

2015



OPENING MINDS TO SCIENCE

The Saint Louis Science Center's Report to the Community



“Thank you so much for the memories!! We come every chance we get and we learn something new every time. Thank you!!”

**— SCIENCE CENTER VISITOR
OCTOBER 2015**

FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
BERT VESCOLANI

Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,



It is my pleasure to share with you *Opening Minds to Science: The Saint Louis Science Center's Report to the Community, 2015*. This report presents an overview of what we learned from and about our guests in 2015.

In 2015, we opened the new *Makerspace* and *Mission: Mars* areas—two additions that supported the continued improvement our guests noted in their feedback. The Science Center is committed to continuing to learn from and about our visitors, not only through the evaluation studies our internal team conducts, but also through nationwide collaborative efforts. Currently the Science Center is one of eight partners in the Collaborative for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies (COVES), which is led by the Museum of Science, Boston, and funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Although still in its pilot phase, COVES is working to establish consistent measures that can be used at science centers across the country so that, as a field, we can better understand visitors to our institutions.

This year's *Opening Minds to Science* report presents an overview of our audiences' demographics and visitation patterns, introduces insights about our Members based on results of a recent Member study, looks at how our guests talk about the Science Center, sheds light on how visitor input helps shape exhibit design, and examines the impact of our educational programs and how evaluation findings can be used to modify programs.

We hope this report offers helpful insights about our visitors and how they experience the Science Center.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bert Vescolani". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.



St. Louis Science Center

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MISSION + INSPIRATION

What inspires our work?

THE MISSION OF THE SAINT LOUIS SCIENCE CENTER IS...

To ignite and sustain lifelong science and technology learning.

The Saint Louis Science Center is an informal learning environment where people of all ages and backgrounds engage with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

OPENING MINDS TO SCIENCE

Our mission inspires us to open minds to science—to develop fun, engaging, interactive, and approachable ways for our audiences to explore STEM and learn about the world around them. Through exhibitions, educational programs, films, and events, the Science Center provides a variety of ways for people to *ignite* their interest in science and technology and pursue opportunities to *sustain* that interest throughout their lives.

We strive to create experiences that encourage visitors to:

- Make personal connections to their knowledge and experiences
- Embrace a spirit of play and discovery
- Act on their own curiosity
- Form and ask questions, and then seek results
- Engage in hands-on exploration and experimentation
- Participate in conversations about the role of STEM in their lives
- Cultivate science process skills
- Pursue and use science throughout their lives

We also actively seek opportunities to turn STEM into STEaM, where the “a” represents the arts. We recognize that the arts can be a powerful tool for interpreting STEM concepts and that integrating the arts into exhibit and programmatic experiences helps make STEM concepts approachable to a broader cross-section of people.

Positive experiences with the Science Center will drive repeat visits and prompt visitors to interact with STEM concepts beyond their visit. Ultimately, we hope to motivate our visitors to think differently about the world around them and empower them to make informed choices in their everyday lives.



OUR DATA

How do we learn about our visitors?

Our visitors and their experiences are central to everything we do at the Saint Louis Science Center. Therefore, we routinely conduct evaluation studies to better understand our visitors and their experiences with Science Center offerings. These studies are designed following best practices in the field of visitor studies. Data are systematically collected, analyzed, and communicated so they can inform decisions about exhibitions, programs, and operations. This is accomplished through methods such as surveys, comment cards, interviews, and observations.

DATA PRESENTED IN THIS REPORT WERE COLLECTED THROUGH A VARIETY OF STUDIES, INCLUDING:



SEASONAL EXIT INTERVIEWS of adult, general public visitors that provide key information including visitor demographics, visitation patterns, and likelihood of recommending the Science Center.



COMMENT CARDS that staff distribute each day to a random sampling of visitors throughout the facility with the invitation to “let us know how your visit goes today.”



THE SCIENCE CENTER’S INTERNALLY DEVELOPED SYSTEM FOR ASSESSING MISSION IMPACT (SAMI), which collects and summarizes key performance indicators for educational programs.



FORMATIVE EXHIBIT EVALUATION STUDIES, in which visitor input informs the design process to improve both exhibit functionality and the presentation of educational content in individual exhibit elements.



PROGRAM EVALUATION STUDIES, which are integrated into ongoing programmatic offerings to assess effectiveness and identify opportunities for modifications and improvements to program structure and content.

