

EDITORIAL

My original intention for this issue was to highlight some of the evaluation studies and to summarize some of the theoretical approaches to exhibit design. As you might expect, it was naive to think that this task could be easily accomplished in one issue. I was quickly overwhelmed by the sheer volume of literature on the subject. My next thought was to expand the number of pages for this special issue. It soon became apparent, however, that the expanded-issue approach would still not do justice to the literature. My final decision was to devote this Issue and the Summer Issue to exhibit design and evaluation. This solution will still not cover the literature the way it should, but perhaps we can devote additional issues in the future to this important topic. Despite the best of intentions, it is difficult to choose a well-balanced array of papers on exhibit design and evaluation. I encourage readers to send any items they feel should be included in the Summer Issue of Visitor Behavior.

[Steve Bitgood, Editor]

WHAT IS THE OPTIMUM NUMBER OF EXHIBIT OBJECTS IN A ROOM?

A. W. Melton (1935). Problems of Installation in Museums of Art. AAM Monograph, New Series No. 14, Washington, D. C.

In one of the classic early studies, Melton systematically manipulated the number of paintings in a gallery. The number was varied in multiples of six and the following average visitor viewing times were found.

No. of Paintings	Avg Time	Avg Time per Painting
6	43 sec	7.2 sec
12	69 sec	5.8 sec
18	103 sec	5.7 sec
24	105 sec	4.4 sec
30	99 sec	3.3 sec
36	99 sec	2.8 sec

Clearly, increasing the number of exhibit objects decreased the average viewing time per object. Melton concludes: "...it is now clear that every object in a museum gallery competes with every other object in the gallery, and that the total amount of competition to which a particular object is exposed is a function of the number of other objects in the gallery." [p. 259]

SOME QUESTIONS ON EXHIBIT EVALUATION

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- What is the purpose of evaluation?
 - To evaluate predetermined objectives.
 - To decide if an exhibit should be removed.
 - To improve an exhibit.
 - To determine the optimal conditions of exhibition.
 - To decide where to allocate resources.
 - To increase attendance.
 - To increase visitor satisfaction.
- How should evaluation be planned?
 - Planned before the exhibit is constructed.
 - Planned during the construction of exhibit.
 - Planned after exhibit is installed/occupied.
- Who should conduct the evaluation?
 - Facility staff (internal evaluation).
 - Outside consultant (external evaluation).
 - Both staff and outside evaluators.
- When should evaluation occur?
 - While the project is in conceptual stage.
 - During development of the exhibit.
 - After installation/occupation of the exhibit.
 - During all of the above stages.
- From where should funds come?
 - Regular operating budget.
 - Supporting organizations (zoological society or museum league).
 - Grants from government or private foundations.
 - Special allocations from budget.
 - Other outside organizations.
- What criteria should be used for evaluation?
 - Education.
 - Recreation.
 - Entertainment
 - Visitor wayfinding.
 - Visitor circulation through exhibit/facility.
 - Visitor comfort (temperature, resting places, noise, lighting, food, rest rooms).
- What measures should be used in evaluation?
 - Surveys and other self-reports
 - Direct observation of behavior
 - Test of knowledge
 - Physical measures
- What should be evaluated?
 - New exhibits
 - Old exhibits
 - Wayfinding and pedestrian circulation
- Whose behavior should be measured?
 - Visitors
 - Potential visitors
 - Professionals