

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue is devoted to the design and evaluation of interactive exhibits. My intention was to summarize some of the important points found in the literature, to provide a bibliography that readers might use for their own exploration, and to provide short abstracts of evaluation studies which targeted interactive exhibits. As I began this task, several problems arose. First, there appeared to be confusion in the literature concerning the definition of "interactive." My solution was a definition that focused on "physical interaction" between the exhibit and the visitor (i.e., a visitor responses to the exhibit results in a physical change in the exhibit). In addition, I make a distinction among three types of response engagement (page 5): simple hands-on, participatory, and physical interactive.

Another problem that emerged was that my short, 2-3 page summary of the literature turned into several more pages than originally anticipated. It would be easy to expand the current article to a massive volume. It might be more valuable, however, to have a series of guidelines for different types of interactive exhibits: computer, other electronic, mechanical, and low tech. Perhaps some of you have suggestions on where to go next.

A third problem was collecting relevant articles/materials on interactive exhibits. Many of the sources are hard to find because they have not been published or they have been published in difficult-to-obtain places.

Finally, there was the problem of time. There was not enough time to consider thoroughly all the information relevant to the design of interactive exhibits. The current issue is only a beginning to the consideration of the myriad of factors necessary for effective interactive exhibits. We hope that it is a useful starting point for readers.

Steve Bitgood, Editor

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Perhaps as an item for the newsletter you might wish to mention the absence of any section on visitor surveys or evaluation in the publication *Required Reading: The Professional's Bookshelf/The American Association of Museums Bookstore Catalogue for Museum Professionals* (Autumn/Winter, 1991-1992). There is only one entry in the index under "evaluation," one titled *Visitor Evaluation Duo*, and one with the title *Visitor Surveys: A User's Manual*, all of which are listed on page 35 under the rubric of "Technical Information Service."

Perhaps you could call attention to the absence of any "Interest Areas" covering Visitor Surveys and the paucity of visitor studies on the "Professional's Bookshelf" despite the existence of a standing committee on the AAM dealing with this subject.

Wilcomb E. Washburn, Director
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Meet Me in St. Louis, Louie... at the 1992 Visitor Studies Conference

"Meet me in St. Louis, Louie," may be a great song, but next year it will also be a great idea! The 1992 Visitor Studies Conference will be held in St. Louis on June 23-27 at the Clarion Hotel in downtown St. Louis—just a few short blocks from the Arch. Sponsored by the St. Louis Zoo, the St. Louis Science Center, Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis Art Museum, and the History Museum (Missouri Historical Society), the Conference will include two full days of workshops held at all five cultural institutions as well as two and a half days of meetings at the Conference Hotel.

The cost for the 1992 Conference will be \$150 for Visitor Studies Association members, \$175 for non-members, and \$75 for students if you register before May 22nd. This includes social events. Prices go up \$25 for late registration. Spouses (or significant others) can attend all of the social events for \$75.

Speaking of social events, we have a wonderful series of evening activities. On Tuesday, the 23rd, delegates will attend a reception at the Missouri Botanical Garden featuring a tram tour. The Garden has just finished renovating the Climatron and completed construction of a brand new education complex and is a simply stunning place to visit in June. Wednesday will feature a tour of one of the world's largest breweries, Anheuser Busch, along with a reception and a tour of their exhibit gallery. Make sure you plan on attending our progressive dinner on Thursday, starting at the Historical Society, going on to the Art Museum, and finishing at the Zoo. All three institutions have undergone significant expansion and renovation in recent years and this five-hour event promises to be one of the highlights of the convention. On Friday you'll tour the Science Center and be among the first visitors to see the completed expansion (opening in June, 1992). You'll also tour the Soviet Space exhibit (appearing in only four institutions in North American) and see a special OMNIMAX show. **ALL THIS IS FREE TO DELEGATES!** Remember too that Saturday is a home game for the Cardinals baseball team and the stadium is located just across the street from the hotel. Also on Saturday afternoon after the sessions are over, there is a bus trip planned to the Cahokia Mounds Historic Site and Interpretive Center, the largest prehistoric Indian city north of Mexico.

We have a conference coordinator, David Blum, with a special phone number. David can be reached at (314) 535-8235. We will also feature an exhibitor's area. Exhibit booths can be rented for two full days by calling David. They're available on a first-come basis.

Roger Miles from the Natural History Museum (London) will be our keynote speaker and we expect to have most of the leading professionals on the program. We are still looking for quality proposals for individual papers and sessions. See the "Final Call for Papers" on page 18.