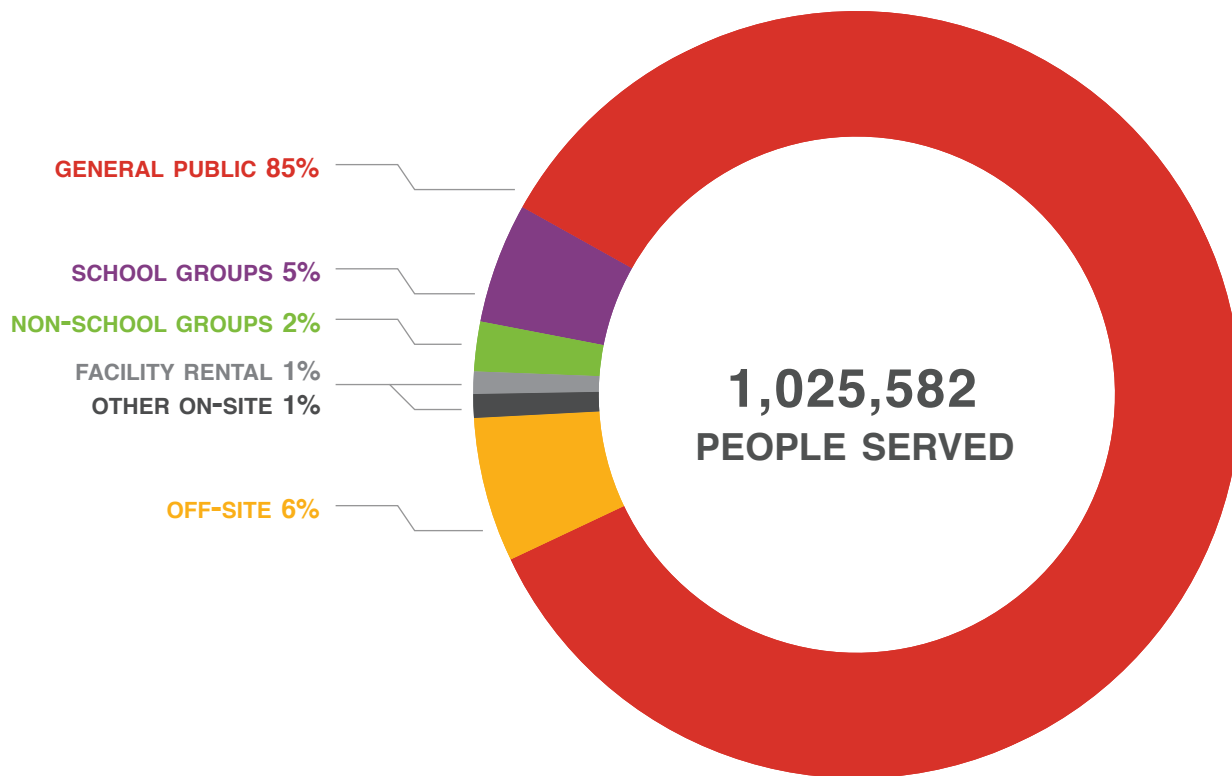


PEOPLE SERVED

How many people does the Saint Louis Science Center reach?

The Saint Louis Science Center monitors its daily attendance through the use of on-site door counters and by tracking attendance at off-site programs.

In 2015, the Science Center reached 1,025,582 people. The majority, 94% (963,789 people), were on-site visitors. The remaining 6%, (61,793 people), experienced educational programs and community outreach activities at off-site locations such as schools, community centers, and the Challenger Learning Center-St. Louis.



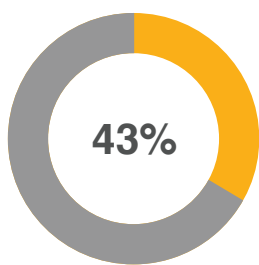
OUR MEMBERS

Why do people choose to join the Science Center?

The Science Center periodically conducts surveys of our Members to understand what motivates people to become a Member, what benefits Members value, and how we can improve the overall Membership program. In 2015, the Science Center worked with Morey Group, a division of The Lukens Company, to conduct a comprehensive survey about the Membership program. Working with Morey Group meant the Science Center's results could be compared with a Benchmark Average based on other similar cultural institutions in their database. A total of 1,094 current Members completed the survey.

Results from the Morey Group's study indicated that the Membership program is highly rated and consistent with the Benchmark Average for overall satisfaction with the Membership program, overall satisfaction with the last visit, and the likelihood of recommending a Membership. In total, 74% of respondents rated their overall satisfaction with Membership as a 10 out of 10, or "Excellent."

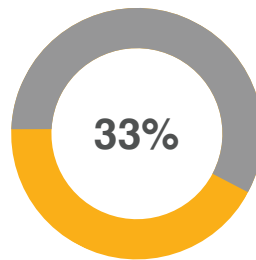
SURVEY RESPONSES WERE USED TO CREATE FOUR MEMBERSHIP SEGMENTS BASED ON RESPONDENTS' REASONS FOR HAVING THEIR MEMBERSHIP:



VISIT + SUPPORT

These Members joined primarily for free/discounted tickets and free parking.

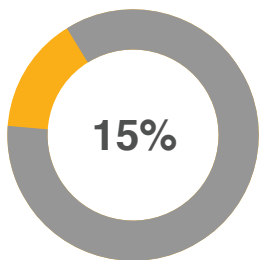
- 66% cited supporting the Science Center's mission as a reason for being a Member
- 43% have children in their household
- 87% will definitely or probably renew



CORE MEMBERS

These are the Science Center's most engaged Members. They joined for free/discounted tickets, Member discounts, free parking, to support the Science Center's mission, and for Member access.

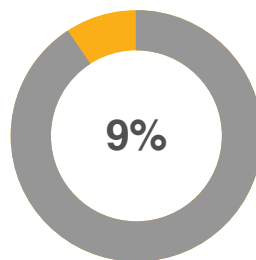
- 87% cited supporting the Science Center's mission as a reason for being a Member
- 44% have children in their household
- 92% will definitely or probably renew



VALUE-BASED MEMBERS

These Members joined primarily for free/discounted tickets.

- 55% cited supporting the Science Center's mission as a reason for being a Member
- 48% have children in their household
- 90% will definitely or probably renew



CASUAL SUPPORTING MEMBERS

These Members joined to support the Science Center's mission and are uninterested in free tickets, discounts, free parking, or Member access.

