

Audience Research Helps Museums Make Informed Decisions

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This paper deals with two major audience research projects. One is a community perceptions study conducted by telephone with citizens of St. Louis city and county in 1990 by the Missouri Botanical Garden. The second is a year-long on-site visitor study at the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan. Both studies were designed, analyzed, and interpreted by Marilyn G. Hood of Hood Associates.

Dr. Hood will present the settings in which these two projects were accomplished and describe how they were carried out; Ernestina Short, Community Liaison for the Missouri Botanical Garden, will cover using their study results to better serve their publics, and G. Donald Adams, Director of External Affairs at Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, will report on insights gained into new audiences for that museum complex.

Part I: Missouri Botanical Garden **Marilyn G. Hood**

The staff and trustees of the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis were surprised to learn, on the morning following a November, 1989, election, that its bid to increase the tax levy supporting the Garden had been soundly defeated.

Since 1983 the Garden had been receiving about one-third of its annual income – or about \$3.5 million – from this property tax. Its effort to raise an additional \$4 million by the increase in the levy won only 41% support from the electorates in both St. Louis city and St. Louis county. That this increase was essential to expand Garden educational programming, renovate aging buildings, and maintain a low admission fee had not been effectively conveyed to the voters by the community campaign organization.

In assessing how it should proceed following the defeat, the Garden decided it must immediately move to acquire answers to several critical questions:

- In general, how aware was the community of the Garden – its existence, its location in an older neighborhood, how to get there?
- How did the public perceive the Garden's programs and services?
- Was there specific hostility to the Garden or to its tax increase?
- How might the Garden change to better meet community needs, which would, in turn, build greater community awareness and support?

One month following the tax levy defeat, Marcia Kerz, Director of Development at the Garden, called me for advice on how they might learn the community's perceptions and how the Garden might respond to the community's expressed preferences. The long-term goal was, of course, to go back to the voters, but only *after* the Garden had improved its relationships with the diverse publics in the city and county. Being able to improve these relationships means knowing about the audiences, their lifestyles, leisure participation patterns and preferences, their expectations and satisfactions of a leisure experience at the Garden.

Though the initial intention was to poll only registered voters, I recommended that the community study not be backward-oriented toward analyzing only voter responses but forward-looking toward expected future leisure preferences and behavior of the community overall. Data from such a broad-based study would provide a more comprehensive guide to defining the Garden's mission in relation to specific publics and to designing programs and services that would be welcomed by targeted audiences.

We began the project with two days of seminars in April, 1990, to brief about 150 staff members, trustees, and volunteers on state-of-the-art knowledge regarding garden and museum audiences, and about how these data could help shape a useful questionnaire for the Garden.

Next a questionnaire committee of 15 persons (staff, trustees, and volunteers) and I explored types of inquiries that would provide answers to essential questions such as:

- How interested are people in St. Louis city and county in learning about the subjects that the Garden offers?
- How frequent is their visitation, and how does it compare with their attendance at other local leisure places?
- How do their lifestyle characteristics relate to their decisions to visit?

The focus of this questionnaire, unlike most designed by gardens and museums, was on learning the psychographic characteristics of the respondents and linking these factors to demographics and participation patterns. Research has shown that it is only when a garden or museum probes the motivations, opinions, values, interests, attitudes, social interaction behavior, expectations, and satisfactions of current and potential audiences that it learns *why* people do or do not go to the garden or museum, and what types of programs and experiences will attract those who do not attend.

Because it was realized that the city and county embrace distinctive socioeconomic groups, rather than being one homogeneous whole, it was decided to structure the community telephoning along geographic-socioeconomic lines to secure comparable data from five Areas. A political scientist assisted in defining these Areas: (1) Inner North, (2) Outer North, (3) Central Corridor, (4) Outer South, and (5) Inner South.

Because it was decided to interview community leaders about their impressions and use of the Garden prior to the telephone surveying, arrangements were made with experienced university graduate students to conduct the interviews. In May, 1990, 23 community leaders participated in 45-minute interviews about their knowledge of the Garden and their recommendations on what the Garden could do to improve its services to their constituencies and the community as a whole.

