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Foreword

In 2005 Arts Victoria published *Audience Research Made Easy* to provide small performing arts companies with guidance on how to conduct effective audience research. The success of this publication, and requests for a similar guide for galleries and museums, led to the development of this new guide.

To assist in developing *Visitor Research Made Easy*, representatives from galleries, museums and cultural heritage organisations were canvassed for interesting case studies and approaches, as well as research requirements and issues.

By adopting a step-by-step approach, *Visitor Research Made Easy* enables you to select the most appropriate techniques to develop insight into both existing and potential visitors.

From informal observation to focus groups and questionnaires, it explores creative ways to manage this essential marketing activity.

By focusing on the needs of relatively small organisations, *Visitor Research Made Easy* demonstrates how effective visitor research can be carried out at all levels to make the most of limited resources and develop a richer connection with your visitors.

Acknowledgements
Visitor Research Made Easy was initiated by Arts Victoria, the Victorian State Government's arts funding and advisory body. The publication was written by Dr Sharron Dickman of Pathfinder Marketing, with advice from a steering group representing museums, galleries, artist-run spaces and heritage sites. The support of the Australia Council for the Arts, the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body, is gratefully acknowledged.

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Why Should We Do Visitor Research?

Visitor research is one of the most interesting and useful things you can do in an organisation.

So much to do—so little time!
In most arts and cultural organisations there is always so much to do, and usually not enough people to do it all.

There are pressures to ensure the exhibition program is developed and implemented in a professional, exciting and interesting way. There are pressures to ensure the collection is protected, conserved and catalogued in an appropriate manner. There are pressures to ensure that staff and volunteers are making the most productive use of their time and also enjoying their work (so they will keep coming back and also recruit other volunteers!).

And of course there are all the pressures involved in simply surviving—paperwork, budgets, grant applications and acquittals, meetings, approaches to potential sponsors, liaison with relevant government authorities—it can seem endless.

On top of all this—why would anyone say, 'Let's do visitor research'?
The answer is: *because it will make all the other things you have to do easier*. Market research assists us to manage our organisation more effectively. It can give us information we need to meet the requirements of our funding partners, and help us develop an effective exhibition schedule, make fruitful approaches to potential sponsors and identify ways to increase visitors numbers by working smarter—not just harder.

Visitor research is all about collecting useful information
The important things to remember about market research are:

1. It is the planned and organised collection of information.
2. The information is practical and useful for making decisions.

Every organisation can conduct effective market research. While it would be ideal to have a huge budget to employ professional consultants to prepare impressive reports, there are many practical things that small organisations can do themselves that will provide useful information for decision-making.

In this manual we have divided the information on research into basic questions (and answers) that you might ask. Check the questions and then check out the research methods that will give you the practical information you want at different levels of complexity. We've presented the simplest, easiest ways first and then progressed to other, more 'advanced' techniques.

CASE STUDY

National Maritime Museum (UK)
Why do we need visitor research?

On its website, the National Maritime Museum (UK) features a comprehensive section on Customer Service and its importance to the Museum, with examples and reports. According to the Museum:

Customer service is important to the National Maritime Museum because without customers there would not be a business. Excellent customer service results in:

- *higher visitor numbers and greater customer diversity*
- *increased sales*
- *increasing public image*
- *survival in terms of competition*
- *satisfied customers and greater job satisfaction for staff*
- *repeat business and customer loyalty.*

To understand visitors' needs and wants, the Museum undertakes a variety of visitor research:

1. Recording visitor numbers and patterns on computerised admission tills that monitor numbers, type of customer and time of day.
2. Exit surveys—an outside market research organisation asks a series of questions to assess satisfaction levels for overall visits, including displays, signage, staff, amenities and facilities (café). The results are sent to relevant government departments and published in the Museum's annual report.
3. Visitor comment cards, available at various sites within the Museum.
4. A feedback facility on their website.
5. An evaluation form distributed at specific programs and events.
6. Assessment and feedback from external bodies such as disability groups and tourist organisations.

The Museum has a Quality Assurance Group to review responses and initiate any action that may be required.

Source: National Maritime Museum (UK)

http://www.nmm.ac.uk/server/show/nav.00500300l00000600100d

CASE STUDY

Powerhouse Museum and Sydney Observatory (Sydney)
Research can confirm successful marketing choices

The City banners [on street lights] have been an effective component in the advertising campaigns for the Sydney Design Festivals at the Powerhouse Museum.

Over the past two years the banners have been extremely well received by the target market. In a survey they conducted of audience awareness of the Sydney Design 05 advertising campaign, of those who had seen or heard specific SD05 advertising, the largest percentage (38.8%) cited the street banners as their main source of awareness. This figure exceeded the next best source by 13%.

Source: Christine Taylor, Marketing Officer, Powerhouse Museum and Sydney Observatory

http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/banners/Testimonials.html

So, what's the bottom line? Why do I need visitor research?
If you are going to take time away from key activities such as exhibition design and conservation, you want to be sure it will be time well spent. You need to know how visitor research will be of practical value to your organisation in order to justify the time and effort you will put into it.

Visitor research can help you:

- retain current visitors and build repeat visitation ('loyalty')
- attract new visitors
- find ways to persuade 'lapsed' visitors to come again
- spend marketing budgets as effectively as possible
- monitor how visitors feel about their experiences
- identify 'competitors' and understand their (and your) strengths and weaknesses
- identify new opportunities
- identify changes in the operating environment which may impact on your organisation
- identify potential sponsorship and fundraising opportunities
- identify potential partners for cooperative marketing and visitor development activities.

All of these outcomes require a knowledge of visitors, their behaviour and attitudes. Good decision-making relies on an understanding of both our own organisation and our operating environment.

The more we know about our visitors, their reactions to what we offer and their spending and attendance patterns, the more effectively we can identify ways to improve. Sometimes it's a matter of looking at information we already have, for example, information in our databases, and analysing it in new ways; at other times, we need to undertake research to 'fill in our information gaps.'

Research on current issues and trends, overseas innovations, attitudes of particular visitor segments (such as youth markets, seniors, non-English speakers) helps us understand our operating environment. So, too, will studies on population trends; for example, the increasing urbanisation of the population, the ageing population, changes in household size and the way people spend their leisure time.

CASE STUDY

Denver Museum of Nature and Science (USA)
Using research to:

1. understand visitor needs and enrich visitor experiences.
2. find out if initiatives are working.

Research at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science highlighted increased levels of visitor satisfaction with galleries when helpful, well-trained staff are present.

