."

Continuing our emphasis on informing our readers about theses and dissertations, a dissertation abstract by James Bigley can be found on page 9. Bigley's study of the motivations of museum society membership would seem to be of interest to all visitor facilities.

Hdayitwayeko and Koran (pp. 10-11) describe an attempt at visitor evaluation in the Republic of Burundi and their thoughts on what is needed with respect to visitor facilities. Their article may tell us that underdeveloped countries are far from embracing visitor studies.

Schulhof (pp. 11-12) reports a visitor study conducted at the North Carolina Botanical Garden.

On page 13 can be found a description of the Picasso Museum training project on visitor evaluation conducted by Chan Screven. This and similar projects provide evidence that French museums are showing growing interest in visitor evaluation.

Lisa Roberts (pp. 13-14) offers a response to the previous issue (Volume 5, No. 3) in which Mark St. John, D. D. Hilke, and Harris Shettel discussed metaphors and methodologies of visitor studies.

Steve Bitgood

Selected Studies on How People Perceive Visitor Facilities

Stephen Bitgood
Jacksonville State University

Nash, G. (1975). Art Museums as Perceived by the Public. *Curator*, 18(1): 55-67.

This study found that, in general, respondents had a positive opinion of art museums and that first-time and repeat visitors to an art museum responded differently to descriptors such as "friendly," "imaginative," and "responsive."

Serrell, B. (1977). Survey of Visitor Attitude and Awareness at an Aquarium. *Curator*, 20(1): 48-52.

Although all visitors were positive, women, frequent visitors, and older visitors gave higher ratings of enjoyment on their visit to Shedd Aquarium than did men, infrequent visitors, and younger people.

Hood, M. (1983). Staying Away: Why People Choose Not to Visit Museums. *Museum News*, 61(4), 50-57.

Hood found that frequent visitors to Art Museums had different leisure values than nonvisitors or infrequent visitors.

Griggs, S., & Hays-Jackson, K. (1983). Visitors' Perceptions of Cultural Institutions. *Museums Journal*, 82(3): 121-125.

The authors had visitors to the British Museum (Natural History) rate 10 different types of leisure institutions on 12 descriptive statements (e.g., "Place for an educational visit," "Place to experience exciting things."). Results suggest similarities among institutions in some respects (e.g., Natural History, Archaeology, and Science Museums are "places to go for an educational visit") and differences among institutions in other respects (e.g., Art Museums and Archaeology Museums "require some background knowledge to get the most from a visit" but Natural History and Science Museums do not).

Prince, D., & Schadla-Hall, R. (1985). The Image of the Museum: A Case-study of Kingston Upon Hull. *Museums Journal*, 85(1), 39-45.

Results of this study found that museums in Hull (England) were perceived as both interesting and educational. In addition, museums were seen as protecting heritage and as a legitimate use of tax-payers' money. Younger respondents tended to wish that the museums were more "lively." Nonvisitors were four times more likely than visitors to view the museums as "boring."

Bitgood, S., & Thompson, D. (1987). How Do People Perceive Museums, Parks, and Zoos? *Visitor Behavior*, 2(3), 9-10.

In this study a list of bipolar adjectives (e.g., spicy-bland, work-fun) were used by students to rate five different types of facilities (Art Museums, Science Museums, Zoos, State Parks, and Theme Parks). Zoos, State Parks, and Theme Parks were more highly rated than the two types of museums on several descriptors such as "stimulating," "comfortable," and "fun."

Bitgood, S., & Bishop, S. (1991). The Role of A Current Visit, Prior Visits, and Gender on Visitor Perception of a Natural History Museum. *ILVS Review: A Journal of Visitor Behavior*, in press.

This study also used the bipolar adjective rating device. Some visitors to a natural history museum were asked to rate the museum before they entered and others were asked to rate the museum upon their departure. Prior visitation, gender, and current visitation were all shown to influence visitor ratings of the museum.