

Building the Field of Informal Science Education Through the Synthesis of Evaluation Reports on Informalscience.org

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Overview

The goal of the Building Informal Science Education (BISE) project is to explore what might be learned from secondary analysis of evaluation reports on informalscience.org.

Research Question

In what ways might the evaluation and research community use a collection of evaluation reports to generate and share useful new knowledge?

Method

Researchers synthesized evaluation reports around a particular issue within ISE. Their syntheses were focused on exploring general lessons that might be learned by systematically combining or comparing findings across individual evaluations. Together, the papers represent a feasibility test for using databases of evaluation reports as a potential source for field-wide, generalizable knowledge.

Audiences

The synthesis papers and related resources are meant for a wide range of ISE professionals including evaluators, researchers, practitioners, and NSF PIs.

Challenges

The biggest challenge has been coding and synthesizing across reports that have varying levels of detail about an evaluation. For instance, we were unable to reliably code subject area across the reports because of inconsistencies in project descriptions.

Project Resources

Coding Framework

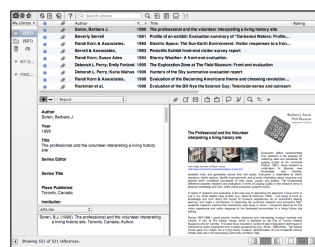
Coding Categories		
REPORT NUMBER*	EVALUATION TYPE*	INTERVIEW PROTOCOL PROVIDED*
EXTERNAL FOCUSES*	EVALUATION PURPOSE/QUESTIONS	SURVEY INSTRUMENT PROVIDED*
TYPE*	PROJECT STRATEGY*	OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT PROVIDED*
YEAR OF WRITING REPORT*	SAMPLE SIZE*	TOOLS & TRAINING PROVIDED*
AUDIENCE*	SAMPLE FOR THE EVALUATION	PROVIDED*
EVALUATION ORGANIZATION*	AGE OF INDIVIDUALS SAMPLED	FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL PROVIDED*
EVALUATOR TYPE*	SCHOOL TYPES OF ADULTS SAMPLED	OTHER INSTRUMENTS PROVIDED*
NET NUMBER*	SAMPLED A SCHOOL GROUP	PRE / POST MEASURES
OTHER FUNDING SOURCE*	ACCESSIBILITY GROUP*	FOLLOW UP
FUNDING START DATE*	LANGUAGE TRANSLATION*	STATISTICAL TEST*
FUNDING END DATE*	DATA COLLECTION METHODS*	RECOMMENDATIONS
EVALUATOR*	INSTRUMENTS PROVIDED*	INTERVIEW SAMPLE*

Collection of 521 Evaluation Reports

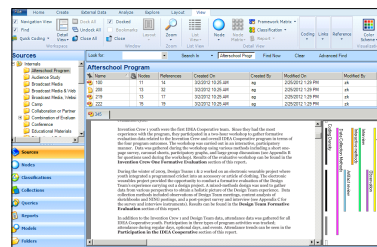


Spreadsheet of Report Level Attributes

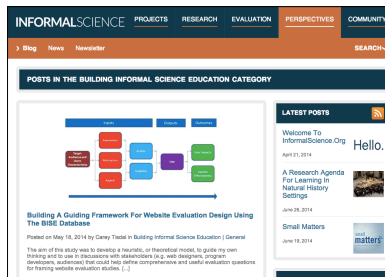
EndNote File



NVivo Database



BISE Blog



Synthesis Papers

Five syntheses were carried out, two by the BISE project team and three from VSA-contracted authors. The papers address the following overarching questions.

- Across the website-related reports in the BISE database, what was the range of evaluation focus areas?
- Museums are increasingly engaging with their communities in understanding and addressing the complex questions of our society. How is this effort manifested in museum practice, and what is the impact of this work?
- What recommendations and advice are provided through summative evaluations of exhibitions?
- How are media projects typically evaluated and how do they show changes in design, knowledge outcomes, and increases in interest and engagement in STEM?
- If the evaluation field wants to learn from evaluation reports on informalscience.org and similar types of repositories, how can evaluators help to ensure the reports they post are useful to other evaluators?



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