

COMPARING VIDEO VS. WALL-PANEL DISPLAY

Landay, J. & Bridge, R. (1982). Video vs Wall-Panel Display: An Experiment in Museum Learning. *Curator*, 25/1: 41-56.

What methods of presenting information will be most effective in improving a museum exhibit's ability to educate? What types of people learn the most from efforts to educate? The answers to these and similar questions were sought in a study of visitors to the Brooklyn Museum during a special painting exhibition.

Information about an artist and his work was alternately provided for visitors by color wall panels, a video display, a combination of the two, or the information was not provided at all. Surveys of visitors after they had viewed the exhibit led to the following conclusions:

1. Color wall panels increased viewing time and knowledge of the subject.
2. Video presentations greatly increased viewing time, but at the expense of other formats when used in combination. Use of video, either alone or in combination with wall panels, produced especially high increases in knowledge.
3. In general, the greatest learning occurred in better-educated visitors, regardless of the method of presentation.
4. Enjoyment of the exhibit by respondents rose with the use of either wall panels or videos. [Don Thompson, Jacksonville State University]

POST-OCCUPANCY EVALUATION

O'Reilly, J., Shettel-Neuber, J. & Vining, J. (1981). The Use of Post-Occupancy Evaluations in an Aviary: Implications for a Continuing Assessment Program in Museums. *Proceedings of the Environmental Design Research Association*, 12: 318-325.

Post-occupancy evaluations (POEs) provide a multi-faceted alternative to exhibit evaluation. POEs combine direct observation with surveys and attempt to minimize some of the scientific measurement problems involved in obtrusive observations. O'Reilly and his colleagues propose that POEs be part of a continuous re-evaluating and upgrading process. This paper starts by contrasting the POE approach with traditional approaches (surveys, naturalistic evaluation, goal-referenced approach). It then describes use of the POE approach with the renovation of the aviary at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. Many of the recommendations that were produced by the POE were incorporated into changes in the exhibit.

In their discussion the authors point out that factors such as client management style, the impact of continual change on research continuity, and communication of results have tremendous impact on the way POE results are used. [Donald Thompson, Jacksonville State University]

PROBLEM-SOLVING WITH DESIGN RESEARCH

Martin, J.; O'Reilly, J.; (1982). *Research and Design at the Reid Park Zoo*. Technical Report No. 87-15, Jacksonville, AL: Psychology Institute, Jacksonville State University. (\$2.50)

"Design research...allows one to systematically identify and solve problems through design." This introductory-level report outlines design research by describing an evaluation of the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson.

Martin and O'Reilly suggest that careful design research benefits a facility in three ways: economic benefits (due to increased performance and productivity of staff, reduction in vandalism, increase in attendance), goal achievement (facilitated by delineation of, and attention to organizational goals), and quality of life (fulfillment of goals of service to the community.)

Following are some of the areas of emphasis for which research was conducted, and some of the principles for better zoo design that were identified.

1. Problem Solving. Walkways which followed a cloverleaf pattern around a central loop were found to provide the best access to space in a small zoo.
2. Master Planning and Programming. Study of animal abuse by visitors determined that the most frequent abuse could be seen at monkey exhibits, that the culprit was most often a teenage male or a group of four or more individuals, and that signs have verifiable but limited effectiveness for reducing abuse when used as the sole method.
3. Identifying User Needs. In order to create better accommodations for children, it was found to be beneficial to increase complexity and movement within exhibits, and to substitute railings for fences where practical.
4. Design Evaluation. Following completion of renovation projects which incorporated the above concepts, post-construction evaluation was begun, and fine-tuning of exhibits was accomplished.
5. Marketing the Zoo. Design research was found to be useful in two ways. Initially its objective was to assess ways it could be a greater attraction and service to the community. The payoffs didn't stop there, however. Completed research itself often serves as a sign to donors and others of importance that a zoo is intent on meeting needs and maintaining excellence. [Don Thompson, Jacksonville State University]