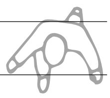
In 1998, DMNS observed visitor behaviour—with and without floor staff—within the permanent gallery *Botswana*. In 'Night on the Kalahari', a dimly lit section where visitors can explore the nocturnal activities of African wildlife, the average length of stay in the area without floor staff was 56 seconds (ranging from 13 seconds to 2 minutes, 42 seconds).

When live programming and hands-on activities were added, visitor time investment increased to 4 minutes, 59 seconds (ranging from 1 to 18 minutes).

Satisfaction with the gallery also improved significantly, and visitors chose adjectives like 'fun', 'interesting', 'exciting' and 'informative' to describe what had previously been an under-utilised treasure.

Source: Denver Museum of Nature and Science (USA)

http://www.astc.org/pubs/dimensions/2003/jan-feb/index.htm



What do I need to know about my visitors?
Every organisation's information needs will vary, but generally speaking there are some key facts you should know about your visitors. The information audit (opposite page) may be useful in identifying what you 'definitely' know, what you 'think' you know, and what you 'don't know' about your visitors.

YOUR VISITOR RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE AUDIT

INFORMATION	HAVE DONE FORMAL RESEARCH	COULD MAKE AN INFORMED GUESS	DON'T KNOW	KNOWING THIS WILL HELP US
(Example) Age		x		– with funding and sponsorship proposals – decide where we advertise
VISITORS:				
Age				
Gender				
Area of residence				
Cultural background				
Family composition (eg. single, adults only, etc.)				
Employment/occupation				
Income				
Education levels				
Languages spoken				
BEHAVIOUR:				
How they heard about us				
Reasons for visiting				
Other leisure interests/activities				
Frequency of visitation				
Transport used				
Attendance group characteristics (solo, group, school group, with partner)				
Intention to revisit/recommend				
Use of the Internet				
ATTITUDES:				
Towards venue				
Towards permanent exhibitions				
Towards facilities (food and beverages, shop, etc.)				
Towards special programs (school holiday activities, floor talks, etc.)				
BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE:				
Main reasons for non-attendance				

Review your answers. If the majority of them fall into the 'don't know' category, then you may want to consult some existing research on your sector (available through industry associations, see Section 3), as well as do your own basic research.

If the majority of your answers fall into the 'could make an informed guess' category, then you should do more formal research to determine if your guesses are, in fact, correct.

If the majority of your answers fall into the 'have done formal research' category, then you are well on the way to having a sound visitor research strategy. You have a good understanding of your visitors, and access to information you can use in a practical way. It will be important for you to develop an ongoing research strategy that will periodically update your information. Regular use of a quantitative questionnaire, supported by qualitative research (focus groups or individual interviews) when introducing something new, will ensure you keep your organisation's research up-to-date.

Who's going to do this research?

It will take a little time to analyse your needs and choose the types of research you can afford to do in terms of the time you have available, your budget and the skills that you, your staff or volunteers have (or don't have!).

Generally, the manager or the Committee of Management needs to be convinced that the research to be undertaken is a good use of your time and resources. It is important for staff and volunteers to understand what is being done, and exactly why it will be of value. That's where the Visitor Research Knowledge Audit (see previous page) is useful. You can clearly indicate *why* having information will be of value.

Do research on your own or in partnership with others. Existing staff and volunteers can carry out certain research tasks as part of their everyday work. It may be as simple as, for example, having the person who sells admission tickets ask visitors how they heard about your institution, or where they live.

Other research might require volunteers or staff to take on an extra project, such as conducting a survey, running a discussion group, or simply observing what visitors do. For example, do they read the information at each exhibit, or just walk through quickly, pausing only rarely to read in detail? Do they buy souvenirs? Do they ask questions about the exhibits?

These are simple types of market research that don't take a lot of time or money, but someone has to take responsibility for planning, conducting and analysing research and—importantly—using the information gathered.

There is also information already available that may be useful to you when planning new programs or exhibitions or advertising and promotion. Students or volunteers may be able to assist with finding and reviewing this type of information.

It would of course be ideal to have the luxury of hiring a professional company to do your research, hand you an impressive final report and make a formal presentation to your staff and Committee of Management—and sometimes that may happen. But most of the time, visitor research is an ongoing part of everyday life, and can be done effectively in-house without major problems.

CASE STUDY

City of Boroondara (Melbourne)
Simple in-house research for a specific exhibition

THE TOWN HALL GALLERY

THINGS MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME

Exhibition Survey: please tick all applicable boxes:

Q1 How did you hear about this exhibition?

☐ Radio ☐ Website ☐ Brochure ☐ Word of mouth ☐ Art Almanac
☐ Poster ☐ School ☐ Newspaper/magazine ☐ Other

Q2 How many times have you visited the Town Hall Gallery?

☐ 1st time ☐ 2-5 times ☐ over 5 times

Q3 Do you come to or would you be interested in coming to public programs associated with exhibitions?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q4 Would you like to be on our mailing list?

Name:
Address: Suburb:
Email:

Some Questions About You:

Q5 Your age group:

☐ under 18 years ☐ 18–24 years ☐ 25–29 years ☐ 30–39 years
☐ 40–49 years ☐ 50–59 years ☐ 60–69 years ☐ 70 and over

Q6 Are you ☐ male ☐ female

Q7 Your postcode:

Q8 Are there any comments you would like to make?

Source: Mardi Nowak, Curator, Leisure and Cultural Services, City of Boroondara

What are YOUR research needs?

In each section of this guide we have identified some key reasons for conducting visitor research. Each section begins with a 'need' and then identifies some visitor research techniques that will meet that need. Read through the information and decide for yourself the level of research you want—and can afford—to do.

CASE STUDY

Victoria and Albert Museum (UK)

Get it right from the start: Planning and evaluating—using visitor research at all stages of an exhibition

When staff at the Victoria and Albert Museum (UK) begin developing new exhibitions (or new gallery spaces) the first thing they do is a baseline study of the old exhibitions or gallery areas that are about to be transformed. This provides information for comparison when the new galleries open.

As they start developing the rationale for the new gallery, they test concepts and ideas with prospective visitors and talk to them about how they would approach the proposed galleries. This is the *Front-end Evaluation* stage (pre-planning the exhibition).

They also ask for visitors' feedback on various types of interpretation for the new galleries. One of the difficulties they have encountered is that people find it hard to assess these things theoretically—concrete examples are essential. Therefore, as part of *Formative Evaluation* (developing and testing new concepts), they test mock-ups and prototypes for the range of different interpretive devices they are thinking of using in the galleries, including interactives and labels.

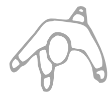
Finally, when the new galleries open they conduct *Summative Evaluation*. This consists of surveys that compare the new exhibitions with the baseline research to provide an overview of visitors' responses to the new material and to check that they have achieved what they set out to do.