When I returned to the Garden in June, 1990, the questionnaire committee made final selections of questions for the instrument, the telemarketing firm and I trained the callers, the pretest was conducted by the firm, and the final version of the questionnaire was prepared.

The data were gathered in 15-minute telephone interviews conducted from mid-June to early July, 1990. The callers phoned from random digit dialing lists that were organized by zip code and by telephone prefix. When the correct number of questionnaires had been secured for each prefix in the required zip code, phoning in that zip code was discontinued. This insured that the appropriate number of responses was acquired in each Area, according to the percentages that were determined before the phoning began. Also, to reflect the composition of the city-county population, 53% of the respondents had to be female and 47% to be male in each of the five Areas.

Because at least 200 questionnaires were needed from each Area, to allow for extensive statistical processing and analysis, Area 5, the smallest, was slightly oversampled. The result was that, instead of an intended sample of 1300 completed questionnaires (representing .001% of the estimated city-county population), 1333 were secured. Data were entered on disk and sent to me for processing. The Systat statistical package was used to produce computer printouts of the data.

The first reports on the data described the findings from the frequency distributions tables for each of the five Areas. Next, a report was submitted

on the merged data for all five Areas, which gave the community "averages" for the findings.

For the cross-tabulations tables, a statistical significance level of .05 was set for the chi-squares. Since only statistically significant findings are included in the cross-tabulations reports, users of these reports are assured that the findings are genuine and dependable, that they meet the two basic requirements of being valid (accurate) and reliable (consistent over repeated testing).

For each of the Areas, a comprehensive report detailing the cross-tabulation findings was written, and a final report presented conclusions and recommendations for action. This final report identified specific audience segments that are the most appropriate for development in each of the five Areas. Altogether, for the 16-month study, the Garden received several hundred pages of reports detailing extensive findings about its community.

This research is unusual, even groundbreaking, in its focus on psychographic characteristics of the audience, placement of the Garden within the leisure framework of the respondents, comprehensiveness of its design, and thoroughness of the analysis and interpretation.

Such an in-depth community study requires not only a willingness by the institution to collaborate enthusiastically with the researcher, but an open mind to recognize that this psychographic/leisure science approach is more productive of useful results than standard audience studies. Especially to be commended for their leadership on this project are Dr. Peter Raven, Director of the Garden, and Robert Kresko, then President of the Board of Trustees, without whose commitment the project could not have succeeded; Marcia Kerz, Director of Development and Public Relations, who inspired and spearheaded the project, and Ernestina Short of the Development Department, who efficiently served as project liaison.

One consequence of conducting comprehensive community research and reaching out to new audiences is that changes will have to be made within the Garden. And, changing things to serve diverse publics may not be an entirely welcome idea, since change is often scary. But none of the recommendations offers a quick turnaround, and that allows the Garden time to build internal support as well as lasting relationships with new publics, by integrating audience development ventures throughout the organization.

Tina Short will describe how the Garden is accomplishing this as it moves to implement the results of its community perceptions study.

Part II: Missouri Botanical Garden

Ernestina Short

The most often reported result of major research surveys is that they are "put on a shelf to age." This is because, often, it is easier to conduct the study than it is to find a way to apply the data usefully, particularly if the

study is not screened initially to include only questions that produce *actionable* data.

In 1990, the Missouri Botanical Garden embarked on a 16 month community perceptions study to understand how the St. Louis area residents viewed the Garden, and how they preferred to spend their leisure time. The details of the research design were outlined earlier by Marilyn Hood. Among the design elements were stringent criteria to ensure that the only questions asked were those whose answers could be the basis for action or change. This attempted to pro-actively avoid the issue of useless data, however interesting. The objective was to learn what the demographics, psychographics, and leisure time preferences were of the general public in the St. Louis area. Of specific interest were the non-visitors, whom the Garden would like to engage to broaden and diversify its audience.

The careful research design on the front end enabled the Garden to incorporate the results into an audience development model that will be used as a blueprint for strategic planning to increase participation by occasional and non-visitors throughout metropolitan St. Louis.

IMPLEMENTATION

The focus of this report is the *implementation* of the research results — that is, how the Garden utilizes the data from the research study in day to day operations.

