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Not only did the circulation patterns change dramatically when the second exit was closed, but the average time in the gallery increased from 134.1 to 230.7 seconds!

#### Study #4

There are times when the circulation pattern is arranged for the visitor to proceed from left to right. Such a gallery was studied in the Buffalo Museum of Science. Since it was too costly to change all of the exhibits to accommodate the right-turning bias, Melton attempted to influence visitors' direction-turning behavior by the use of a direction sign. The sign had an arrow with the words, "Please go to the left [or right]." The gallery was about 50 feet long with the entrance also serving as the exit. Initially, it was found that 70% of visitors turned right as they entered the gallery, even though the gallery was set up for visitors to see the left side first. Melton varied the sign (directions to turn right vs. directions to turn left) and the distance of the sign from the entrance. The following results were found when the sign was placed 0, 2, 4, and 6 feet from the entrance:

#### Percent visitors turning right when the sign said to turn right:

0 ft	99.5%
2 ft	98.0
4 ft	92.0
6 ft	89.3

#### Percent visitors turning left when the sign said turn left:

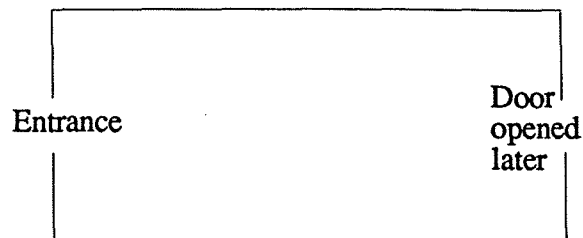
0 ft	90.0%
2 ft	85.0
4 ft	77.0
6 ft	65.8

Clearly, the right turning bias was not completely overcome with the direction sign. It was easier to increase right-turning than left-turning behavior.

#### Study #5

This study examined the effects of opening a second door in a gallery in the Pennsylvania Museum of Art. Before the second door was

opened, the entrance also served as the exit. A simplified illustration of the gallery is below:



Before opening the second door, visitors averaged 73.3 seconds in the gallery. After opening the second door, visitors averaged 22.7 seconds if they entered the original entrance and 34.9 seconds if they entered the second door. Time viewing the paintings and furniture both dramatically decreased when the second door was opened. Melton argued that the exhibition value of the gallery was reduced to a minimum as a result of this second door.

#### Conclusions

Taken together these five studies by Melton demonstrate persuasively that exhibit designers cannot ignore the right-turning bias of visitors nor the tremendous attracting power of exits. □

#### *A Review of: Museum Audiences Today: Building Constituencies for the Future* by Lee Draper with Contributions by Ann Bunn.

Reviewed by Randi Korn  
J. Paul Getty Museum

In 1982 the Visitor Studies Committee of the Museum Educators of Southern California (MESOC) started planning a cross institutional investigation of museum visitors in Southern California. Museum Audiences Today: Building Constituencies for the Future is the product of this ambitious endeavor. The study includes 25 museums of various types and sizes and covers five counties in Southern California. It was coordinated by a volunteer committee consisting of museum professionals, interns and community consultants. The survey was conducted between January and March, 1984.

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**Thoughts - [continued from page 9]**

experiences she had had. Few Westerners travel across China, and even fewer travel by train. As an "outsider" she had experienced something quite rare. Had she been a native Chinese, her travels might have been viewed as necessary tedium.

Of course "system maintenance" and the status of the "outsider" are integral parts of visitor behavior. They are inseparable. The vulnerability of being a visitor is precisely because the visitor is an outsider. But then, would such visitors want it any other way? □

### **Factors Affecting "Hands-On" Exhibits**

From A. W. Melton (1936). Distribution of Attention in Galleries in a Museum of Science and Industry. *Museum News*, 14(3), 6-8.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects on visitor behavior of manual operation of exhibits demonstrating electricity. Automatic operation of the exhibits was compared with manual operation. Before Melton intervened, five exhibits on electricity were programmed in a sequence such that the first exhibit would operate for ten seconds; a five second delay occurred; the second exhibit would operate for ten seconds; etc. until all five exhibits were completed. Under these conditions the mean time looking at the exhibits were 13.8 seconds. When visitors were allowed to manually operate three of these exhibits with a crank, the average time increased to 23.8 seconds. In addition, the average reading time increased from 4.5 seconds to 5.7 seconds after the manual condition was implemented. Melton argued that: "It seems reasonable to conclude that the manual operation stimulated interest of the type museums are attempting to foster." (p.7) □

**Book Review - [continued from page 8]**

MESC designed the study to help member museums understand and compare audiences so individual museums can become aware of their impact, and learn more about the role museums play in American society. The book presents the results of the study, a detailed analysis, and a copy of the questionnaire along with other procedural materials.

The first chapter discussed the demographic profile of visitors. The data are presented in a straight-forward manner with comparisons to 1980 U.S. Consensus data

and results from other visitor surveys. The second chapter provides an in-depth picture of key demographic characteristics in relationship to each other and to the type of museum visited. Matrices are used to compare the variables of age, sex and education with museum type. The results indicate that preferences for museum type is significantly influenced by these three variables.

Next is a detailed analysis of three (Asian American, Black, and Hispanic) ethnic minority audiences who are infrequent visitors (together they total 15.7% of the survey audience) to museums in Southern California in spite of the fact they comprise more than one-half of the regional population. The results show that younger ethnic minorities are a potential audience for museums in Southern California. The attention paid to the visiting behavior of minorities is worthwhile in that museums now have explicit information to help them develop specific programming for segments of this potential audience.

The final chapter examines with whom one chooses to visit the museum and the number of companions in a visiting group. The author uses the data to discuss the idea of the family and social group audience in a larger context: the role museums can play in American life. She suggests that museums re-examine current programming trends (group tours) and consider developing alternative programs for the small group, whether it be family or friends.

The data collected for this study were analyzed very thoroughly. The authors made excellent use of the data. As always, carefully defining the goals of a research project is the key to a successful and useful study. The apparent thought process behind the data analysis and the inclusion of the procedural materials are the most positive aspects of the book.

All surveys were conducted between January and March because other existing studies have shown more local visitors attend museums during this period and MESC wanted to focus on the local population. While there is an inquiry about place of residence, those results are not reported.

The book is a model for individual museums and those in regional associations who are interested in cooperating to conduct a visitor study; however, it must be realized that a project of this scope is not an easy task. There are many problems that are inherent with survey work that the book does not discuss. A description of some of the problems would have been useful to readers. On the whole, this inexpensive book is a worthwhile reference for those who conduct surveys and for those interested in museum audience statistics.

The book can be ordered from MESC Publications, Museum Educators of Southern California, P. O. Box 27854, Los Angeles, CA 90027. \$8.50 (\$7.50 MESC members) and \$1.50 postage (book rate) or \$2.50 (first class). Add \$ 0.40 postage for each additional copy.