[Preparing Volunteers -continued from page 7]

The most important step in the data gathering process is that the research director anticipate all the questions and needs of the volunteers and the respondents before any training takes place. Then, the actual data gathering proceeds almost automatically. However, if the volunteers sense that the director hasn't planned for all eventualities, they will have little reason to prepare themselves to do the job precisely, graciously, and with commitment.

After having prepared volunteers to carry out this and other data gathering assignments, some of which involved more extensive, rigorous training for personal or phone interviews, this research director can confirm that dedicated, personable volunteers can carry out an audience study very satisfactorily when they have been well trained and they follow instructions carefully.

References

Hood, M. G. (1986). Getting Started in Audience Research. Museum News, 64(3): 24-31.

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CHECKLIST FOR ON-SITE AUDIENCE SURVEYS

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In preparing for our four-season audience survey in 1987 at the Holden Arboretum, Mentor, Ohio, we developed a checklist that may help other museums in making plans for on-site visitor studies.

In the two months prior to start of survey:

- List all survey dates and hours scheduled for the entire survey period (in Holden's case, several weeks in each of the four seasons).
- Develop list of potential volunteers and decide on minimum number needed to cover all scheduled days and hours.
- Send letter, containing brief explanation of audience survey and expectations of the volunteers in terms of time and duties. List survey dates and request volunteers to note their availability for these dates (this is not yet a signup for the dates). Identify dates for the training sessions, to be held one week prior to the first survey session, for two days on-site.
- Follow up with phone calls to volunteers who do not respond. Try to get a core group of 25 or so for the initial training sessions.
- Call volunteers to actually schedule days and hours for the first season; try to randomize their participation by day and time slot. Follow up with reminder postcards one week prior to their scheduled service.
- Hold the two-day training sessions (see Dr. Hood's accompanying article).

One month before start of subsequent survey seasons:

- Continue recruiting and training new volunteers before each season; training may need to be on individual rather than group basis.
- Mail out new availability sheets with schedule of survey dates and hours; follow up with phone calls to obtain signups, again aiming to randomize assignment by day and time slot.

During the survey period:

- Schedule one volunteer on weekdays for each time slot (i.e., 10 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., 1:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.), unless a large group is expected, when more volunteers are needed. On weekends schedule two persons for each time period. On busy weekends and special events, recruit at least three volunteers for each period.
- When more than one volunteer is scheduled for a time period, space out the locations of survey sites to get maximum coverage of visitors: near exits inside visitor center, just outside or near visitor center, and remote location such as parking lot or picnic area. It is a good idea to assign outdoor locations to teams such as married couples.

Requisite Supplies at Each Station:

- Tables -- at least six feet of work space; located so volunteers can view exits to sample visitors as they leave building or groups;
- Four to six chairs at each table, for volunteers, respondents, their companions;
- Survey instruments, pencils or pens;
- Sign to identfy the project
- Badges for volunteers to identify project
- Notepad to list reasons for refusals
- Notepad to list addresses of members not receiving timely mailings, or other non-survey comments.
- Notepad to record survey numbers, dates, times, and volunteers for designated days

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[Checklist for Surveys - cont'd from page 8]

- Information booklet for the volunteers containing:
  - Instructions for sample selection
  - Guidelines for carrying out the survey
  - Answer sheet to provide standard answers to most-asked questions
  - Signup sheet for volunteer hours
  - Coding sheets and samples of coded questionnaires to volunteers to code answers during slack times
  - Complete list of volunteers' names, addresses, phone numbers, and availability sheets
- Manila folder for completed survey instruments
- Box to hold supplies, including extra blank survey forms
- Free coffee and tea for respondents and volunteers

Of course, on busy days when you double the number of volunteers, you also double the supplies, so it's a good idea to have a second box ready ahead. The surveys taken to the second site should be temporarily numbered 1, 2, 3, etc., with a location code letter such as "P" for picnic area. These surveys are later renumbered into the record book in order of the time they were completed, to maintain the proper sequence overall. This must be done before the next survey day.

Preparing for and carrying out an on-site audience survey requires time, diligence, and patience, but we have found that visitors are very willing to participate and volunteers have had enjoyable experiences. □

HOW DO PEOPLE PERCEIVE MUSEUMS, PARKS, AND ZOOS?

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Introduction

Whether or not people visit museums, parks, and zoos is dependent, to a large extent, on how they perceive these facilities. For example, Hood (1983) found that museum attendance was correlated with the leisure values and expectations of the potential visitor. Hood's study is unique since there has been little investigation into the relation between how people perceive a particular facility and whether or not they actually attend. Hood has argued convincingly that informal educational facilities should be studying those audiences who do not visit rather than concentrating only on those who do (Hood, 1983; Hood, 1986).

In two studies using the semantic differential survey technique, we attempted to determine how people perceive museums, parks, and zoos in terms of 27 bipolar characteristics (Shettel, 1986) and to measure the effects of a visit to a science museum on the perceptions of respondents. Since the respondents in these studies were all students, we must be cautious about interpreting the generality of results. However, the results are suggestive.

Method

In the first study, 150 undergraduate and graduate students from Jacksonville State University were given the semantic differential survey which asked respondents to rate, on a 7-point scale, art museums, science museums, zoos, state parks, and theme parks in terms of 27 bipolar characteristics (e.g., active-passive, formal-informal, complicated-simple). When reporting the results, lower numbers indicate ratings toward the first term, e.g., "active", and larger numbers toward the second term, e.g., "passive". A rating of "4" is a neutral score.

Results

The "child-adult" characteristics revealed that art and science museums were perceived as more "adult" than "child", while zoos and parks were viewed as more "child".

Art Museum	5.3
Science Museum	5.1
Zoo	2.7
State Park	3.6
Theme Park	3.3

The "bland-spicy" dimension revealed a difference between science museums and other facilities: science museums were rated on the "bland" side of the dimension while the other facilities were rated as more "spicy".

Art Museum	4.3
Science Museum	3.9
Zoo	4.8
State Park	4.5
Theme Park	4.7

The data also suggested that respondents view museums as more "formal" than zoos and parks. Art museums were considered the most "formal" of the five types of facilities. Parks were rated as most "informal".

Art Museum	3.8
Science Museum	4.3
Zoo	5.9
State Park	6.1
Theme Park	6.1

Ratings of the "complicated-simple" dimension suggested that museums were viewed as complicated, while zoos and parks were seen as "simple". Science museums were perceived as more "complicated" than art museums. State parks were seen as the most "simple" of

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