- 84% cited supporting the Science Center's mission as a reason for being a Member
- 28% have children in their household
- 95% will definitely or probably renew

Overall, 73% of Members indicated that support of the Science Center's mission was one of their reasons for joining. This was well above the Benchmark Average of 53% and indicates a strong level of support for the Science Center among its Members.

GENERAL PUBLIC AUDIENCE PROFILE

Who are our visitors?

Three times per year, a randomized sample of our adult, general public visitors are invited to participate in an interview at the end of their visit. These exit interviews occur in the spring, summer, and fall/winter and provide key information on demographics and visitation patterns. In 2015, a statistically valid sample of 965 visitors were interviewed.

ST. LOUIS COUNTY

ST. LOUIS CITY

METRO AREA MO COUNTIES

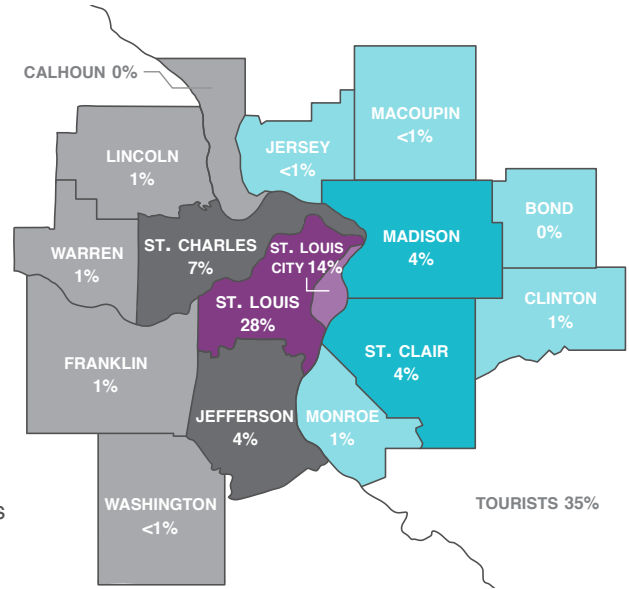
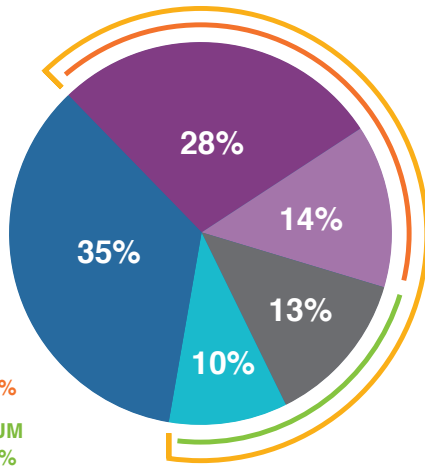
METRO AREA IL COUNTIES

TOURISTS

ALL LOCAL RESIDENTS 65%

LOCAL ZOO-MUSEUM DISTRICT RESIDENTS 42%

LOCAL NON ZOO-MUSEUM DISTRICT RESIDENTS 23%



Visitors represented 40 states plus several countries. The majority of visitors (65%) reside in the Metro St. Louis area, including St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and the surrounding Metro area counties in Missouri and Illinois.

OVERALL GENERAL PUBLIC AUDIENCE ETHNICITY

CAUCASIAN/WHITE 73%

AFRICAN-AMERICAN /BLACK 15%

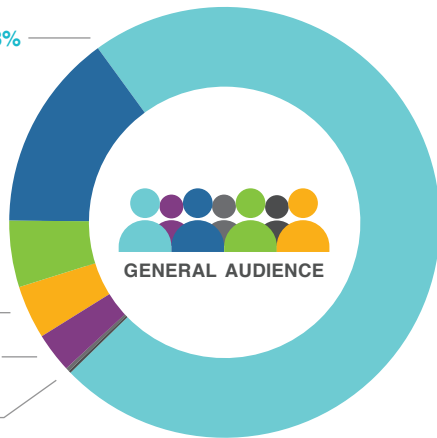
ASIAN/PACIFIC 5%

MULTI-RACIAL 4%

HISPANIC/LATINO 3%

OTHER 0.3%

AMER. INDIAN /AK NATIVE 0.1%

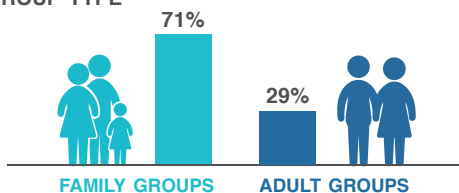


The racial/ethnic distribution of Science Center visitors who reside in the St. Louis area (St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and the surrounding Metro area counties in Missouri and Illinois) is closely matched with the 2014 US Census Bureau data for the St. Louis Metro area (the most recent data available).

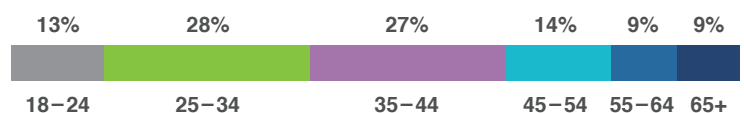
	2014 US CENSUS DATA FOR ST. LOUIS METRO AREA	2015 SCIENCE CENTER LOCAL VISITORS
CAUCASIAN / WHITE	77%	69%
AFRICAN-AMER. / BLACK	18%	20%
ASIAN / PACIFIC	2%	4%
HISPANIC / LATINO*	3%	3%
AMERICAN INDIAN / ALASKA NATIVE	<1%	<1%
MULTI-RACIAL	2%	4%
OTHER	1%	<1%

*The US Census tracks Hispanic data separately from race data; total exceeds 100% for the US Census data column.

