

We decided that there was one main variable that would affect how people would relate or react to the content of the two galleries. This was to do with how closely their lives had been touched by war. People who had been closely touched by war would use the gallery to remember or reaffirm what they already knew; people without experience of war would use the galleries to "find out" about what had happened and the people involved.

Focus groups, visitor surveys and tracking studies were undertaken to find out about our audiences and how they would respond to the proposed galleries. During the focus groups we raised various issues and discussed whether and how they could be treated in the gallery, including ways of representing "the enemy".

The participants felt very strongly about this issue. They were unanimous in wanting us to show the ugly reality of war and that many Australians had suffered and were killed by Japanese forces during WWII. However, our audiences also held many conflicting opinions about "the enemy".

People whose lives had not been touched by war wanted to be able to find out about the enemy at the Memorial and to understand their motivations, culture and behaviour. They wanted to see a balanced representation of war that showed both sides of the story. And they wanted to focus on the humanity of the people involved: "the enemy" were people too.

On the other hand, most people who had been closely touched by the war said that they did not want to find out about the enemy, especially at the Memorial. While they understood that it was part of Japanese culture to treat prisoners badly, they were very concerned that the Memorial would excuse this treatment if it tried to explain it. These audiences had difficulty comprehending a "humanised" enemy and said that it was inappropriate for the Memorial to include personal information about enemy soldiers.

The Memorial has tried to find an outcome that will meet the needs of both audiences, despite their differences. Some of these resolutions are:

- including displays that show the ugly reality of war
- including Australian stories that feature or revolve around Japanese people; through these, showing a variety of sides to the enemy to let visitors build up their own picture and reach their own conclusions
- allowing a degree of choice into how much visitors wish to "find out"
- including stories that will disclose the motivations, behaviour and culture of Japanese people without having to "explain" them
- drawing attention to the humanity of the enemy by referring to enemy soldiers by name and using artefacts, objects and photos that communicate our shared humanity.

As a result of front-end evaluation, the Memorial can develop these two new exhibitions in a way that will engage, and not alienate, our different audiences.

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From Exhibit Evaluation to Insights into Visitor Behavior

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In 1996, staff and volunteers at Questacon, Australia's national interactive science and technology centre, used observations of and interviews with visitors to evaluate a group of sixteen prototype hands-on exhibits. The evaluation method and instruments used (Rennie and McClafferty, 1996) proved extremely useful in pointing to improvements for the exhibits concerned. This article describes early stages in the further exploration of the data collected.

The place of prototype exhibit evaluation in an interactive exhibition development project has been described elsewhere (Groves, 1996), as have the development and use of the evaluation handbook and the results obtained using it (Groves, McClafferty and Rennie, 1997). Briefly, the evaluation handbook provides observation and interview schedules and summary record sheets (with instructions for their use) for three evaluation stages, yielding information on whether and why an exhibit attracts visitors, whether it is used in the way intended, what visitors understand the exhibit to be about, what they enjoy and what frustrates them during its use. The same data are now being revisited with a focus on the visitors rather than the exhibits.

The project yielded observations on how each of 493 people (51% males, 49% females) interacted with an individual exhibit, as well as summaries of interview responses from a further 296 people who used the exhibits. At this stage, the re-analysis is incomplete and thus conclusions are tentative.

As a start, the impact of visitor group size on whether or not people managed to use an exhibit successfully (as judged by observation only) is being explored. Of the 493 visitors observed in the first round of the evaluations, almost exactly half (51%) used the exhibit on their own; the rest were in groups of two to five people. Among 'single' visitors who paid some attention to the exhibit being observed, 38% were judged to use it successfully. Among people in groups, the figure was a rather similar 42%. A slightly different picture emerges, however, if the visitors who used exhibits while

interacting with other people are considered in their groups rather than individually. Among the 98 groups of visitors who shared in the use of an exhibit in some way, at least one member of the group was judged to have used the exhibit successfully in 63% of cases. This apparently higher success rate suggests an obvious question for further research: does successful exhibit use by one member of a group translate into appreciation and/or understanding of the exhibit by other group members, and if so, how does this compare with the impact of using the exhibit by themselves?

Another question being explored is the extent of age and/or gender based variation in exhibit usage. Preliminary analysis suggests that in general, higher proportions of males used exhibits successfully, with the exception of elementary school aged children where the proportions of successful users were very similar for girls and boys.

Further analysis will look at patterns of exhibit use other than successful use; any behavior differences related to exhibit type; whether, in group situations, males or females dominate the actual exhibit use; whether group composition affects the pattern of exhibit use and/or the pattern of interactions among group members; whether age or gender or group size correlates with longer or shorter times spent at an exhibit; the impact of interaction among visitors on successful use of an exhibit and understanding of its content.

In the longer term, it is hoped that data collected for the 1996 exhibit evaluation project will lead to insights into visitor behavior and provide information on exhibit use patterns which can be explored in greater depth using other research methods, perhaps casting new light on questions relating to how and what visitors gain from their science centre experience, and leading to useful lessons for exhibit developers.

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Sportex: Not a Hall of Fame

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The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) is a national institution with its headquarters in Canberra, the national capital. In 1994 the AIS planned to build a new multi-function Visitor Centre which would provide a gateway to the range of site facilities available to the general public and also act as a hosting centre for visitors. The AIS attracts two main types of visitors: those who use the facilities or attend events are mostly local people, whereas those who come to look around the site and learn what happens at the AIS are mostly out of town visitors. The concept for the proposed Visitor Centre included an exhibition area.

Early in the planning process, some members of the management team were attracted to the idea of an exhibition which would use the latest technology to give visitors the experience of really being at major sporting events. This would be an exhibition which would break new ground. The concept tapped into the excitement in the press at the time concerning the roll-out of Sega Centres across Australia.

However, some members of the management team had strong reservations about the viability and appeal of this concept. The team decided that it needed more information about market expectations and demand in order to direct its decision-making. Environmetrics was commissioned to conduct visitor research. We carried out focus group discussions and on-site interviews amongst visitors.

As well as providing a useful demographic profile of the potential audience, the research showed quite clearly that visitors wanted a much broader experience from an exhibition at the AIS than the hi-tech concept being proposed. The following table sets out the interest expressed in possible exhibition components.

Table 1. Interest in topics

Topic	Interest (%)
Hall of Fame	60
Visitors test own performance	54
Meet the athletes	51
History of Australia at the Olympic Games	48
Sports medicine	47
Latest training techniques at AIS	47
Story of work behind achievements	44
Hi-tech exhibition which gives feeling of really being at major sports events	44
Achievements of older athletes	37

It was clear that visitors wanted a multi-faceted experience which focused on Australian sport at the national level, on sporting heroes and on the AIS itself.

The qualitative research emphasised that recognition of underlying values would be fundamental to the success of the exhibition. The following values were identified as critical: