

- continued to think in both the mode of short-term actions as well as that of long-range planning, which serves to highlight some implications for action as well as appreciating input to a new master plan for physical development of the site.

Technical Details of the Research

Even though the focus of this article is on the process of an institution's need for and response to visitor studies, some basic facts about the studies themselves include the following:

- Primary research method: exit interviews with randomly-selected visitor groups (one person interviewed per group); samples of 400 visitor groups in each of two seasons; cooperation rate was about 90% of visitors approached.
- Additional research methods: a survey of languages spoken by visitors, interviews at entrance gates, interviews at the conservatory.
- Demographics included: residence, group composition, age, gender, education, income, racial/ethnic identification, membership.
- Behavioral measures included: prior visits to the Garden, entrance and exit points used, duration of visit, awareness of cafe/store and spending at those visitor services, features of the Garden visited on the survey date, mode of transportation to the Garden.
- Psychographics included: reasons for visiting, awareness of publicity about the Garden, reactions to the fees, satisfaction with the visit, disappointments with the visit, future interests, whether and how visitors pursue special interests in horticulture through other activities.

Visitor Studies: Theory, Research, and Practice

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Public Perceptions and Use of Lincoln Park in Chicago

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Lincoln Park is a large multi-use park on Chicago's lakefront used by millions of people. It is an impressive landscape of natural features such as grassy fields, trees, beaches, and ponds. It also has numerous facilities including a zoo, a conservatory, a golf course, tennis courts, softball fields, and picnic areas.

In the process of developing a master plan for the park, the Chicago Park District and the Recreation and Leisure Task Force requested an extensive investigation into the public's usage patterns and perceptions of Lincoln Park. Some of the questions for the study were: Who uses the park and who doesn't? What are the most common activities? What are the most salient issues in the public's perceptions of the park? What characteristics of park users are important to consider when planning for a diverse urban population?

In a multi-method research project conducted during the summer and fall of 1990 (final report 1991), three different methods to gather information pertinent to these questions were used:

1. Behavioral mapping. Observers recorded the number of people in different areas of the park at different times, and what they were doing (i.e., bicycling, jogging, playing frisbee, playing softball, reading, etc.). These observations of nearly 55,000 summer visitors served to document the "what," "where," and "when" of user behavior during the primary season of park use.
2. Interviews with people in the park. Four hundred summer park users were interviewed to find out who they were and what they thought about the park.
3. Telephone survey. Approximately 1000 Chicago households were called in the fall of 1990. Information was collected about park use in all four seasons, about people who don't use the park and why, and reactions to some potential policy initiatives prepared by the Task Force.

Highlights of Findings

The park is a metropolitan attraction. Visitors come from all over the city as well as from the suburbs. Roughly 70% of members of Chicago households had visited the park within the previous two years. The most frequent users are the local residents from adjacent neighborhoods. These residents are more likely than those who live farther away to use the park in seasons other than summer.

The park attracts a diverse audience. A broad range of ethnic groups, income levels, ages, and men and women are represented among the users.

Young adults are the strongest segment of park users. About 60% of the people using the park are in the 20's and 30's.

The most valued aspects of the park are the zoo, the greenery, and the lakefront. Park users are generally supportive of facilities at the edge of the park (museums, recreation center) but not in favor of more development (e.g., more parking lots) encroaching on park land.

Most park users engage in passive, unstructured recreation. This is defined as activities that require low levels of energy and/or organization, such as walking, lying on the beach, picnicking, sitting, fishing, etc. However, people who use the park for active recreation (biking, running, playing tennis or softball, etc.) are more frequent visitors than passive-only users.

The top three concerns that park users have involve maintenance, traffic, and security. When asked about perceived problems, people mention litter, traffic congestion and parking hassles, poor lighting, and not feeling safe.

Park users are not a homogenous group. There are important dimensions of difference among them. The extensive data about park users allowed for detailed analyses and profiles of the different types of users. The variables with the greatest power to distinguish patterns of park use were:

1. recreational style — active users, passive users, and combination users;
2. location of residence — nearby neighborhoods versus elsewhere in the city;
3. age group — young adults, middle-aged adults and family groups, and older adults;
4. racial/ethnic identification — Caucasians, African-Americans, and Hispanics; and
5. frequency of park use — frequent users tend to live nearby and be young adults, but frequent users as a segment tend to be active users and more supportive of improvements.

Conclusions

Lincoln Park supports a wide range of activities. This diversity is an important part of the park's success. Visitors like the sense of variety of recreational opportunities, but the public does not recognize that trade-offs must occur in order to accommodate such variety (for example, controlling traffic and parking). There will always be conflicts between people who like quiet grassy areas and those who want to

listen to a boom-box while playing frisbee, or between organized softball players who want more fields to play on and people who prefer fields of flowers. However, user conflicts in Lincoln Park were not perceived as major problems, and the park seems able to accommodate a wide range of recreational styles and activities.

This study of the recreation and leisure patterns of park users and nonusers has and will continue to inform the decisions of people who are working on a new master plan. In addition, it has stimulated a major new statement of priorities for managing and planning, involving issues as diverse as user satisfaction, financial commitment for maintenance by major special events, restrictions on expansion of parking, recognition of passive-recreation as the primary style of use, and encouragement for park users to recognize responsibilities such as tolerance, voluntary recycling, and security. □

Longwood Gardens Visitor Studies

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As part of a long-range planning process, Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA, is conducting several audience research studies over the next few years.

At an initial audience research planning meeting, Longwood's staff members identified a multitude of concerns about the visiting and nonvisiting public. They ranged from visitor satisfaction to public awareness and perceptions of Longwood Gardens.

The audience research committee, which includes representatives from each department, quickly realized that one study was not going to give them all the information they needed to move forward. Therefore, various visitor and non-visitor groups and the type of methodology that would most appropriately interface with each group were identified. They were:

1. Longwood Passholders (visitors who purchase an annual pass allowing them unlimited visits): standardized mail questionnaire.
2. Off-site visiting and nonvisiting general public: standardized telephone interview.
3. On-site visitors: year-long standardized questionnaire and in-depth visitor interviews.
4. On-site foreign visitors: year-long standardized questionnaire.
5. Special events visitors: methodology undecided.
6. School groups: methodology undecided.