VISITOR GROUP TYPE

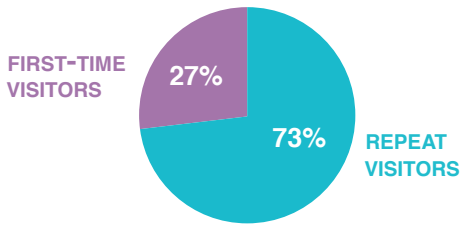


AGE RANGES OF ADULT, GENERAL PUBLIC VISITORS



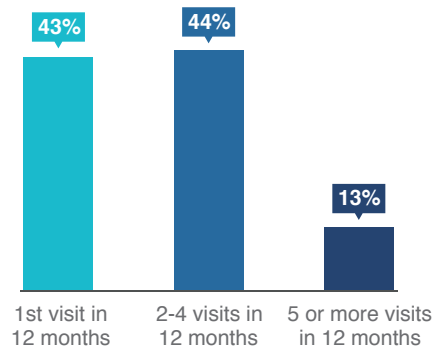
What do visitors do during a typical visit?

FIRST-TIME VS. REPEAT VISITORS

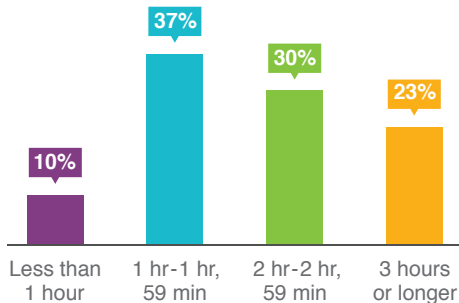


Nearly three-quarters of general public visitors are repeat visitors. On average, these repeat visitors came to the Science Center 3.1 times in the previous year.

HOW OFTEN DO REPEAT VISITORS COME TO THE SCIENCE CENTER?



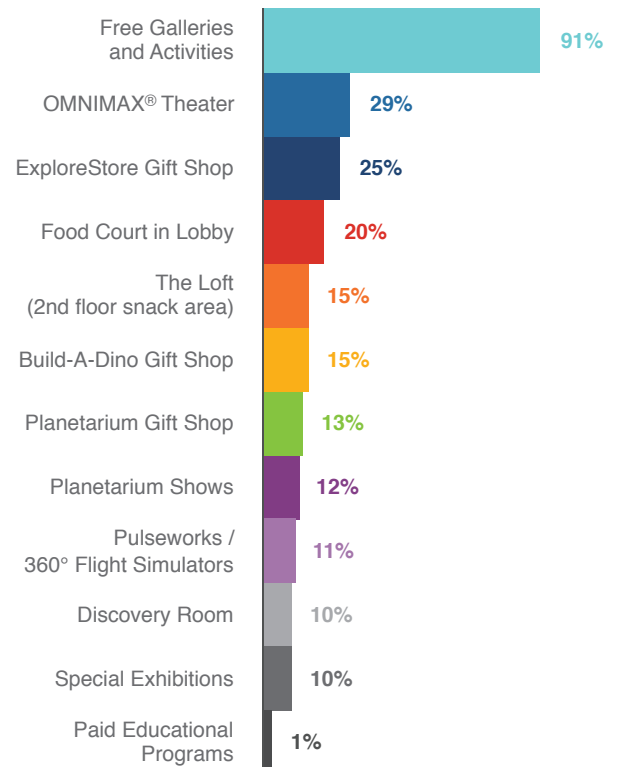
HOW LONG DO VISITORS STAY AT THE SCIENCE CENTER?



Visitors stay an average of 2 hours, 14 minutes.

AREAS VISITED

(Multiple responses possible. Total exceeds 100%)



FREE GALLERIES AND ACTIVITIES

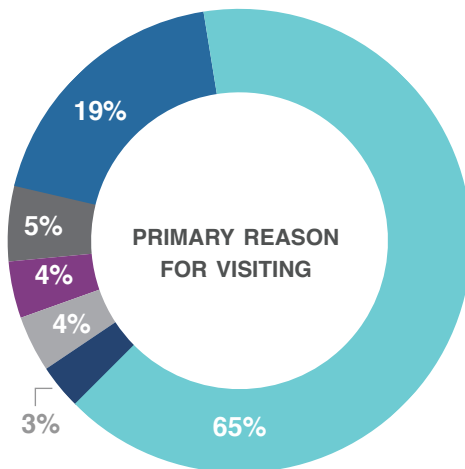
OMNIMAX® THEATER

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

PLANETARIUM SHOWS

DISCOVERY ROOM

OTHER VENUES / ACTIVITIES*



The majority of visitors came for the free galleries and activities. Another one-fifth came specifically for the OMNIMAX® Theater.

* "Other venues/activities" includes: the Pulseworks/360° Flight Simulators, the Build-A-Dino® store, paid educational programs, the cafes, and the ExploreStore gift shop.

Nearly all visitors spend time in the free galleries. The OMNIMAX® Theater and the ExploreStore gift shop are the most heavily visited revenue-generating areas. *Alien Worlds and Androids* and *The Science of Ripley's Believe It or Not!* were the ticketed special exhibitions featured in 2015.

VOICE OF THE VISITORS

What do visitors say about their Science Center experiences?

The Saint Louis Science Center uses two key measures to track overall visitor satisfaction: ratings from our comment cards, which staff distribute daily to a random sampling of visitors, and the Net Promoter Score (NPS®), which is collected on our seasonal exit surveys.