The V&A continues to conduct research after new galleries open so that it can discover what visitors need, and how best to provide relevant, engaging experiences.

Source: Victoria and Albert Museum (UK)

http://www.vam.ac.uk/res_cons/research/visitor/galleries/index.html

Section 1—The Absolute Bare Minimum



As part of your funding agreements with local councils, community arts groups, State or Federal arts or funding organisations and sponsors, you may be required to report on basic visitor information.

To meet funding authority requirements I need to…

- keep track of visitor numbers
- keep track of where my visitors come from
- monitor visitor satisfaction levels.

These three basic forms of research will enable you to report on visitors:

1. Conduct simple visitor counts.
2. Conduct simple 'anecdotal' research—talk to people.
3. Hand out and review 'comment cards'.

Why can't I just use our Visitors Book?
Some organisations keep a Visitors Book to monitor numbers, find out where visitors come from and determine satisfaction levels. Generally speaking, a Visitors Book is a good way to obtain positive comments and information from enthusiastic visitors. But not everyone takes the time to sign a Visitors Book, and often those who do are the people who only have good things to say. Whilst a Visitors Book can be a source of positive comments that you can use in reports, it won't be very effective as a systematic source of statistical information.

Conduct simple visitor counts
Depending on your reporting requirements, you may only need to keep track of the number of people coming through the front door. This can be as simple as keeping a pad and pen by the entry way and asking volunteers or front-of-house people to tally visitor numbers. The accuracy of this method depends on three key factors:

- All your visitors must pass through the same entry way (or a limited number of entry places that can be monitored so visitors won't be counted more than once).
- There is someone on duty who can keep track of visitor arrivals.
- There are no periods of especially high activity during which it would be difficult to keep track of visitor arrivals.

Using simple tally sheets you could, depending on your needs, marginally expand the information collected to include an analysis of the sex and approximate age of visitors. The following is an example of a simple tally chart.

DAY/DATE	ADULT MALE	ADULT FEMALE	CHILDREN	TOTAL
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Seniors Week visitors to the Immigration Museum (© Museum Victoria)

Another system is to have a simple 'clicker'—a mechanical counting device to record the number of visitors. There are considerations, however, when using a clicker—each person on counting duty requires one, everyone who enters must be counted, and you need to ensure that visitors are not counted more than once.

CASE STUDY

Shrine of Remembrance (Melbourne)
Knowing your audience—gathering basic information on visitors

Visitor research conducted in March 2004 showed that the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne attracted 397,826 visitors in 2003/2004. 39% of these visitors were Victorian residents, with 86% of those coming from metropolitan Melbourne. 40% of visitors came from overseas, with groups from the United Kingdom, America and Asia being the most significant.

These visitation levels represented an 80% increase from 2002/2003, giving a strong indication of acceptance within the community and with tourists generally.

The numbers demonstrated that widespread press coverage, an improved visitor experience and the establishment of a comprehensive calendar of public programs and exhibitions were successful, contributing to the growth of new visitor groups and to increasing repeat visits by Melburnians and Victorians.

Source: Shrine of Remembrance (Melbourne)

http://www.shrine.org.au/retrievemedia.asp?Media_ID=264

Keep track of where visitors come from

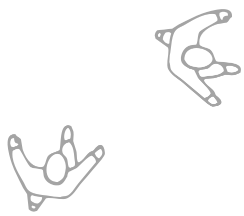
Additional information may be required about where visitors come from. The easiest way to monitor this is to ask about postcodes; if they are international visitors, note their country of origin. If you charge admission and use an electronic cash register, it may be possible to enter some of this information on the register. Check with the manufacturer. The following is an example of a postcode record sheet.

DATE	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
POSTCODE							
Local: 8009	卌 卌 卌 卌 卌 卌 卌						
Immediate area: 8007	卌 卌 卌 卌						
8006							
8003							
8002	卌 卌 卌						
OTHER (FILL IN POSTCODE AND NUMBER OF PEOPLE)							
3400	|||						
5600	||						
2005	||||						

Just a little bit more information

Use your tally sheets to find out a little bit more about visitors. For example, divide sheets up into morning and afternoon to identify the most popular visitor arrival times. Recording the sex of visitors is another quick entry that can be made.

When asking people their postcode, you might also ask how they heard about your organisation or institution. If you keep track of all the responses for a week or so, you should be able to gather a fairly comprehensive list. You can then categorise that list and enter a code against a particular response. By all means ask visitors additional questions, but remember that keeping track of more than three or four items on tally sheets becomes time-consuming and difficult.



Sources of awareness may include:

1. friend/family member
2. visitor information centre
3. advertisement (radio)
4. advertisement (television)
5. local tourist guide
6. Internet
7. local resident—always known about it
8. don't know.

However, if you believe it would be useful to know more about your visitors and how they feel about you, Section 2 in this manual can help.

Simple comment cards

Simple comment cards are generally more useful than Visitors Books and can provide valuable feedback as well as demographic information. They also offer the opportunity to ask visitors if they would like to join a mailing list, become involved as a friend—or make a donation!

Cards can be handed to people at either the entry or exit point, and a box placed in an obvious spot and clearly labelled for card collection. Provide pencils or pens near the box, perhaps attached to the desk or table. If the cards are handed to visitors on their way out, someone needs to monitor the exit for this purpose.

The following is an example of a simple comment card.

We hope you enjoyed your visit today. To assist us with future program and exhibition planning, please take a minute to complete this Comment Card and then deposit it in the box at the entry desk.
Thank you for your assistance.

This is my first visit

☐ Yes ☐ No My postcode is:

The things I most enjoyed about my visit today were

The things I did not enjoy about my visit today were

I would like to see more exhibits about:

☐ local history ☐ local people and events
☐ natural history ☐ science and technology
☐ exhibits for children ☐ art and craft
☐ other (please specify)

I would like to receive information about upcoming exhibits and programs

(email address)

(name and address if you would prefer to receive information by post)

Name (please print)

Address p/code

CASE STUDY

The Australian Museum (Sydney)
Visitor research for a special exhibition

The Australian Museum conducted visitor research during the *Chinese Dinosaurs* special exhibition. The Museum experienced an increase of 117% in visitor numbers for July 2002 compared to the previous year. 75% of people visiting the Museum visited *Chinese Dinosaurs*. An exit survey of 300 visitors undertaken over eight days of the July school holidays revealed that:

1. Visitors were typically:

- Sydney residents
- family groups
- aged between 35 and 64 years
- university/college educated.

