

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

The current issue of Visitor Behavior is dedicated to the pioneering work of Edward Robinson and Arthur Melton. Their studies began in 1925. The first investigations were purely observational in nature. No experimental changes were made, observers simply recorded behavior and the results were examined in terms of the situation under which the behavior occurred. Robinson reported some of these findings at the 1926 American Association of Museums Annual Conference. As a result of this report, the Buffalo Museum of Science and the Pennsylvania Museum of Art in Philadelphia agreed to modify their exhibits and labels in order to experimentally study visitors. Later, Robinson and Melton conducted studies at the Museum of Science and Industry in New York, the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, and the Newark Museum in New Jersey.

Although these studies by Robinson and Melton have been widely circulated and cited, visitor research by others was not one of the immediate fruits of their efforts. Other than in a few isolated studies here and there, it was not until the latter 1960's and early 1970's that a variety of researchers from the fields of psychology, education, museum studies, etc. began to systematically study visitors. Today, the study of visitors is flourishing, even without adequate financial commitment and support.

Several of the classic works by Melton and Robinson were part of the American Association of Museums (AAM) monograph series. AAM suggested that if there was enough interest, they may consider reprinting these monographs. If you have any interest in obtaining these works, send a card or letter to the AAM and let them know. Or let us know and we will forward your interests to AAM.

Have aquariums, museums and zoos learned anything from the Melton and Robinson studies? We have all been in facilities that do not take into account factors such as the placement of exits, the effects of museum "fatigue," the design of visitor circulation, the use of hands-on exhibits, and the use of exhibit labels. Exhibit designers and facility directors are often not aware of these findings. What can you do? Perhaps you can pass on this issue to exhibit designers, curators, board members, and others involved in decision making who may be unaware of these classic studies.

[S. Bitgood, Editor]

The reader is strongly encouraged to study the original sources listed below. Only a few of these studies are represented in this issue. I hope the samples provided in this issue will motivate you to actively search for these papers.

A List of Pioneering Articles on Visitor Behavior

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- Melton, A. W. (1935). Problems of Installation in Museums of Art. New Series Number 14, Washington, DC: American Association of Museums.
- Melton, A. W. (1936). Distribution of Attention in Galleries of Science and Industry. Museum News, 14(3), 6-8.
- Melton, A. W., Feldman, N. G., & Mason, C. W. (1936). Experimental Studies of the Education of Children in a Museum of Science. New Series No. 15, Washington, DC: American Association of Museums.
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- Porter, M. C. B. (1938). Behavior of the Average Visitor in the Peabody Museum of Natural History Yale University. New Series No. 16, Washington, DC: American Association of Museums.
- Robinson, E. S. (1928). The Behavior of the Museum Visitor. New Series No. 5, Washington, DC: American Association of Museums.
- Robinson, E. S. (1930). Psychological Problems of the Science Museums. Museum News, 8(5), 9-11.
- Robinson, E. S. (1931). Exit the Typical Visitor. School and Society, 33(839), 121-125.
- Robinson, E. S. (1933). Experimental Education in the Museum -- A Perspective. Museum News, 10(6), 6-8.
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