It became clear early in the study that effective changes would have to begin with internal modifications in the operating procedures of the Garden. To be able to move steadily forward in the implementation process, the internal focus would have to be as aggressively pursued as the external plan for the community was.

The internal plan was based on three guiding principles: awareness, investment, and what we have called “pay off.”

Awareness

As with any program, the more familiarity there is with it, the more readily acceptance can be garnered for it. An aggressive campaign was launched whose objective was to reach every phase of Garden operations with full descriptive presentations of the plan.

Group meetings were scheduled to present the findings and final report by the consultant, Dr. Marilyn Hood. These included the volunteers and staff who originally participated at the inception of the study. Two months later a second presentation was delivered at the regularly scheduled staff meeting. To further engage each of the departments and to provide them with information specific to their sphere of work, small group presentations were made to each department expanding on the information previously reported. Finally, for any of the programs which are conducted on an inter-

departmental basis, again, specific committee meetings were held to present pertinent data.

Throughout the study and since, the leadership of the Missouri Botanical Garden was kept informed through the Trustee committee whose responsibility it is to report on the progress of the program. The Members' Board, an auxiliary that services the Garden membership, also maintains this regular reporting process.

Investment

The second key element to success relies on the level of commitment or "investment" which is made to any new approach. Significant financial and institutional commitments were made by the Board of Trustees, as represented by the recommendations unanimously adopted at the conclusion of the study:

- Creation of a community liaison position;
- Adoption of the audience development model;
- Involvement by leadership;
- Approval of additional funds.

The Members' Board has also made the necessary commitment to ensure the successful implementation of the program. A Members' Board Committee has been established, whose role is to attend to the issues of community perceptions. The Liaison works with this committee and assists where appropriate. All of these efforts are aimed at timely and sustained information flow, in addition to strengthening and enhancing the commitment made by the groups.

Pay Off

To encourage and support the investment of the various groups, there had to be a "pay off" or a benefit to those involved. The least tangible, but definitely important, incentive to the staff is the professional satisfaction and pride in knowing that sound decisions are being made which are based on accurate and pertinent data. These decisions will translate to additional reward in the greater response from the public. It is expected that increases in attendance and in support to the Garden will be the result of these efforts, and ultimately, it is hoped, higher membership levels as well.

The external plan consists of the **Audience Development Model** coupled with specific public relations efforts which will be addressed later. (See Figure 1: Diagram of Model.)

The first step identifies opinion leaders in each of the geographic areas. These individuals are not the politicians or CEO-level personalities, necessarily, but rather the grass roots community and

civic leaders who are closely involved in their communities, have a clear sense of what the public thinks, and have influence within their spheres. Once the leader is identified, a dialogue is established with her/him through personal visits, interviews, and invitations to the Garden. The second step links the opinion leaders with the Garden leadership forming Ad Hoc groups to create programs for their area that address the psychographic and leisure preferences expressed by the residents there. A stiff or encumbering bureaucracy was intentionally avoided to keep from being held back by layers of structure or hierarchy. The third step designs specific activities in each program with leisure time preferences expressed by the public. Step four ensures an outflow of information by linking the program to existing organizations that would be relevant to steps one and three. After the activity or event has occurred, evaluations would be conducted and appropriate revisions made.

The cyclic nature of the model ensures that the refinements are incorporated in subsequent programs and that the short, medium and long range goals of the study are addressed. (See Figure 2: Goals.)

The public relations element of the plan consists of modification of one existing program and introduction of two new efforts. The ongoing program is that of the Garden's news releases, which now are carefully written to include any information that the study deemed important, including simple things like better directions on location of the Garden, or hours of operation, etc.

The first new public relations effort consists of sending personalized letters to the opinion leaders identified in the Model on a regular basis. For each special public event, an invitation is extended to the leader and details about the activity are included. The second public relations effort is a new publication called *Garden Notes*. It has been designed for the non-visitor, specifically the non-visitor in each of the five geographic areas. The first page of the *Garden Notes Newsletter* will be customized for each area to include pictures and activities of special interest. To reach the people who do not normally attend the Garden, the newsletter is sent to "intercept" points such as waiting rooms, lobbies and other locations where the public may congregate. This method of distribution represents some savings compared to a totally direct mail campaign.

