

EDITORIAL

Unfortunately, it is impossible to present all of the important issues and viewpoints dealing with exhibit design and evaluation in a format such as this. The current and previous issues of *Visitor Behavior* hopefully introduce the multiple viewpoints and issues found in the literature on exhibit design and evaluation. I hope that these two special issues will motivate and direct readers to search for more information on the subject of exhibit design and evaluation. The last issue provided selected bibliographies for both museums and zoos. The current issue gives some suggested readings for those who are not sure where to start. The reader is cautioned that there is no substitute for the real thing. The summaries of reports provided by *Visitor Behavior* are not meant to be easy-to-read replacements for the entire reports. Much of the detail, richness, and meaning is lost when material is distilled into short summaries. One of our major goals is to stimulate curiosity in the reader. We hope that you will be curious enough to find and read the original reports.

These special issues on exhibit design and evaluation have not attempted to deal with the design of signage or orientation systems. These issues have been discussed in special issues in the first volume of *Visitor Behavior*. It is important to recognize that signage and orientation are integral aspects of exhibition and should be carefully considered in the design of any exhibit.

WHAT IS EVALUATION?

Screven (1986) stated: "Evaluation is a tool that provides information for decisions that are made during planning and design stages. [These]... decisions are made with or without evaluation. Evaluation simply provides more reliable information."

Loomis (1987): "Good evaluation can strengthen museum management by providing timely information about audiences, programs, and other items that are part of a manager's responsibilities. ... Evaluation is based on data, and established methods must be used for collecting the information needed."

Evaluation is a problem-solving tool. When used effectively, it can identify problems and help find solutions. But, it must be used skillfully.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Exhibit Design and Evaluation

The following readings should be helpful to those who wish to acquaint themselves with the methodology and critical issues in design and evaluation of exhibitions. I have attempted to make the list representative of the area. It is suggested as only a beginning introduction to the area. We hope that readers will be encouraged to explore more of the literature (see the bibliographies in Volume II, No. 1 of *Visitor Behavior* and the *ILVS Bibliography*). This list represents both the pioneering writings of Melton and Robinson and the current research and theory of Loomis and Screven. In addition, conflicting viewpoints are discussed by Shettel (1978) and Wolf (1980).

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- Screven, C. G. (1976). Exhibit Evaluation: A Goal-Referenced Approach. *Curator*, 19(4): 271-290.
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- Shettel, H. (1978). A Critical Look at a Critical Look: A Response to Alt's Criticize of Shettel's Work. *Curator*, 21(4): 329-345.
- Wolf, R. (1980). A Naturalistic View of Evaluation. *Museum News*, 58(1): 39-45.