2. Visitors typically spent one to three hours in the Museum.

3. Visitors found out about the *Chinese Dinosaurs* exhibition through:

– TV advertisement	27%
– word of mouth	20%
– newspaper story	18%
– radio	12%
– print advertising	11%
– TV story/report	11%
– outdoor signage	8%.

In addition:

- 89% of *Chinese Dinosaurs* visitors came specially to see the exhibition
- 82% of visitors to *Chinese Dinosaurs* rated it highly
- 88% would recommend the exhibition to others
- 58% nominated *Chinese Dinosaurs* as their favourite exhibition
- 60% were very interested in fossils and dinosaurs and would make a special visit to see other exhibitions on this topic.

Some comments from visitors to *Chinese Dinosaurs* were:

Really good. Best museum I've been to.

Well worth a visit. Great pram access.

It's a wonderful place to come—a great legacy.

[I'd] like to see more exhibitions like the Chinese Dinosaurs.

Terrific. Great value for children [and a] great learning experience.

This type of information and positive visitor response can be especially valuable when preparing acquittal reports and in exhibition evaluation with sponsors.

Source: Lynda Kelly, Audience Research Centre, Australian Museum, 2002

http://amonline.net.au/archive.cfm?id=911

A Kimberley Art Appreciation Evening – Listening to Guest Artists at the Lovell Diversion Gallery, WA

CASE STUDY

Gathering simple information

A small commercial contemporary art gallery in South Australia undertakes simple research over two weeks, four times a year. Staff keep a folder with clear plastic sleeves by the entrance desk, and a notebook in which to record answers. Each sleeve in the folder features a copy of a current advertising publication in which the gallery appears, for example, the *What's On* guide, current regional tourist brochures, arts publications, etc.

A staff member gives each visitor the folder on arrival and asks: *Can you tell me which of these publications you used when planning your visit?* Visitor responses provide very practical information about which publications are being used, and allow the gallery to base advertising decisions on the answers received.

Source: Commercial-in-confidence discussion

Section 2—Basic Visitor Research

If you want to know more about your visitors and gather information that will assist you with promotions, exhibition development or audience development, you need more than just total visitor numbers and postcodes.

To understand my current visitors I would like to find out…

- how they heard about us
- what they liked and disliked
- how frequently they come
- if they would visit again
- how they spend their time
- if they combine their visit with visits to other venues
- how satisfied they are.

To learn more about your visitors you could:

1. conduct a more detailed survey using the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) *Visitor Survey*
2. conduct basic discussion groups.

Most importantly, you will need to manage your research project.

Conduct a more detailed survey

Surveys—options, advantages and pitfalls

On the following pages we have provided a basic Do-It-Yourself (DIY) *Visitor Survey* that will assist you with research fundamentals. The *Visitor Survey* is in interview format—which means someone asks questions and records answers—and is designed for use on-site with current visitors.

Visitor research has four elements:

1. Research questions (what you want to know).
2. Access to your visitors (who you want to ask).
3. Resources (the time and money you have available for the project).
4. Restrictions in terms of privacy, legal and ethical constraints (the 'rules' for conducting research).

You may want to conduct research with existing visitors (or segments of that audience; for example, first-time visitors, regular visitors, students or local residents), or you may want to research past visitors, or new or potential visitors. You might be interested in audiences for other activities, such as craft markets, theatres or festivals; for example, knowing you have a lot of student visitors will assist you in preparing project or information sheets that they can use to prepare assignments. If you discover that many of your visitors also attend craft markets, you might consider distributing your brochures at local markets or having volunteers set up a display at the market.

Once you have identified the group you want to research, you need to locate them and develop a survey they will be willing to answer. It is relatively easy to research your current visitors, and this is the aim of this section.

Cowen Gallery at the State Library of Victoria

If you are interested in researching non-attenders, or using other methods such as telephone, off-site or email, or undertaking research with more complex analysis requirements, see Section 3.

The DIY Visitor Survey

The DIY *Visitor Survey* reproduced on the following pages has been specifically designed to take the stress out of basic research. The questionnaire has been fully tested and can provide information on the demographic profile of visitors, their patterns of attendance, interests, sources of information, use of the Internet, etc.

Survey questions have been designed based on identified needs and standard industry-accepted categories and responses.

Before reproducing this questionnaire, you should read over it carefully.

As you will see, there are several questions that you can tailor to suit the needs of your own organisation. Instructions concerning the options available to you are designated in italic.

Firstly in question 7, you can add a feature of your facility to the list of standard responses. This will enable you to gauge response to a particular aspect of your facility that is not included in the standard list.

Secondly, you can decide to include any of the optional questions following question 18. When choosing which optional questions to include you should try to limit the total number of questions on your final questionnaire to around 25 or so.

The optional questions are designated by a letter and number format (e.g. T1 is the first question about ticketing). Differentiating optional questions in this way will enable you to identify this particular question consistently over time, or to compare your results with results from other organisations.

Question M1 requires you to insert the name of your organisation or institution.

Question N1 allows you to gauge interest in receiving email updates. It is strongly recommended that you print this question on a separate or detachable piece of paper to ensure visitor confidentiality.

You may also want to scan in a copy of your logo on the final questionnaire.

VISITOR SURVEY

Thank you for visiting us today. To help us understand more about our visitors we are conducting a short visitors' survey and we'd like to include your views. Your responses will be entirely confidential.

1. Have you ever visited here before?
   - ◻ Yes ◻ No (go to Q.4)

2. If YES

   Approximately how many times have you been here?
   - ◻ Once ◻ 2-3 times
   - ◻ 4-5 times ◻ More than 5 times

3. Approximately when was your last visit?
   - ◻ Within the last month ◻ Within the last 2-6 months
   - ◻ About 6-12 months ago ◻ More than a year ago
   - ◻ More than two years ago

4. Who are you visiting with today? (Tick one)
   - ◻ On my own
   - ◻ With spouse or partner
   - ◻ With family members including children
   - ◻ With family members NOT including children
   - ◻ With friends
   - ◻ With a tour or organised group

5. How did you travel here today?
   - ◻ Private car
   - ◻ Public transport
   - ◻ Taxi
   - ◻ Tour bus
   - ◻ On foot/bicycle
   - ◻ Other (specify)

6. What was your MAIN reason for visiting today? Were there any other reasons? (Tick one box under the column 'Main reason' for the first answer, then tick as many as desired under 'Other reasons'.)