The simplicity of the total community perceptions effort belies its powerful effects. While any of the parts, in retrospect, could be said to be obvious or simply common sense, we could never have reached the whole community outreach plan without having gone through the *process* and without having made the commitment to depth and quality which were the underlying support throughout.

Part III: Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village **Marilyn G. Hood**

The Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, has conducted audience research sporadically over the past 15 years, but, as in many museums, there was no coordinating factor, no overall plan behind the various research efforts. Most of the studies were geared to marketing purposes, but often the results were not applied to solve practical problems.

By 1989, the Museum's decision makers recognized that data from these individual studies sometimes were in conflict or were applicable only to segments of the museum program. The senior management realized it needed a comprehensive visitor study to supply a body of basic reliable and accurate information that would serve as the integrating factor, the guiding principle, to link the findings from separate, limited endeavors. It would also act as a launching pad for future focused studies that could refine the findings of the basic research.

Accordingly, in the spring of 1989, G. Donald Adams, Director of External Affairs at HFM/GV, invited me to go to the Museum to outline a study that would focus on "the general notion that we need to know more about how visitors use our facilities recreationally." In July, 1989, I presented two seminars on audience research, which were attended by senior management and middle management, and by all other staff and volunteers who found it possible to come. The seminars achieved three goals: they clarified the purpose and content of a comprehensive visitor study and the application of its findings to real problems the museum faced; they helped allay apprehension about how study results might affect the staff's subsequent work; and they stimulated internal discussion on the benefits of comprehensive visitor research.

As we discussed what Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village needed, everyone recognized that this would be one of the largest studies ever undertaken by any history museum, and therefore, influential beyond the immediate locale. Mr. Adams characterized it as "a major project to gain information for the next century," because, for the first time, the Museum would conduct an in-depth study of visitor motivations, expectations, and satisfactions, which would relate participation in the Museum to the guests' overall leisure life.

When the eight members of the questionnaire committee were being selected by the Museum president, Dr. Harold Skramstad, I emphasized they should be persons who had a global perspective on the museum complex, rather than being bounded by departmental issues, and who believed that the psychographic/leisure science approach to audience research was an appropriate change from their previous undertakings. Also, they should feel

it was an honor to be chosen for this important responsibility, not a burdensome task.

This dedicated questionnaire committee met nonstop for one and one-half days in August, and again in October 1989, to tailor an instrument that grew from their "need to know" as well as from my leisure science/museology expertise. The committee's final version of the eight-page questionnaire represented a broad consensus on inclusion of sections covering:

- Psychographic dimensions of the visitors, based on six Important Leisure Concepts previously validated in several studies;
- Reasons for visiting, which were psychographically based;
- Satisfying aspects of the visit on the survey date;
- Perceptions of the Museum and Village;
- Orientation and interpretation techniques visitors would prefer to use;
- Frequency of visitation to the Museum and the Village;
- Frequency of participation in related leisure places and activities;
- Demographic characteristics.

Foremost in our minds was that this research be focused on two primary concerns: major problems the Museum is seeking to resolve over the long term and what *can be* for the future – not just what is or has been (which is the case with many museum studies). All of the questions were designed to gather "actionable data" – that is, every answer had to meet two criteria: it must supply information that could be applied to practical problem solving; and the information could not be acquired in any other manner. We were particularly concerned with identifying how the Museum's and Village's offerings were being received by different types of people, which messages were most effective with whom, and which visitor values were in harmony with HFM/GV's mission and priorities. This required delving into visitor preferences and lifestyles, to be able to forecast which experiences and services would be most valuable and relevant to specific audiences.

Since Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village operates on five program seasons rather than on four calendar seasons, we set up the schedule for data gathering to include both weekends and weekdays, special event and non-special times, through the five seasons of 1990. Data were taken from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on 86 designated days as visitors departed at two exits. Three research associates served each day – one at the exit to the Museum, one at the exit to the Village, and one relief person who substituted for the other two on coffee and lunch breaks. They selected

respondents on a prescribed sampling plan, which aimed to secure completed questionnaires from at least 1500 adults.

An integral member of the research team was the volunteer coordinator, Peggy Willis, who enthusiastically recruited over 60 "people-oriented" volunteers to serve as research associates – to intercept the visitors and administer the questionnaire. As a token of appreciation, each respondent received a museum key chain or other memento.