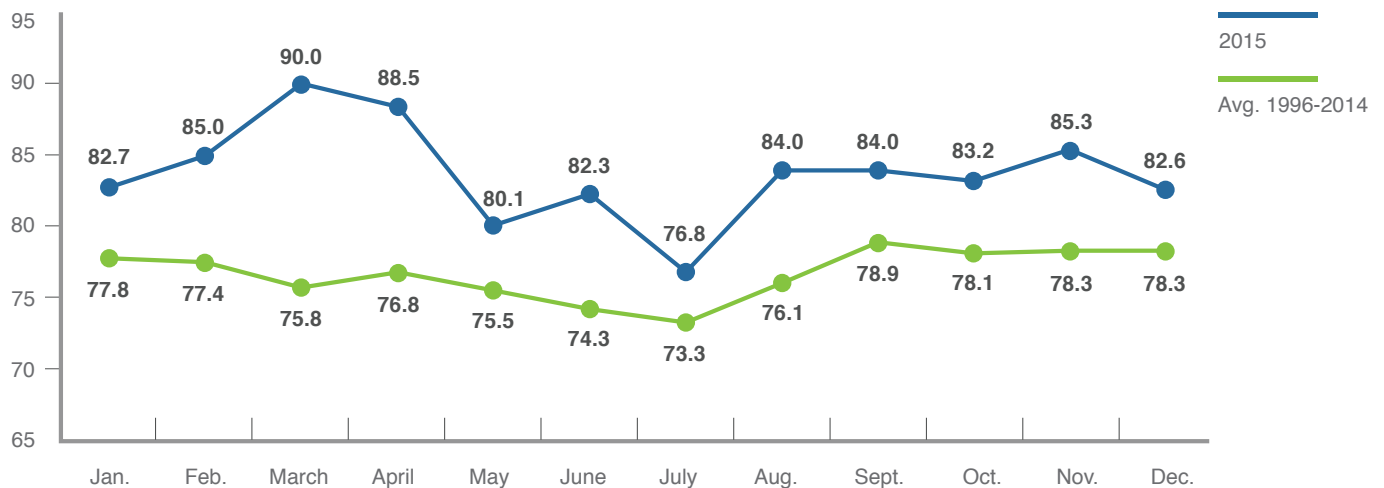
COMMENT CARD FEEDBACK

In 2015, visitors completed 1,155 comment cards, on which they rated their visit from “Below Expectations” to “Above Expectations” using a four-point rating scale. The ratings were converted to a score, where a rating of ‘4’ was 100 points, a rating of ‘3’ was 67 points, and ratings of ‘2’ or ‘1’ were both 0 points. In 2015, 93% of the comment cards had a rating of ‘3’ or ‘4.’

The Science Center has been using the current comment card system for twenty years. Over that period of time, the average year-end score is 76.8. In 2015, the year-end score of 83.4 marked a new high, up from the previous high of 80.9 set in 2014.

As the graph below illustrates, throughout 2015, monthly scores were consistently well above historical averages, indicating visitors had a high degree of satisfaction with their experiences.

MONTHLY VISITOR SATISFACTION RATING SCORES
2015 Compared to Average Monthly Scores for 1996-2014



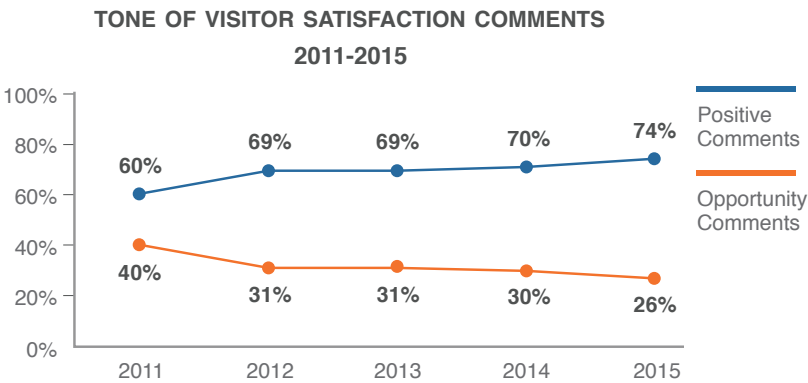
“I came here as a kid & this was my first time bringing my kiddo. He is one year old and had a blast!”

“Very friendly and helpful staff.”

“I love what you do and I look forward to bringing my children here someday. I enjoyed learning new things, even as a college student in Engineering. Keep it up!”

The comment cards also invite visitors to provide any feedback they choose to share. Visitors' comments are coded into 23 different categories based on the topic addressed. The comments are also identified as either a "Positive/General" comment, which expresses either satisfaction or no problem, or an "Opportunity for Improvement," which expresses either dissatisfaction or offers a suggestion.

Of the 1,155 comment cards visitors completed in 2015, 85% included at least one comment. A total of 1,486 individual comments were collected from all of the cards. As the graph below illustrates, in recent years, an increasing portion of the comments have been "Positive/General," while the portion classified as "Opportunities for Improvement" has decreased. The most commonly mentioned topics are: OMNIMAX® Theater, Galleries, Staff, Age Level, and General Positive.



"The IMAX presentations are extraordinary. What a treat! Thank you for the opportunity to experience these films in this unique and impressive way. We were still talking about it at dinner!"

"We really enjoyed the variety of exhibits. The lab experiment area was great! We especially enjoyed the earthquake simulator and space exhibits."