MAIN REASON	OTHER REASONS	
◻	◻	To see the collection
◻	◻	It was recommended
◻	◻	To see a special exhibition
◻	◻	To show visitors around

☐	☐	Reputation of the gallery/museum
☐	☐	Touring the area, so called in
☐	☐	To attend a special activity or event
☐	☐	To use facilities (shop, café, garden)
☐	☐	For study purposes

7. What did you enjoy MOST about your visit today? Was there anything else you enjoyed? (Tick one box under the column 'Most enjoyed' for the first answer, then tick as many as desired under 'Other enjoyed'.)

MOST ENJOYED	**OTHER ASPECTS ENJOYED**	
☐	☐	Collection/exhibition
☐	☐	Special/temporary exhibition
☐	☐	Lecture/education program/activities
☐	☐	Atmosphere/building/space/garden
☐	☐	Services—café/shop
☐	☐	Children's activities
☐	☐	Staff/volunteers' helpfulness
☐	☐	Other (specify)
☐	☐	*[Insert other distinct feature of your facility]*

8. Was there anything you would like to see changed and/or did not enjoy?

____

____

____

9. Which statement best reflects your future plans?

☐ I will definitely visit again.

☐ I will probably visit again.

☐ I will probably NOT visit again.

☐ I will definitely NOT visit again.

10. How did you hear about us? (Tick one box under the column 'Main', then tick as many as desired under 'Other'.)

MAIN	**OTHER**	
☐	☐	Recommended by friends/relatives
☐	☐	General/regional tourist literature/brochure
☐	☐	Have always known about it
☐	☐	Newspaper (major metropolitan)
☐	☐	Newspaper (local/community)
☐	☐	Radio

◻	◻	Signs
◻	◻	Television
◻	◻	Gallery/Museum brochure or flyer
◻	◻	Internet
◻	◻	Other (specify)

11. Do you use the Internet for… (Tick as many as apply)
    - ◻ Email
    - ◻ For shopping
    - ◻ To find out what's on in the arts
    - ◻ To plan trips or holidays
    - ◻ To make bookings and reservations when travelling

A few questions to learn more about our visitors

12. Are you:
    ◻ Male ◻ Female

13. Which of the following age groups best describes your age?
    - ◻ Less than 15 years
    - ◻ 15–17 ◻ 18–24
    - ◻ 25–34 ◻ 35–44
    - ◻ 45–54 ◻ 55–64
    - ◻ 65–74 ◻ 75 years plus

14. What is your residential postcode? ◻ ◻ ◻ ◻
    ◻ If an international visitor, please tick this box.

15. Which category best describes your household type?
    - ◻ Single person
    - ◻ Couple with dependent child(ren)
    - ◻ Couple without dependent children
    - ◻ Single parent with dependent child(ren)
    - ◻ Group household
    - ◻ Other (specify)

16. Please indicate whether you:
    - ◻ Work full-time
    - ◻ Work part-time
    - ◻ Not in paid employment
    - ◻ Student full-time
    - ◻ Student part-time
    - ◻ Retired

17. What is the highest education level you have attained, to date?

- ☐ Primary School
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Certificate
- ☐ Diploma/Advanced Diploma
- ☐ Bachelor Degree
- ☐ Graduate Diploma/Certificate
- ☐ Postgraduate Degree
- ☐ Other (please specify) ______________________________

18. What is your approximate annual household income before tax?

☐ under $20,000 pa	☐ $20,000–$39,000
☐ $40,000–$59,000	☐ $60,000–$79,000
☐ $80,000–$99,000	☐ $100,000–$120,000
☐ over $120,000	☐ Don't know/prefer not to answer

Optional questions

Consider adding these to the survey if they are relevant to your organisation.

Type of ticket purchased

T1. What type of ticket did you purchase?

☐ Adult—full admission	☐ Child
☐ Family	☐ Concession/pension
☐ Seniors	☐ Group
☐ Friends or society	☐ Unpaid/complimentary
☐ Other (please specify) ______________________________	

Interest in e-newsletter

[For visitor confidentiality, print this question on a separate/detachable slip of paper.]

N1. Would you be interested in receiving email updates about forthcoming shows?

- ☐ Yes. My email address is: ______________________________
- ☐ No

ATSI and LOTE audiences

B1. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent?

☐ Yes ☐ No

B2. Do you speak a language other than English at home?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If YES, please specify ______________________________

Friends/Members membership

M1. Did you know that *[name of organisation/institution]* has a Members/friends organisation?

◻ Yes ◻ No

M2. If YES, are you a Member?

◻ Yes ◻ No

M3. If YES, which of the following is your MAIN reason for being a Member? (Tick one)

◻ Regular information about events

◻ Discounts on entry

◻ To support the work of the gallery

M4. If you have been a Member in the past, is there any particular reason why you are not a current Member?

Cultural tourism

O1. Did you visit any other attractions before you came here today?

◻ Yes ◻ No

If YES, which one(s)?

O2. Will you be visiting any other attractions afterwards?

◻ Yes ◻ No

If YES, which one(s)?

Disability access

A1. Do you have a disability or other condition that impacted upon your visit today?

◻ Yes ◻ No (Go to Qxx)

A2. If YES, please describe (eg. wheelchair use, mobility restricted, sight impairment, hearing impairment, other):

A3. If YES, is there anything that can be done to make your visit more enjoyable?:

Catering facilities

C1. Did you/will you eat out today on your visit?

☐ Yes ☐ No

C2. If YES, where?

☐ At the gallery café/restaurant

☐ At a café/restaurant elsewhere

☐ Picnic/brought our own refreshments

Shop

S1. Did you make any purchases at the shop today?

☐ Yes ☐ No

S2. How would you rate the shop on a scale of 1–5, with 1 being 'very poor' and 5 being 'very good'? (Circle one)

1 (very poor) 2 3 4 5 (very good)

K1. *[Organisation choice question—ask any question relevant to your organisation, provided it can be answered 'Yes' or 'No'.]*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Thank you for taking the time to assist us with this survey.

Who do we survey?

There are two ways to select people for interview:

Random sample: everyone has an equal chance of being involved; for example, every third person who visits is approached and asked to participate.

Quota sample: selecting a particular type of respondent; for example, if carrying out youth research, approaching only younger people until you reach the target number.

An important factor to be aware of in this survey type is that volunteers and untrained interviewers sometimes feel uncomfortable approaching certain people. If a random sample requires that they interview every tenth visitor, and the tenth person looks grumpy or perhaps non-English speaking, interviewers might find it easier to skip that person and wait for someone else who looks 'more friendly' or approachable. This can seriously impact the validity of the survey.

CASE STUDY

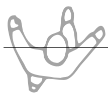
The Tate galleries (UK)
Different venues and exhibitions attract different audiences—find out who your audience is!