In early January, 1990, I returned to the Museum to train the research associates, train the coders of the data, conduct the pretest, make final revisions to the questionnaire, gain approval of the final version from senior management, and supervise the start of data gathering. It is a tribute to the dedicated research associates that despite a fierce storm on the morning of the first training day, everyone showed up, on time. Two of the employees in the volunteers office also took the training, to prepare them to substitute in an emergency, which occurred once during the entire year.

Though research associates were eager to assist the Museum in this monumental project, they were initially apprehensive that no one would answer the 15-minute questionnaire. Then, they were exhilarated when they found people were very willing to comply. When I took the second training class to the data gathering stations on the third day of the project, the by-then "veteran" research associates offered testimonials on how rewarding the experience was and how gracious the respondents were.

During 1990, the Museum periodically sent me the coded questionnaires, data were verified and entered, and computer printouts were run. By year's end we had 2095 completed questionnaires, a bonus of nearly 600 over our stated goal. The Systat statistical package was used to produce computer printouts of the data, and the statistical significance level was set at .05. Only statistically significant cross-tabulations findings were included in the reports.

For each season, the museum received a 12-page summary of the frequency distributions data, and extensive cross-tabulations reports of 46-74 pages each. Since each of the five seasons produced between 349 and 692 cross-tabulations tables, the analysis, interpretation, and report writing were more time consuming and labor intensive than for previous projects I have conducted (which averaged 200-300 tables per calendar season). In addition, the museum received a merged data report on all the frequencies for the year, and a summary of findings from a mini-study of the staff and volunteers.

For the latter, samples of about 60 persons from each group were selected to receive a three-page questionnaire of just psychographic, leisure participation, and demographic queries. Comparison of these data with the visitor responses is most intriguing because it shows similarities and dissimilarities of attitudes, preferences, and behaviors between the three cohorts. (The Missouri Botanical Garden conducted a similar mini-survey with its staff and volunteers, as did the Chicago Botanic Garden, as part of the 1988-1990 visitor study than I conducted with them. The data help the

staffs determine the “fit” between the museum mission and staff intentions and the expectations and satisfactions of visitors and volunteers.)

With all the analysis completed, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village has now received over 400 pages of reports from this 26-month study to guide its major decision-making and long-range planning. Staff members are prepared to evaluate how the study results will influence programming, services, education, exhibit design, marketing, public relations, volunteer training, and many other aspects of the Museum.

This Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village audience research has truly been a collaborative project. In addition to Mr. Adams spearheading the undertaking, we had the complete support of the Interpretation Committee (senior management). Dr. Skramstad personally introduced the project to the research associates to demonstrate his commitment to it. JoAnne Hazel, Timothy Woods, and Barbara Herman of the External Affairs Office were essential research team members. And, Mrs. Willis and her devoted volunteers supplied the man- and woman-power to make it all work.

In this situation, as at the Missouri Botanical Garden, it has been a joy to work with these sincere enthusiasts of audience research to accomplish a truly significant study that will have enduring value for Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village and the entire museum profession.

Part IV: Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village

G. Donald Adams

Unfortunately, unopened research reports clutter many dusty bookshelves. I've even seen them lying on closet floors like fallen soldiers – long forgotten because they never were useful.

In this paper, I want to make a startling revelation – that it *is possible* to *think* about how a study will be used *before* the study is done, *during* its execution, and *after* it is completed.

Now those of you who are research professionals must be thinking, “how silly, we already know this.” But what you may not know is that seldom does a research client think clearly about the ultimate use of a research study's findings unless guided by you, the researcher.

The outcomes of this lack of thinking are dismal – fallen soldiers all over closet floors. When this happens, institutions take inappropriate actions regardless of what the research suggests, research budgets are eliminated, and public involvement and financial support decline because an organization merely marches on to its own drumbeat, unaware that with every step it is moving farther away from the people upon whom its life depends.

Even though we have just now received the results of a major year-long audience assessment conducted by Hood Associates, we have spent more

than two years thinking about how it will be used as a resource informing the overall management of Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.