"The Makerspace area is the best! I enjoyed it as much as my kids did."

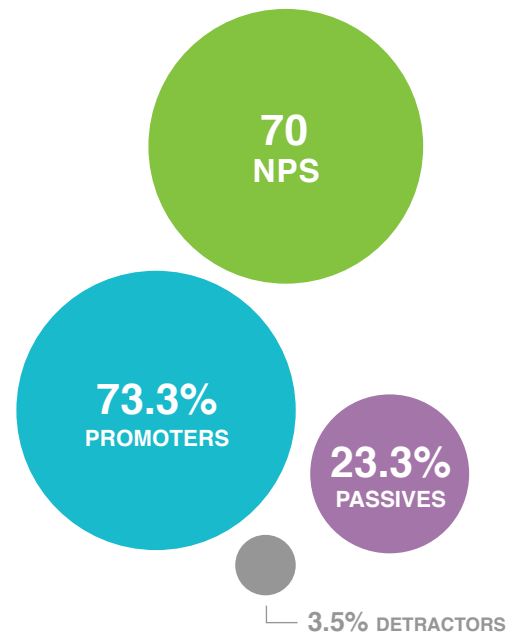
"Love the new Mars exhibits."

NET PROMOTER SCORE (NPS®)

The NPS, which asks visitors how likely they would be to recommend visiting the Science Center, is a question used in a variety of service industries. On a scale of 0—"Not at all likely to recommend" to 10—"Extremely likely to recommend," those who provide a rating of '9' or '10' are considered "Promoters," those giving a rating of '7' or '8' are considered "Passives," and those whose rating is '6' or lower are considered "Detractors."

The NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of respondents who are Detractors from the percentage who are Promoters. In 2015, the Science Center's NPS was 70 which, although down slightly from 2014's score of 74, was higher than 2011-2013, when the score ranged from 58-69.

2015 NET PROMOTER SCORE (NPS)
 $NPS = \% Promoters - \% Detractors = 70$



FORMATIVE EXHIBIT EVALUATION

How do visitors help shape the design of new exhibits?

The goal of formative evaluation is to improve exhibit design by including visitors in iterative testing of exhibit concepts. This process, conducted while exhibit design is being developed and refined, addresses both functionality and communication of educational content. Ultimately, visitor input helps frame the direction designers and educators take with exhibit concepts: continue to modify the design until it works, rethink the approach, or repurpose it.

In June 2015, the Science Center opened *Makerspace*. Several of the interactive exhibits in *Makerspace* underwent formative evaluation as part of the overall design process, allowing visitors to influence the final exhibition. From front-end evaluation, we learned that while some visitors, particularly students, had heard of maker spaces, few were familiar with the maker movement. To ensure that any visitor would have a quality experience in *Makerspace*, Research & Evaluation staff worked as part of the exhibit development team to test prototype exhibits with visitors.

MAKING MODIFICATIONS TO IMPROVE DESIGN

Sail Race was one of the interactives visitors tested. This exhibit challenged visitors to design a sail that would propel its boat-like base along a track pushed by wind from a fan. The exhibit encouraged visitors to redesign their sail to improve their race times. In addition to examining Sail Race's user-friendliness, the formative evaluation focused on answering several questions specific to this interactive:

- What is the level of competition and collaboration?
- How many times do visitors redesign and retest their sails?
- Do visitors use the prep table or work directly on the race track?

The Sail Race proved popular among visitors; so much so that the single prep table used in the prototype often became overcrowded. The two-sided racing track encouraged competition within and across visitor groups, with some visitors helping to record "the quickest time," and others racing against visitors from different groups.



MAKER SPACES: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The maker movement, which gained momentum in 2005 with the launch of the magazine *Make.*, consists of a supportive community that enjoys a variety of DIY activities.

Traditional "maker spaces" allow this community (and those interested) to access resources, such as tools and expertise, be creative, and make things.

The Science Center's *Makerspace* was designed to communicate that "everyone is a maker" and to connect the local maker community with the public. The exhibits are designed to challenge visitors to think, build, test, and rebuild their creations to meet the problem at hand. Related classes offer a way to jumpstart or expand their interest in making. Additionally, partners from the maker community visit often to demonstrate their talents.

Formative evaluation also provides the opportunity to test out different materials. For example, binder clips proved ineffective, particularly for younger visitors, who had more difficulty using the clips. Tinkertoys worked well and provided visitors with enough choices to develop different designs to test. In fact, the observations revealed that those who started by making their own sail averaged eight design changes, while those who used previously made sails tended to stay for less time and made fewer changes to their sail design.

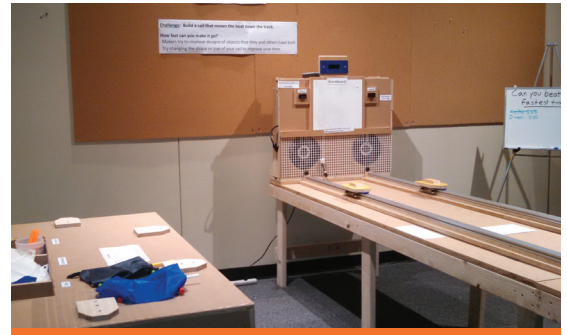
Based on the results of the formative evaluation, changes made to the final Sail Race exhibit included adding a second prep table, changing the location of the buttons that activate the fans and timers, and providing different materials for building the sails.

WHAT IF IT DOESN'T WORK?

