Editor's Note

This issue marks the end of five years of publishing Visitor Behavior. A variety of subjects are discussed in this issue. Two articles (pages 4-9) deal with the meaning of facility names. Do people have specific expectations of what features and programs they will find based on the name of a facility? The answer from these results appears to be “yes.”

Continuing our emphasis on informing our readers about theses and dissertations, a dissertation abstract by James Bigley can be found on page 9. Bigley's study of the motivations of museum society membership would seem to be of interest to all visitor facilities.

Hood (1983) found that frequent visitors to art museums had different leisure values than nonvisitors or infrequent visitors.


The authors had visitors to the British Museum (Natural History) rate 10 different types of leisure institutions on 12 descriptive statements (e.g., “Place for an educational visit,” “Place to experience exciting things.”). Results suggest similarities among institutions in some respects (e.g., Natural History, Archaeology, and Science Museums are “places to go for an educational visit”) and differences among institutions in other respects (e.g., Art Museums and Archaeology Museums “require some background knowledge to get the most from a visit” but Natural History and Science Museums do not).


Results of this study found that museums in Hull (England) were perceived as both interesting and educational. In addition, museums were seen as protecting heritage and as a legitimate use of tax-payers’ money. Younger respondents tended to wish that the museums were more “lively.” Nonvisitors were four times more likely than visitors to view the museums as “boring.”

Selected Studies on How People Perceive Visitor Facilities

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This study found that, in general, respondents had a positive opinion of art museums and that first-time and repeat visitors to an art museum responded differently to descriptors such as “friendly,” “imaginative,” and “responsive.”


Although all visitors were positive, women, frequent visitors, and older visitors gave higher ratings of enjoyment on their visit to Shedd Aquarium than did men, infrequent visitors, and younger people.


In this study a list of bipolar adjectives (e.g., spicy-bland, work-fun) were used by students to rate five different types of facilities (Art Museums, Science Museums, Zoos, State Parks, and Theme Parks). Zoos, State Parks, and Theme Parks were more highly rated than the two types of museums on several descriptors such as “stimulating,” “comfortable,” and “fun.”


This study also used the bipolar adjective rating device. Some visitors to a natural history museum were asked to rate the museum before they entered and others were asked to rate the museum upon their departure. Prior visitation, gender, and current visitation were all shown to influence visitor ratings of the museum.