Tate researches visitors to understand its differing markets through a regular tracking study, carried out three times a year, and a more in-depth qualitative survey every three years. This enables the institution to understand its visitors and respond to their views; questions about media readership and motivation to visit enable it to identify likely new visitors and the best ways of reaching them.

In addition, research enables Tate to communicate particular messages to particular groups at certain times. Methods include targeted advertising, direct mail campaigns and print distribution, and generic promotional partnerships with other organisations.

Research indicates that Tate Modern and Tate Britain audience demographics vary according to the current temporary (paying) exhibition. For example, the *Turner Prize* at Tate Britain regularly attracts relatively young audiences; in 2002 only a third of Turner Prize visitors were over 45 years old, in comparison with *The Victorian Nude* exhibition, where two thirds of visitors were over 45.

This variation in demographics according to the exhibition is also applicable to the class and ethnic make up of Tate visitors, although generally Tate Britain attracts a high social class profile—despite a stringent social inclusion policy. Tate Britain has a particularly loyal visitor base and a long history, with approximately 65% repeat gallery visitors in 2002. UK residents with a slight female bias make up the majority of Tate Britain's visitors.



Trends for Tate Modern are fairly similar although generally Tate Modern audiences are slightly younger, and tend to visit the free permanent collection displays rather than paying exhibitions. Tate Modern continues to attract a higher degree of first-time visitors than Tate Britain, with roughly equal shares of new audiences and repeat visitors. This can be attributed to the fact that Tate Modern is an entirely new and high profile institution (whereas Tate Britain remained in the old Tate Gallery building) and has a slightly higher number of overseas visitors who come to London less regularly.

Source: The Tate galleries (UK)

http://www.tate.org.uk/about/faqs/research_q13.htm#visitor

How many people do we need to interview?

For most research, a sample size of between 100 and 200 is sufficient. However if you want to analyse sub-categories within a sample—those aged under 30, or people from particular localities for instance—the data arising from less than 50 responses in that sub-category should be treated with caution. It may be better to conduct a quota sample for that sub-category (eg. 50 people under the age of 30 years). Don't forget to do an extra 10 or so interviews in case you discover later that some are incomplete or unusable.

LEGAL NOTE

Let's review the legal issues first. The Federal Government's Privacy Legislation is very clear about your obligations to treat the information you gather with care—for information sheets on the rules and regulations, go to the website: <http://www.privacy.gov.au>

Another good source of basic information about privacy and research can be found on the Roy Morgan Research website:

<http://www.roymorgan.com/company/privacy-statement.cfm>

Basically, if you are collecting names and addresses or information from people you must state how their details will be used.

1. Ask if they would/would not like to receive information from you in the future.
2. Inform them that their contact details and answers will not be forwarded to any third party.
3. Make personal questions, such as income, age and occupation, optional.

You can insert a disclaimer at the end of the survey or, for telephone surveys, give a brief assurance at the beginning of the conversation, such as:

Please be assured that the information and opinions you provide will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. While we would very much appreciate it if you answer all the questions, if there is anything you would prefer not to answer, that's fine. Just let me know.

You've got a stack of completed surveys. Now what?

Once the surveys are completed you will have a lot of information on hand. The next step is to make sense of it all. Entering the data into the computer and analysing it can be the most daunting part of research. You have two options at this stage:

1. Process the information internally.
2. Give it to an outside organisation to process on your behalf.

The DIY *Visitor Survey* has been designed to make this process as easy as possible. However, someone has to go over each questionnaire and enter the information into a computer.

There are three factors that will influence your decision about how to handle this task:

- your time
- your budget
- your resources and skills.

If you have time you can process the information internally. It is a fairly straightforward process and you, your staff, volunteers or even a student (they generally know more about computers, anyway) could help. However, make sure the people involved are detail-oriented and conscientious. Survey data needs to be processed carefully, completely and accurately!

If you can afford it, there are advantages in having an outside organisation do this work—it's quicker, less of your time is required, someone else does the data input and it generally guarantees accuracy—but it costs more than doing it in-house.

If you have computer equipment and people available who are computer savvy and have time to do the work, then there are major advantages in doing it in-house. On the other hand, if your computer equipment is limited, your staff get nervous around computers, or no-one feels confident about taking on a new project, then it might be wise to consider outsourcing.

Reviewing the completed questionnaires

Before inputting the data you will need to edit the questionnaires, as follows:

- Discard questionnaires that are clearly inaccurate. Not everyone takes research seriously. If someone has stated he or she is 15–17 years of age, has a postgraduate degree and is earning over $100,000 a year, then they probably haven't been totally honest in the rest of the survey either.
- Review incomplete questionnaires. Where a question hasn't been answered, assign a 'no answer' or 'no response' category. If too many questions have been unanswered, disregard the survey. NEVER add answers you think are 'probably OK'.
- If you included any open-ended questions (questions where you provided a blank space for respondents to write an answer), group the responses into categories. For example, *Didn't have time to see everything; Had to leave before we saw all the exhibits; Not enough time;* and *Had to be back on the coach too quickly* could all be grouped under the heading 'not enough time allowed'. On the other hand, group the response *Had to leave because the children were bored* with other answers relating to 'levels of interest' rather than 'time'.
- Include an 'other' category for comments that do not occur frequently enough to warrant their own category.

For information on how to write up the results, see Section 7.

Conduct basic discussion groups

What are discussion groups and why do we do them?

Talking to people is a very good way of finding out how they think and feel. Talking to your visitors, staff and volunteers can provide useful information. In basic form, these are *discussion groups*. When the discussions become a bit more complex, targeting more specific information or building upon information gleaned from previous groups, they are usually referred to as *focus groups* (see Section 4).

Discussion groups are moderated discussions with a target group of people that aim to find out about how they think and why they act the way they do. Organising and running a discussion group may appear simple—*let's just get a few people together and ask them some questions*—but in reality the exercise is much more difficult.

Managing group dynamics, staying totally impartial and not leading the group in a particular direction can be challenging. Market research organisations employ trained professionals to run groups, often those with a psychology background. However, you too can run basic group discussions, provided you take the time to organise and plan the sessions properly, and execute them in as professional a way as possible.

People in your organisation who come in regular contact with your visitors, such as the entry cashier, floor or security staff, education officers, volunteers or activators, often see and hear a great deal, and their input can be a useful starting point. Begin by asking them to give you feedback on what they've seen and heard, and what they believe could be issues—positive and negative! Getting staff and volunteers together to discuss their experiences and observations is a good way to identify potential areas of interest, and practise your group discussion skills.

If you can formulate some clear, specific topics of interest as a result of these preliminary discussions, you are ready to plan a discussion group. Topics are generally 'why' and 'how' questions that require people to express an opinion or feeling, or explain why they do particular things. It is therefore important not to cover too many issues.