The Automata exhibit, which challenged visitors to design a mechanical toy with moving parts, is an example of a concept that was repurposed. Visitor testing revealed that the best way to communicate this content would be through a staff-facilitated program. This format would let participants design and create their own personalized automaton, rather than changing out moving parts in an existing exhibit. As a result, the Automata exhibit never made it to the museum floor, but the activity has been transformed into one of the *Makerspace* classroom programs.

POST-OPENING FEEDBACK

Overall, *Makerspace* has been well-received in its debut year. Based on *Makerspace* visitation rates from the seasonal exit surveys, we estimate that approximately 54% of our general public visitors include *Makerspace* in their Science Center visit. Comments about *Makerspace* were extremely positive, with 90% of respondents indicating they were likely to come back. Thus, *Makerspace* has provided a positive new experience that engages visitors with the growing maker movement and may help drive repeat visitation.



Sail Race prototype exhibit



Sail Race final exhibit



Automata prototype exhibit

“I like to experiment. I look at others to make adjustments to mine and make it lighter to make it go faster.”

— Child, after using *Sail Race* prototype

“It's a fun place to be and we can be creative there.”

— Adult visitor to *Makerspace*

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

How do we track engagement in Science Center programs?

At the Saint Louis Science Center, we define programs as “staff-led interactions scheduled for a specific audience with written educational goals and objectives.”

Since 1997, the Saint Louis Science Center has collected information about the experiences of participants in our programs. Our System for Assessing Mission Impact (SAMI) tracks the frequency with which programs occur, the number of participants, and total hours of interaction.

WHAT TYPES OF PROGRAMS DOES THE SCIENCE CENTER OFFER?

The Science Center offers programs to a wide range of audiences. In 2015, education staff delivered 70 programs a total of 5,777 times. Programs included seasonal programs such as *Holiday Camps*, recurring programs such as *Boy Scout Workshops*, and daily programs such as *Maker Programs*. Of those 70 programs, nine are designed for the General Public audience, nine are designed specifically for intergenerational (family) interaction, seven for adult participants, 12 focus on early childhood, and 51 programs cater to the K-12 audience.

An “interaction” represents each time a visitor participated in a program. Interactions varied in length from less than five minutes at one of the outreach *Festivals* to a five-day *Summer Science Blast* summer camp. In 2015, 208,103 program interactions took place for a total of 199,853 hours of engagement. We track programs based on the audiences they serve. Some programs serve more than one audience, such as *Live Planetarium Shows*, which has versions designed for the General Public and K-12 audiences.

WHO PARTICIPATES IN PROGRAMS?

Many program participants had the opportunity to fill out a brief survey about their experience. In 2015, a total of 8,719 survey cards were completed. Through these surveys, we learn about their experience as well as gather basic demographic information. Child participants 17 and under filled out 60% of the survey cards and adults ages 18 and up completed 28%. Another 12% did not provide age data.

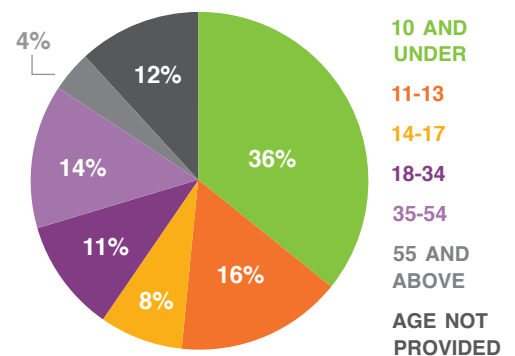
16

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS DELIVERED BY SCIENCE CENTER EDUCATORS EVERY DAY

TOTAL INTERACTIONS BY AUDIENCE SERVED

	NUMBER OF INTERACTIONS	% OF TOTAL
OVERALL	208,103	100%
GENERAL PUBLIC	115,297	55%
FAMILIES	2,559	1%
EARLY CHILDHOOD	57,826	28%
K-12	31,365	15%
ADULTS (INCLUDING EDUCATORS)	1,056	<1%

PROGRAM SURVEY RESPONDENTS' AGE RANGES



WHAT IS THE IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF PROGRAMS?

SAINT LOUIS SCIENCE CENTER'S DEFINITION OF "IMPACT":

On an individual level, impact results from a Science Center offering that enables a participant to make personal connections between the content and experience of the offering and their own knowledge and experiences. In the short-term, this is illustrated by a change in knowledge/understanding, attitude, interest, or enjoyment.



KNOWLEDGE
3.44



ENJOYMENT
3.61



INTEREST
3.41



ATTITUDE
3.40



IMPACT

The survey cards that program participants complete include four questions that assess knowledge gained, enjoyment, interest in science, and attitude towards science. The Knowledge, Enjoyment, Interest, and Attitude ratings, each of which is on a four-point scale, are summed to produce the Impact Score. The Impact Score provides a numerical way to represent the impact that participation in a program has on an individual. The lowest possible Impact Score is four and the highest is 16. Staff monitor how scores for one program relate to other programs delivered to the same audiences.

SPOTLIGHT ON *DINO MYSTERIES*

In 2015, Impact Scores for individual programs ranged from 11.60 to 15.90. One of the higher rated programs was *Dino Mysteries*, with an Impact Score of 14.88 in 2015.

