



**NATURAL
HISTORY
MUSEUM**

Visitor Studies: an overview

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Structure

- Brief history
- Terminology
- Audience research cycle
- Areas of overlap
- Resources
- Ethics



Acknowledgements

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The beginnings

“I have long been convinced that a series of observations on the constituents of this irregular procession of visitors, combined with overtures suitable for inducing them to make remarks on the objects exhibited – in a word, the application of inductive method to the examination of human elements in transit through a museum- might lead to much valuable information.”

Henry Hugh Higgins

Transactions of the Literary & Philosophical Society of Liverpool

Visitor studies before the 60s

US and British visitor studies papers

- 1920s 5
- 1930s 20
- 1940s 13
- 1950s 26

- Higgins 1884
- **Gilman 1916**
- Gibson 1925
- **Robinson & Melton 1935**
- Melton 1936
- **Wittlin 1949**

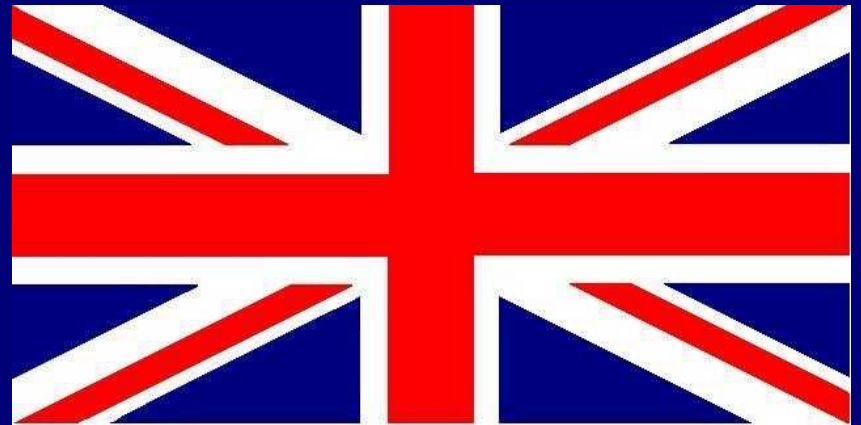
United States

- Elementary and Secondary Education Act 1965
- The Evaluation Network 1974
- American Evaluation Association 1986
- National Science Foundation 1980s
- Committee for Audience Research & Evaluation 1989
- Visitor Studies Association 1990

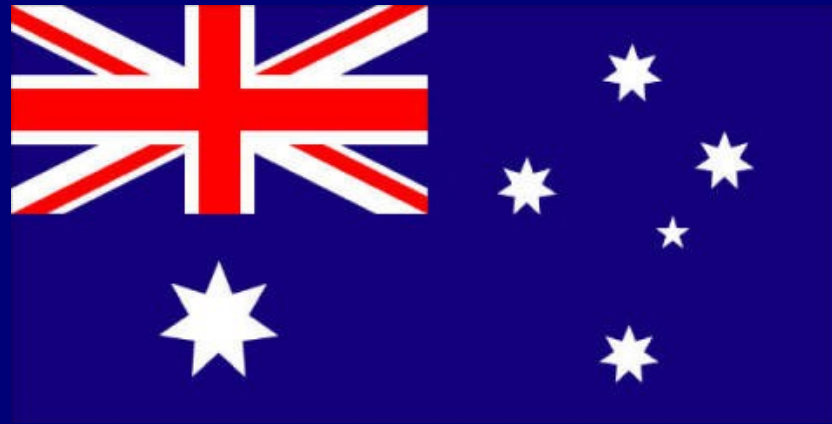


United Kingdom

- Roger Miles
Steve Griggs 1980s
- Sandra Bicknell 1990
- Science Museum
Conference 1993
- Visitor Studies
Group 1997
- ILFA 2002