The need to make research useful is not something new to us. Mailback questionnaires distributed to visitors randomly over the last two decades have enabled us to monitor demographic trends. In recent years, formative and summative studies, facts tests, and focus groups have supplemented these data by allowing us to better judge our visitors' use of and satisfaction with our on-site offerings.

Together these research reports grew to an impressive thickness. But even though they stayed off the closet floor, they too seldom stood in the front ranks when advice was being sought. Although useful, they seemed fragmented and confusing when combined into an overall resource. What we needed was a current study that would help especially in the development of our marketing strategies and the planning and refinement of our public programs. This study needed to provide a reality check and advice for a long-range strategic plan to take us safely through the 1990's. Because one of our businesses is to be a provider of experiences, we needed a study of people's leisure behavior as it was influenced by their psychographic characteristics. The study needed to relate to visitors' actual use of our site.

Several resources aided us in establishing the focus of this study. Our experience with what had and had not been useful in our previous research was important. The Marilyn Hood, April, 1983, *Museum News* article, "Staying Away: Why People Choose Not to Visit Museums," directed our attention to learning more about occasional visitors' leisure experience expectations. Our knowledge that our attendance mainly is driven by word-of-mouth referrals helped focus our interests on a broader understanding of visitor expectations and satisfactions.

There was agreement by all members of the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village senior management on what should be addressed by the study. This agreement is a vital point of beginning for all research studies if they are to be used by the client. Even more importantly, the need for and focus of the study was enthusiastically supported by our Chief Executive Officer. Without the concurrence and support of the person at the top, most studies are doomed to a life on the closet floor.

With the need for the study and its focus firmly established, a second step, of equal importance to the work's ultimate use, was undertaken – the development of a consensus on the line of questioning.

At the advice of the researcher, a representative selection of public contact employees, not behind the scenes managers, but rather the people who actually conduct the day-to-day personal contact with visitors, was assembled and, under the supervision of the researcher, developed the questionnaire. By now, involvement had been achieved at all the levels where buy-in and high level support would be required if the findings of the study were to be used.

Throughout the year while the study was being conducted, the researcher released interim reports to the Museum, course corrections were made, and reporting procedures were refined to create a good match with the needs of those who would use the study results.

In addition to support from top management and multi-level collaborations in focussing and developing the study, we found that our overall institutional management structure also was very important to making the research useful. There had to be an opportunity for the research findings to be consulted jointly by those in the most involved museum departments. One place that opportunity already existed at Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village was in the Interpretation Committee, a committee comprised of the President and the Heads of Exhibits, Public Programs, Collections, and External Affairs. The committee met weekly to judge the appropriateness of all public program initiatives in terms of the organization's overall mission. At Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village that committee is a major forum for the discussion and implementation of the findings of this study.

Now that it is completed, the study will be communicated to people in all areas of the museum's operations with an emphasis on how it is relevant to the responsibilities and work of each department. This means that just having a researcher's executive summary with recommendations for action would not have been sufficient for our use. Rather, specific outlines of actions to be taken that are related to each department's tasks were required. If these specifics are not communicated, the usefulness of the study would be diminished.

In our case, the researcher, the staff project team, and the individual departments will be responsible for selecting and applying study findings appropriate for individual user groups.

Although at this writing, there has been insufficient time to act upon the findings, I am certain that the study will be very useful to our marketing, fund raising, education, public relations, exhibits, collections, buildings and grounds, food services, and merchandising departments.

In this I paper I shall cite only a few of the specific ways in which the study findings will be used. These examples are based upon information involving our visitors' gender, age, education, occupation, and origin.

Advertising to women will be influenced by the finding that they more often visit with their families, while men more likely visit with friends or alone. The evidence that women have a greater liking for costumed interpreters, while men prefer video treatments, will be considered in developing exhibits and interpretive messages.

Learning that older visitors most want to regain a sense of the American past confirmed our earlier impressions and gave us greater assurance in developing and promoting special activities in those periods of the year when seniors visit most frequently. Finding out that they also were

the group that most enjoyed weekend special events might change our program focus.

There are several important uses for new information regarding parent-aged adults. The findings strongly suggest that the benefits being sought by parents visiting with children vary with the number of children involved. For example, two-thirds of parents visiting with one child selected the Museum and Village as a pleasant and entertaining place to spend time with family and friends, while only one-third of those with three or more children selected this benefit. The latter group, which felt learning something was most important, is most likely to be using a family membership when visiting. Our knowledge of family member's interest in learning will help us fine-tune our family membership renewal communication and will be reassuring to our education program planners.