For example, after a special exhibition you may want to ask visitors:

- Why did they visit this particular exhibition?
- How did they collect information to make decisions on where to go and what to see?
- Who influences decision-making in their family?
- How much did they enjoy their visit?
- Why did they visit the special exhibition but not the permanent exhibition?

These are all questions that require more than just a 'yes' or 'no' answer, and the answers could lead off into other areas of interest or importance—you won't know until you talk to them. So a discussion is the best approach.

Recruiting people to attend a discussion group

There are a number of ways to recruit participants. When conducting a visitor survey you can include a question that asks if the respondent would be willing to join a discussion group. Follow up those who say 'yes' with an invitation to attend such a group.

Contact people on your database (Members, Friends, people who asked to be on your mailing or email list). Other approaches might be through volunteers to your organisation or through schools or universities.

LEGAL NOTE

Remember, privacy laws require that people whose contact details you use in this way must have agreed to be contacted. Your database should specify whether or not people may be contacted for research or other purposes.

Select discussion group participants according to the target audience for the research project; for example, people who attended a particular exhibition or who are regular visitors to your facility, Friends who have not renewed their membership, young people or people who have attended as part of a school group.

Sometimes it is possible to combine two types of participants, for example, young people and older Friends, but this is generally not recommended. Managing groups can be difficult enough without adding additional complexity to the group dynamics.

CASE STUDY

Melbourne Museum
Using research to plan the right treatment for potentially controversial issues

Viewing the Mind & Body display (© Museum Victoria)

Before mounting the exhibition the *Mind and Body Gallery*, the Melbourne Museum conducted extensive research. The *Mind and Body Gallery* contains four major exhibitions:

1. BodyScape
2. Body Parts
3. Biotech and Beyond
4. Medical Melbourne.

A key feature of the exhibition is the Melbourne University Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology's selection of dissected human body parts, preserved using the latest technology.

In preparing the exhibition, the Museum conducted visitor research and consulted a wide range of community groups. Feedback revealed clear public support for such displays, set in the educational context of the Melbourne Museum. The *Mind and Body Gallery* features signs at its entrance and throughout the exhibition spaces to inform visitors about the nature of the material on display, so that they can choose whether or not to enter particular areas.

Source: Melbourne Museum

http://www.unimelb.edu.au/ExtRels/Media/UN/archive/2001/611/gettingrighttothe.html

Where and when will the discussion group take place?
Asking visitors to participate in a discussion group will require additional time and commitment from them. It is unlikely it can be accomplished at the same time they visit, so they will need to return another time.

Hold interviews in places and at times convenient for your target audience. Make sure that parking is readily available, and allocate a room with a table sufficiently large for everyone to sit around and be comfortable. There should be no distracting noises (or views!). Generally, sessions are recorded to capture relevant information.

Remember that if people are giving up their time, they probably expect some form of 'reward'. You will certainly provide refreshments (snacks and drinks) and it is current practice to provide a nominal payment or a special offer such as merchandise, vouchers or free tickets. Be sure to include catering costs, room hire, tapes/recording equipment and any participation incentives in your research budget.

Group discussions usually run from an hour to an hour-and-a-half. For most people that is the maximum amount of time they can maintain interest in a discussion. Normally you would invite 8–12 people to participate (and hope that most of them will appear at the appointed time). A discussion group with less than six participants seldom yields worthwhile results.

How do I conduct a discussion group?
The facilitator of the discussion group generally presents an introduction and a discussion plan. During the introduction, he or she outlines how long the discussion will last, and any general information that participants may require. See Appendix for an example of a discussion plan.

The discussion plan (which is not divulged to the group) outlines the basic questions to be considered, and acts as a reminder to the facilitator to cover all the topics. However, keep in mind that discussion groups are not question and answer forums, where the facilitator poses a question, the participants answer, the facilitator moves onto the next question, and so on. Rather, the idea is to introduce a topic and let the conversation go in whatever direction the group takes it.

The facilitator must initially inform everyone that the session is being recorded, and assure them that the content of the discussion will remain confidential. This usually sets the group at ease and gets the 'conversation' going. Groups seem to become accustomed to a recording device fairly quickly, so recording should not be a problem.

The facilitator manages the flow of the conversation, keeping the group on the topics of interest, but should not force the discussion into a particular direction, or imply that some participants are on the 'right track' while others are 'wrong'.

Organisations often find that the best facilitator is someone who knows them well, but is not directly involved in management. This person keeps the group focused, but does not become personally involved (and remember that respondents may be more honest if they think the facilitator is impartial and not directly involved with the organisation). If you plan to hold a number of discussion groups, try to engage the same facilitator for all the groups.

What do we do with all those tape recordings?
After the discussion group is completed, it is important to replay the tape recordings of the sessions. In some cases, complete transcripts are prepared, however this can be expensive and time-consuming. In other cases, staff listen to the tapes together and comment and analyse what they have heard. The facilitator prepares a report based on the interviews, including excerpts that are particularly relevant or interesting.

LEGAL NOTE

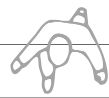
Be aware of privacy laws in terms of identifying participants! Make sure that reports (particularly final reports) do not include information that could identify individual participants, and that quotes from the discussion are accurate representations of what was said.

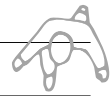
Analysing discussion group data can take time, as you need to replay tapes (or reread transcripts) to identify key themes or issues that arose. Generally, the facilitator reviews the original discussion plan and records comments under each main heading, classifying information under topics rather than according to its order of appearance in the discussion. This is usually done as soon as possible after the session, when it is easier to recall the dynamics and the key points of discussion. If there are a number of groups being held with only a short interval between them, it is even more important to write up the notes without delay.

For example, if the groups' conversation started out talking about a special exhibition, then moved to parking, followed by problems with sound equipment, and then shifted back to a particular artwork in the special exhibition, before someone commented on their experience at another museum or gallery, the facilitator would group all the comments about the special exhibition together, regardless of when they occurred in the general conversation.

Where possible, use actual quotes to highlight and emphasise key points in the report so that the readers can 'hear' the respondents, not just read a summary of what was said.

Simple, basic discussion groups can provide much useful information, but sometimes you will want to know more. There are various other techniques, including more detailed discussion groups and one-on-one interviews, which may be appropriate. See Section 4 for more information.





CASE STUDY

Art Institute of Chicago (USA)
Research can inspire innovative ideas

The Art Institute of Chicago used feedback from focus groups of people with disabilities to develop an exciting new component for their exhibitions.

