

Shettel, from page 20

All of the thirteen committees of the Association have been staffed. I thank all of you who agreed to serve on these committees with a special thanks to those of you who have multiple assignments. We will certainly try to avoid this in the future when we have a larger membership pool to draw upon. I am preparing a draft charter for each of the committees and will ask them to be ready with a short report to the membership at the conference in June.

In the last issue of *Visitor Behavior* there was a "Call For Nominations" notice for the officers of the Association – President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and board members – with a December 15 deadline. As of now, December 23, we have received zero nominations, which may mean that there are none, or it may mean that the notice was not noticed. In case it is the latter, I am extending the deadline to January 31st. You may nominate yourself. (The full nominating procedure will be explained in a subsequent issue of *Visitor Behavior*.)

Speaking of nominations, the Site Selection Committee has asked me to request nominations for conference sites for 1993. If your museum would like to be considered as a host institution (ideally, along with others in your area), we need to know *as soon as possible*. By the time we meet in St. Louis in June we should have a site selected for 1993! See the notice on page 11 for information about where to send your ideas, suggestions, and proposals.

Somewhat less important, but a lot more fun, is the contest we are initiating for the design of a logo for the Association. Members are invited to send their ideas to me, which will then be reviewed by our Logo Selection Committee, consisting of the Officers (4) and Board Members (12). All entries (with names removed) will be ranked by the Committee and the logo with the highest average ranking will be announced at the June meeting. The winner will be given a free registration to the conference (or the equivalent value if he or she cannot attend). Officers and Board Members are eligible to submit entries. The deadline for all entries is February 15. Put on your creative hat and send us your ideas – as many as you can come up with!

In closing, let me remind you that all VSA members should have received by now their renewal membership notice for 1992 (along with your membership directory). If you have not received it or you have misplaced it, a copy is contained in this issue. **I urge you to join NOW so that the expense of sending out second notices can be avoided.** (Joining now will also insure the continuation of your subscription to *Visitor Behavior* through 1992.) Growth in both membership and conference attendance are the two interlocking keys to our future health and well-being. Don't wait for the conference to join. We need the funds "up front" to support the conference. Are you convinced? Great! We await your check with eager anticipation.

AAM Visitor Research & Evaluation Committee Report

Good news for members of the VR&E (Visitor Research & Evaluation) Committee of the AAM! The program committee for the '92 AAM in Baltimore approved 8 of our 13 proposed sessions. Topics include: The African American Museum Visitor, Evaluation and Fiscal Responsibility, New Approaches to Visitor Learning Assessment, and Testing Interactive Media Exhibits.

In addition, we will be presenting our poster session and distributing the associated publication "Current Trends." Researchers, scholars, and visitor behavior specialists – all those wishing to participate in this year's visitor studies poster session should contact Steve Bitgood at the Center for Social Design (address on page 1). This is a valuable opportunity to share the results of your work with the museum community.

Also at this year's AAM meeting, VR&E will be co-sponsoring an issues luncheon in collaboration with ED-COM (the Education Committee). The luncheon, "Resources and Opportunities for Collaboration," grew out of an observation that educators were becoming increasingly concerned with learning research, and might benefit by looking at work that has been done in museums in addition to classroom-based studies. Those attending the luncheon will be asked to look at selected research studies on museum-based learning, to consider to what extent this work is useful in answering the questions of museum educators and to think about which questions, issues, needs are not addressed by this work. In preparation for the lunchtime discussion, it is recommended that participants read *Visitor Behavior*, Volume 4, No. 2, Summer, 1989, a special issue on school field trips, and "What Research Says About Learning in Science Museums," available through ASTC (Association of Science-Technology Centers, 1025 Vermont Ave, Suite 500, Washington, DC). We're looking forward to a lively and informative discussion.

Preceding the AAM meetings will be a two-day workshop on evaluation sponsored by the VR&E Committee. It will cover front-end evaluation, critical appraisal, and formative and remedial evaluation. This is a first for an AAM meeting and will be an exciting experiment in offering professional development opportunities to AAM conference attendees. The workshop will take place on April 23-24, so mark your calendars and spread the word to those who might be interested in taking part. For more information, call me (215-448-1103), Harris Shettel (301-871-5516), or Steve Bitgood (205-782-5640).

Readers who wish to join the AAM Visitor Research and Evaluation Committee should drop a note and \$10.00 dues to: Bea Taylor, Treasurer, 610 Somerset Rd, Apt #1, Baltimore, MD 21210. Ph. (410) 235-4027.

Minda Borun, Chair

What's Happening with the Visitor Studies Association?

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Harris Shettel
Visitor Studies Association

The Visitor Studies Association is moving ahead on a number of important fronts, a few of which I will report on here. First, the planning for the 1992 conference in St. Louis on June 23-27 is moving along very nicely, thanks to the excellent team that has been brought together – Jeffrey Bonner (St. Louis Science Center) and Ellen Stokes (St. Louis Zoo), Co-chairs, Mary Beth Mobley (St. Louis Science Center), Secretary, and Tom Turner (St. Louis Science Center), Treasurer.

In addition, David Blum, a professional meeting planner, was brought on board to add his considerable expertise to the planning process. He will remain a part of the team until the conference is over and the final accounting has been completed. As one of David's early and critical tasks, he has negotiated a very favorable room rate at the Clarion Hotel of \$59.00 per night (plus tax of about 12%). Up to four people can share a room at that same rate. This is an excellent price for a very comfortable, centrally located, downtown hotel, and should allow those with limited budgets (e.g., students) to attend the conference, especially if they are willing to share a room with others. Hotel parking, by the way, is included in the room price. All Conference panel sessions will be held at the Clarion Hotel.

Additional information about the cost of the conference can be found in this issue (registration fees, etc.) Those of you who need to budget in advance (or who work for organizations that need to do so for the '92 budget year) can now make a very good estimate of the total cost of the conference.

Official registration and hotel forms will be sent out after the first of the year.

The very sizable task of putting together a program for the conference has also begun, with Steve Bitgood taking the lead as Chair of the Conference Program Committee. (The Final "Call For Papers" can be found on page 18. Note the January 31 deadline!) Poster session proposals are also being solicited.

I should note that at this point we have a very limited number of proposals submitted for the June conference. June may seem like a long way off, but it takes time to review and approve proposals, and to organize and publish the program. Please take a few moments to think about what you have done, or ideas and opinions about the field, that you would like to share with your colleagues.

Personally, I would like to see more public discussion about some of the issues that we often get excited about in small informal discussions over a beer, but tend to shy away from when asked to present them to a wider audience. Among the subjects that I have heard brought up in such discussions are: General methodological issues (e.g., are we really in the throes of a paradigm shift?); the variety of roles evaluation can play within an institution (e.g., part of, or independent from, the exhibit development process); the role of learning theory in the development and evaluation of exhibits and programs; the importance of, and measurement of, the affective as contrasted with the cognitive domain in visitor studies; the proper role, or roles, of hands-on, participative, and interactive exhibits. Perhaps a debate or public forum format would be an appropriate way to present such topics. But whatever the topic or format, it is essential that you send Steve your ideas ASAP!

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VISITOR BEHAVIOR
Psychology Institute
P. O. Box 3090
Jacksonville, AL 36265

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