The finding that exhibits designed especially for children appealed most to parents of children under age six will be useful to museum staff planning new, temporary, and permanent exhibits.

That none of the study respondents in the youngest group of visitors, aged 18 to 24, chose the phrase "a fun experience" as a satisfying aspect of their visit further validates evidence gained by other studies and anecdotally that there is a need to try new ways to reach out to this age group. To know that they are the most interested in attending special events and in using interactive video will be helpful.

Because Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village visitors tend to have attained fairly high levels of education, it was useful to learn that the higher the visitors' education, the higher their level of satisfaction with the variety of experiences offered.

However, the largest percentage of visitors who had less than high school graduation as their highest level of education were persons 55 and older. Since these two oldest cohorts were the most likely to prefer an introductory film or brochure, that tells us that we should consider gearing these media to no higher than a tenth grade reading and vocabulary level to be most effective.

Also, the scripting of interpretative messages, label writing, and exhibit design could be impacted by the finding that those with the least education were most interested in learning about how objects are preserved and restored.

Older people generally preferred a leisure place where people of all ages could participate and where they could meet others who had interests similar to their own. Making a social experience possible is therefore a key factor in interesting and satisfying this visitor group.

In assessing the occupational cohorts, it was surprising that the higher executives and major professionals were most likely to seek a place of solitude in their leisure. This finding could influence the content of messages targeted at this group. Also, learning that this group was usually less responsive to program initiatives that attracted other occupational

cohorts alerted us to the fact that these well-educated decision makers have their own agenda on what is important at the museum.

That those in semi-skilled occupations were more likely to see an outing for children as a very important reason for visiting suggests promotional copy points for targeted communication in markets such as Detroit where this segment dominates.

The findings by residence were very confirmatory with the exception of one big surprise. Previous research and anecdotal evidence had told us that generally local visitors found special events and activities to be the focus of their attendance, while those coming from a distance came for the intrinsic value of the collections. This confirmation is important to future market positioning decisions.

However, learning that nearly half of the respondents who reside in a geographical area near the museum and village thought Greenfield Village was a real community rather than what it is – an outdoor museum to which the buildings were moved from their original sites – was not only a surprise, but also an important reminder. It is only through careful research, supported and acted upon by our management, that we can become aware of what is in the minds of our diverse audiences. Only then can we begin answering the questions that people are asking, providing the experiences that they are seeking, and gaining the revenues that will assure that we will be strong and useful in the future.

Reference

- Hood, M. G. (1983). Staying away: Why people choose not to visit museums. *Museum News*, 61(4), 50-57.

Table 1**Missouri Botanical Garden Audience Research Findings****Age of Respondents in St. Louis City-County Study**

| | <u>Area 1</u> | <u>Area 2</u> | <u>Area 3</u> | <u>Area 4</u> | <u>Area 5</u> |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 18-34 years old | 48% | 41% | 35% | 37% | 48% |
| 35-54 years old | 28 | 38 | 42 | 37 | 29 |
| 55 + years old | 24 | 22 | 22 | 25 | 23 |

Race of Respondents in St. Louis City-County Study

| | <u>Area 1</u> | <u>Area 2</u> | <u>Area 3</u> | <u>Area 4</u> | <u>Area 5</u> |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| African-American | 59% | 7% | 10% | 2% | 6% |
| Caucasian | 38 | 91 | 88 | 96 | 92 |
| Other | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

**Educational Level of Respondents
in St. Louis City-County Study**

| | <u>Area 1</u> | <u>Area 2</u> | <u>Area 3</u> | <u>Area 4</u> | <u>Area 5</u> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Less than high school graduation | 26% | 15% | 7% | 13% | 21% |
| Graduation high school/trade sch. | 29 | 28 | 17 | 28 | 26 |
| Some college, technical school | 28 | 28 | 25 | 31 | 25 |
| Graduated college | 12 | 22 | 30 | 22 | 20 |
| Postgraduate, prof. degree work | 7 | 7 | 20 | 6 | 8 |