Dino Mysteries introduces participants to the lives of dinosaurs including how scientists use dinosaur anatomy to understand what they ate. 2015 marked the fourth year for *Dino Mysteries* and this year, visitors frequently cited learning about dinosaur diets (21%), dinosaur anatomy (18%), and fossils (18%). Additionally, respondents' comments revealed that making the dinosaur tooth was a highlight activity for many (30%) participants. As one of the Science Center's highest rated programs, *Dino Mysteries* will continue in 2016.

13.86

(OUT OF 16.00)

2015 YEAR-END SCIENCE CENTER
PROGRAM IMPACT SCORE



"I got to make a tooth and learn more about fossils and dinos."

— Child Participant in *Dino Mysteries*

"My son wants to be a paleontologist when he grows up, and it was awesome to feed him some knowledge to continue his excitement!"

— Adult Participant in *Dino Mysteries*

PROGRAM EVALUATION

How do we use participant feedback to improve programs?

Program evaluation informs the development and refinement of program content and design. From 2013 – 2015, the Research and Evaluation Department gathered feedback from participants in the Early Learners Workshop to better understand their experiences in the program and to use in planning future workshops.

THE COLLABORATIVE

The Early Learners Workshop has served as an extension of the efforts of the Early Learners Collaborative to promote the sharing of resources and ideas for early learner programming among museums and other community organizations. The Collaborative, supported through grant funding by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and administered by the Science Center’s Science Beyond the Boundaries network, *sciencebeyond.org*, brought together staff from 21 science centers and children’s museums to share content, activity ideas, and experiences through group calls, conference sessions, and an annual one-day workshop. The workshop was free and open to any Science Beyond the Boundaries member, as well as other St. Louis-area organizations that serve early childhood audiences.

THE WORKSHOP

From year to year, each workshop has been built on the experiences of the staff and the feedback provided by the participants. The data reveal which aspects of the workshops were highlights for the attendees and what they felt needed improvement.

The highlight for attendees of the first workshop in 2013 was networking and sharing. That year, the program was new and emphasis was placed on the opportunity to connect with colleagues. Most of the time spent on sharing (expertise, ideas, and resources) happened among smaller groups, thus attendees had more face time with a small number of people. Based on the comments received, this seemed to have given enough time for discussion and the building of networks.

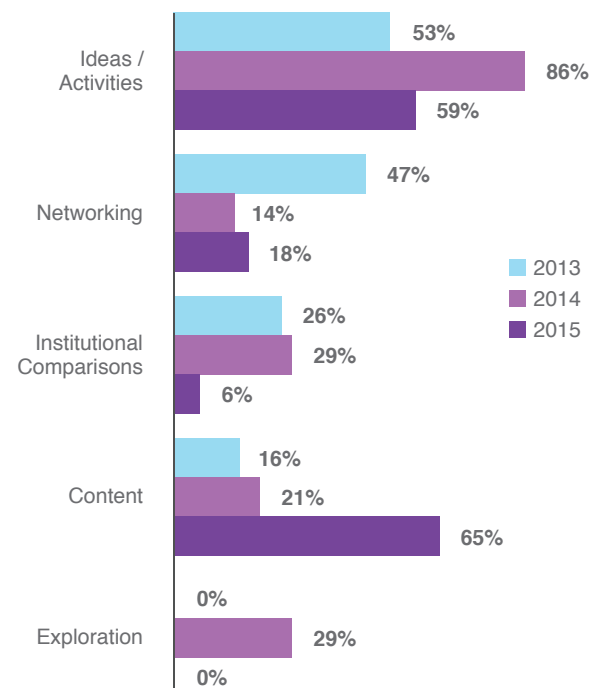


“I really enjoyed the sharing of classroom activities. There were so many different ideas and ways of science expression. I can’t wait to pass on what I have learned!”

— Year Two Participant

WHAT PARTICIPANTS GOT FROM THE WORKSHOP

SAMI Data (Coded Responses)



In 2014, the Science Center co-hosted the workshop with The Magic House, St. Louis Children’s Museum. Respondents appreciated visiting multiple institutions, but the highlight of the workshop was the shared activities. That year, each participant shared an activity with every other attendee, thus each participant went home with a book of activity write-ups.

The 2015 workshop was retooled to have participants spend more time learning and discussing relevant topics in the early childhood field. The team brought in Janella Watson, Director of Early Childhood Education at the New York Hall of Science. In both a presentation and hands-on activity framed around “making your ideal city,” participants explored techniques to help connect making and early learners. The workshop also included time for working groups to explore topics even more in-depth.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORKSHOPS

In 2015, the workshop departed from its previous model which was largely focused on sharing specific materials and program ideas to a new format based on sharing content knowledge and networking. Over the years, what respondents have found most useful in these workshops appears to be learning what others are doing, be that through discussions among the participants, learning best practices in the field from presenters, or seeing it through exhibit and program examples at multiple institutions. For future workshops, staff should continue:

- Recruiting speakers who can lead discussions on best practices and can speak to the current hot topics in early learning.
- Sharing activity ideas through handouts and hands-on examples.
- Exploring the newest examples of early childhood experiences that the Science Center and other local organizations have developed.

IMPACT SCORES

(Out of 16.00)

2013 (n=20)	13.60
2014 (n=23)	14.61
2015 (n=17)	14.12



“Talking one-on-one to other participants who come from similar institutions was very useful.”

— Year One Participant

Evaluation reports about the Early Learners Collaborative are available at:

informal.science.org/sites/default/files/2015-05-14_ELCYearTwoEvaluationReport.pdf

and

informal.science.org/sites/default/files/ELCYearOneEvaluationReport.pdf