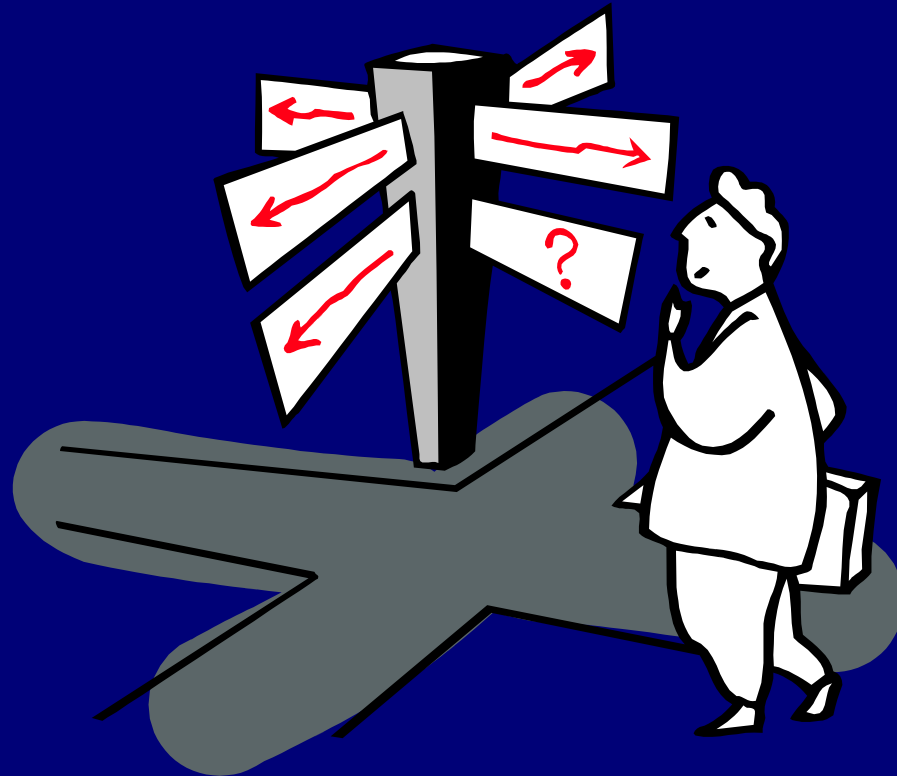


Australia



The Evaluation and Visitor Research Special
Interest Group (EVRSIG) 1996

Visitor Studies?



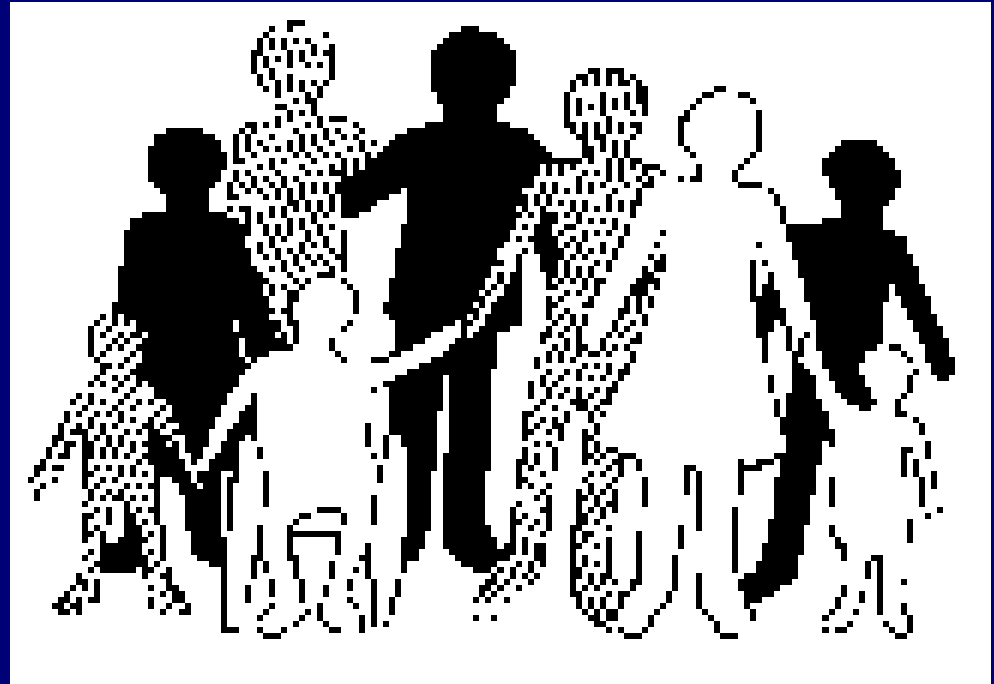
Possible definition

Visitor studies is a rapidly evolving, dynamic discipline "concerned with the study of visitors in leisure and informal educational settings". Its aim is to aid museums, galleries, libraries, archives, zoos, botanic gardens, and other cultural and natural heritage organizations to:

- gather real evidence about how to meet their core aims and objectives
- explore the impact they have on their visitors
- develop ongoing relationships with their visitors
- encourage ongoing improvements within themselves.

Audience research

- Visitors
- Non visitors
- Potential visitors



Aim to provide information which can be generalised

Market research

It is the function that links the consumer, customer, and public to the marketer through information.



information for:

- marketing opportunities and problems
- marketing actions
- marketing performance
- marketing as a process.

Demographics

Who comes

Who does not come

4 possible strategies

- Cater more precisely
- Non-visitor from profile
- Underrepresented
- Combination



Evaluation

- Feasibility study
- Front-end evaluation
- Formative evaluation
- Snagging (remedial evaluation)
- Summative evaluation
- Meta-evaluation



Behavioural studies

Visitor's behavioural
response to exhibits



Knowledge gain studies

Pre-post testing of
visitor's knowledge



Visitor focused studies

Open-ended qualitative studies using smaller groups of visitors



Audience research cycle



Community consultation

Consulting communities about decisions,
which affect them directly.