**St. Louis City-County Respondents
Who Have Children in Their Households**

| | <u>Area 1</u> | <u>Area 2</u> | <u>Area 3</u> | <u>Area 4</u> | <u>Area 5</u> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Have children | 44% | 41% | 41% | 41% | 37% |

**Number of Visits to the Missouri Botanical Garden by
St. Louis City-County Respondents in Last 12 Months**

| | <u>Area 1</u> | <u>Area 2</u> | <u>Area 3</u> | <u>Area 4</u> | <u>Area 5</u> |
|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0 Visits | 40% | 45% | 33% | 39% | 31% |
| 1-2 Visits | 28 | 29 | 36 | 30 | 33 |
| 3 + Visits | 9 | 9 | 23 | 15 | 24 |

(Because of rounding of percentages, totals may not equal 100%; also, there were missing responses to some questions.)

Table 2**Henry Ford Museum/Greenfield Village Findings****Age of Respondents in HFM/GV Visitor Study**

| | <u>Winter</u> | <u>Spring</u> | <u>Summer</u> | <u>Autumn</u> | <u>Dec.</u> |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| 18-34 years old | 32% | 26% | 20% | 25% | 21% |
| 35-54 years old | 45 | 42 | 46 | 39 | 50 |
| 55 + years old | 22 | 32 | 33 | 35 | 29 |

Educational Level of Respondents in HFM/GV Study

| | <u>Winter</u> | <u>Spring</u> | <u>Summer</u> | <u>Autumn</u> | <u>Dec.</u> |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Less than high sch. graduation | 4% | 5% | 6% | 5% | 3% |
| Graduated high sch./trade sch. | 18 | 24 | 24 | 22 | 24 |
| Some college, technical sch. | 34 | 33 | 28 | 31 | 34 |
| Graduated college | 20 | 19 | 16 | 18 | 12 |
| Postgraduate, prof. degree work | 22 | 16 | 22 | 19 | 25 |

**HFM/GV Respondents Who Have
Children in Their Households**

| | <u>Winter</u> | <u>Spring</u> | <u>Summer</u> | <u>Autumn</u> | <u>Dec.</u> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Have children | 35% | 39% | 36% | 29% | 32% |

**HFM/GV Respondents Who
Would Bring Children To HFM/GV**

| | <u>Winter</u> | <u>Spring</u> | <u>Summer</u> | <u>Autumn</u> | <u>Dec.</u> |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Bring children | 71% | 65% | 62% | 59% | 66% |

**Number of Visits to Henry Ford Museum
by HFM/GV Respondents in Last 12 Months
(If they had ever been to the Museum)**

| | <u>Winter</u> | <u>Spring</u> | <u>Summer</u> | <u>Autumn</u> | <u>Dec.</u> |
|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| 0 visits | 21% | 18% | 23% | 18% | 24% |
| 1-2 visits | 15 | 13 | 10 | 15 | 21 |
| 3 + visits | 29 | 19 | 9 | 17 | 29 |

**Number of Visits to Greenfield Village
by HFM/GV Respondents in Last 12 Months
(If they had ever been to the Village)**

| | <u>Winter</u> | <u>Spring</u> | <u>Summer</u> | <u>Autumn</u> | <u>Dec.</u> |
|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| 0 visits | 17% | 16% | 21% | 16% | 19% |
| 1-2 visits | 16 | 14 | 10 | 13 | 20 |
| 3 + visits | 26 | 17 | 8 | 17 | 27 |

Figure 1

Missouri Botanical Garden
Community Perceptions Study

Audience Development Model

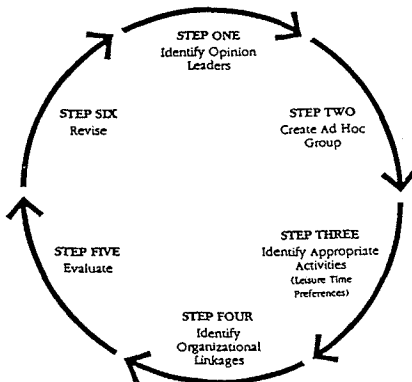


Figure 2

Missouri Botanical Garden
Community Perceptions Study

Audience Development Model