Areas of overlap

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Long term engagement with
Communities

MARKET RESEARCH

market penetration
market analysis
visitor profiling

Front-end evaluation
Market research
Communities
consultation
Summative
evaluation

Formative
evaluation

Benchmarking

Remedial evaluation

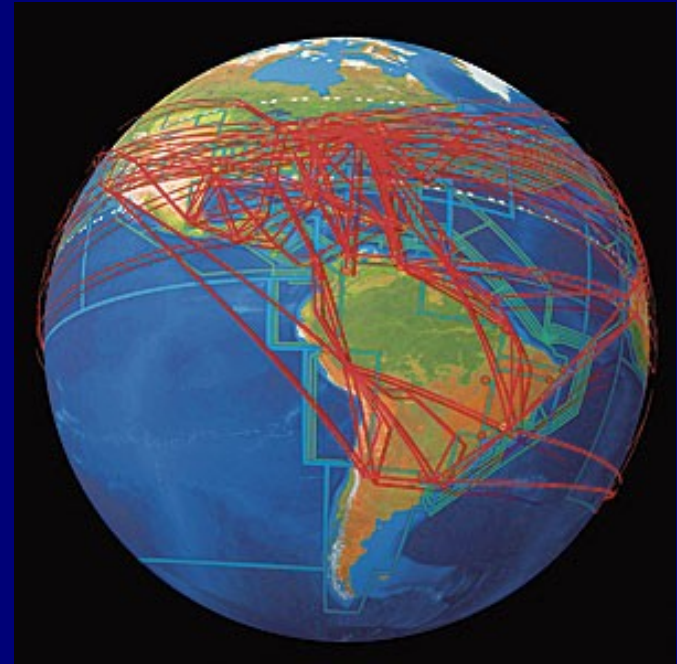
PROGRAMMES/EXHIBITION EVALUATION

Resources

On line

- Specialist groups
 - Visitor Studies Group (VSG)
www.visitors.org.uk
 - Visitor Studies Association (VSA)
www.visitorstudies.org
- Museums
- Consultants
- List-serves
- Blogs

Books & articles



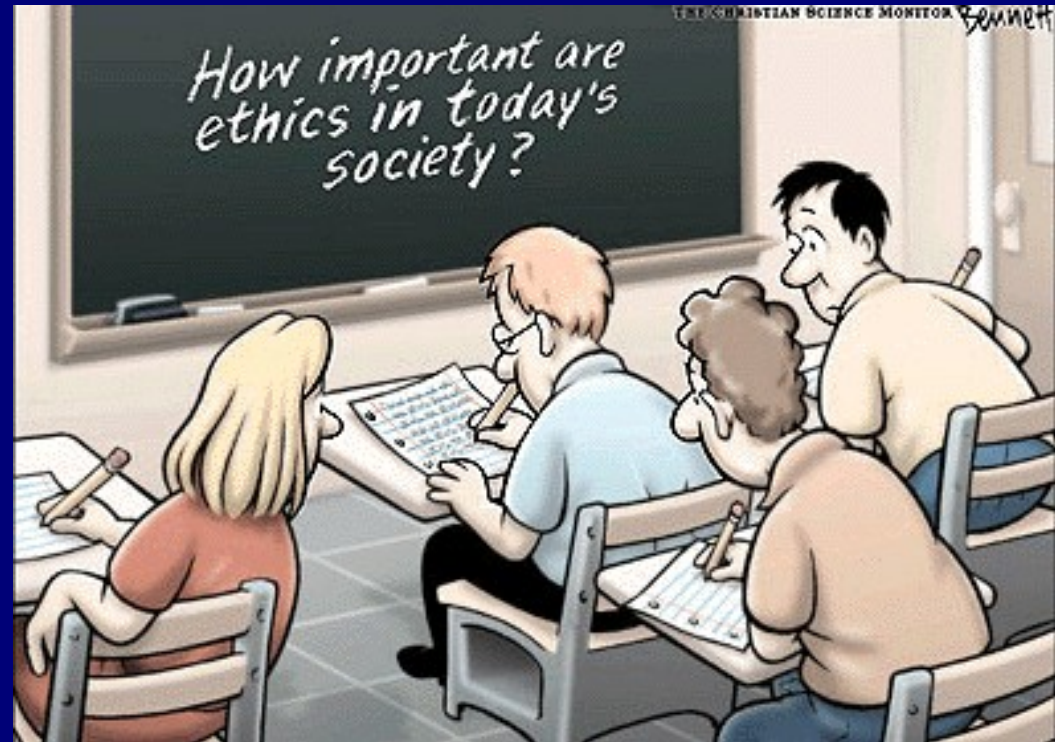
Look widely

Think creatively

Ethics

The evaluator

- Competence
- Integrity
- Accountability



Economic & Social Research Council

1. Integrity and quality
2. Transparency
3. Confidentiality and anonymity
4. Voluntary participation
5. Avoid harm to research subjects
6. Independence – conflict of interest



Any questions?