TacTiles are 20.3cm by 25.5cm boards that replicate in relief the brushstrokes of such masters as Renoir and Miro. Developed by Helen Maria Nugent of the School of the Art Institute, the idea came from a focus group of vision-challenged people interested in art. 'We want to touch things,' they said.

The Art Institute had a Touch Gallery of sculptures for the blind but was looking to expand the audience. The museum had been using styrofoam to help explain tactile differences in paintings, but the new TacTiles are proving much more popular.

The tiles have been pre-tested and approved by blind and vision-impaired volunteers, and are available through pre-arranged museum tours.

Source: Andrew Herrmann, 'Art Institute gives blind a chance to "see" art', *Chicago Sun Times*, April 20 2006.

Manage your research project

Who will do it—and what support will they require?

Carrying out a visitor research project takes time and resources and it is important to have one person take charge of the project. That does not mean that individual will do all the work, but they will be responsible for organising the research, ensuring it is on schedule, analysing the results and preparing the final report.

The best person for this job is someone who has had previous experience with visitor research—perhaps they were involved with research at another organisation, or participated in an earlier research project at your institution.

If there is no-one with research experience available, then you may have to select someone who is willing to take on the project and is a reasonably organised self-starter. As it is likely that this project will be additional work over and above their existing workload, it is important they have support and assistance as required. Perhaps you can recruit one or more volunteers or a work experience student to help. The amount of assistance required will depend on the size of the research project.

If your project is a relatively small one—keeping track of the tally sheets at the front entrance—all that is required is someone to take responsibility for collecting them on a regular basis and entering them into a simple spreadsheet (on a computer or by hand). Once a month, the numbers are tallied and a short written report submitted to the Director/Curator/Board. At the end of the year, the monthly figures are totalled and an annual report prepared (it may only be a page or two). In this scenario there is probably no need for additional assistance.

If your project is bigger, prepare a list of things to be done and a timetable. Divide 'things to be done' into milestones and tasks.

MILESTONES

Milestones are the key things that need to be achieved, which could be as simple as:

- define the research problem
- identify the best method of research
- organise the research
- conduct the research
- analyse the results
- write a report on the results and present it to relevant stakeholders.

TASKS

Tasks are the specific things that need to be done to reach each milestone. These vary, of course, depending on the specific research project. For example, in Section 4, *Conduct focus groups or one-on-one interviews* details a list of things to consider when organising focus groups—the tasks that need to be done. Section 5 contains detailed information on undertaking surveys and outlines the types of tasks required.

How much time will it take?

While it is obvious that the time required to undertake research will vary with the type and complexity of the research, keep the following in mind:

1. Plan your project fully. Think about who will conduct the surveys—and also consider who will enter the results into the computer.
2. Allow enough time for each task. Do a test run if it helps you calculate time requirements:

- See how long it takes to do a test survey, then multiply it by the number of interviews you want to complete (and allow a little extra time for miscellaneous things like finding a pencil, having a coffee break during the interview process, etc.). Test how long it takes to enter the survey results into your database.
- For focus groups, the rule of thumb is that it takes three times as long to organise a focus group as it does to run one (not including the time required to transcribe or prepare a report on the results). So, if you plan a 90-minute focus group, assume it will take another four-and-a-half hours to organise, set up the room, etc. Formulate a schedule, as you won't expend all the time you allocate at one go—you'll spend time on the phone contacting potential participants, wait for people to respond, then make additional calls, wait again, and so on. Allow about three to four weeks from start to finish, including recruitment time, planning, organising, setting up, writing up results, etc.

3. Plan for problems. Set aside an hour or two (and have a backup plan) for emergencies. Photocopiers seem to sense when a copy job is urgent; computers are also prone to problems at the most inconvenient time.
4. Organise a secure and quiet place to work with appropriate

Watch This Space, NT

equipment. You will need space for storing materials, questionnaires, computer disks, focus group tapes, etc. It will also be important to have access to a quiet work area and a computer for entering data and writing reports, as well as storage boxes, a calculator and access to a printer.

5. Back up all results and archive materials. When entering data for analysis, make sure you back up everything and secure copies in a separate location. At the end of the project, archive all the relevant materials in a box with a label that clearly states the date and contents. Include a copy of the final report so that everything is in one place.

How often do we do research?

It is useful to maintain visitor attendance records on a daily basis and to collect information during special or temporary exhibitions or displays. General demographic information is usually collected several times a year, either on a quarterly or six-monthly basis.

Smaller organisations may conduct a more detailed demographic study on an annual basis, and if so, it is a good idea to make sure the research is done at about the same time each year. Trying to compare research undertaken during a quiet period one year with that carried out during the height of a busy period (such as school holidays) in another will not be very helpful.

Some organisations do their research twice a year, selecting a quiet period and a busy period for contrast, then comparing these periods from year to year. They then supplement this regular research with special projects for temporary or travelling exhibitions. You might also undertake research when you are planning a new project or making changes to a permanent space.

Remember, things change. The attitudes that people had about your facility last year or five years ago may not be the same as visitors today. Research needs to be done—and redone—regularly to ensure it is up-to-date and reflects the current environment.

Section 3—Making Use of Existing Information

There is a massive amount of research conducted by others that is publicly available and may be of value to your organisation. However, finding it can be a challenge. Locating, assessing and using existing research is called *secondary research*. It is a cost-effective way of gaining information, and is reasonably fast, since the material already exists.

To understand my community, the cultural sector and current trends, I need to know...

- how to find out what information is already available
- how to keep up-to-date with current trends and issues
- where to find information about my community.

In order to find out these things I need to:

1. identify sources of secondary research
2. gather information from the Internet, etc.

Identify sources of secondary research

Types of secondary information, and why you need it

It is often helpful to begin any research project by spending a bit of time exploring secondary research options. You may not find exactly the information you need, but you can learn a lot, access useful background information and perhaps make contact with others who are willing to share their experience and form lasting networks.

There are various sources for this type of information, and time spent on the Internet can be productive. You can collect data from individual organisations, government websites, specialist arts and cultural websites and State and national arts organisations, both in Australia and overseas.


Port Arthur, TAS

First, think about the information you want; for example, you may wish to learn more about:

- a specific market segment, such as youth or families
- your local community, population growth and information on ageing or ethnicity
- people who buy certain kinds of products, such as DVDs or computer games, or who attend particular events like art exhibitions
- a particular artform (eg. current trends in attendance at festivals, museums or art galleries)
- reports and conference papers from conferences you have not been able to attend
- ‘how to’ information on research techniques, analysing information, carrying out statistical analysis and making presentations
- visitor demographics, comparing your visitors with the demographics of your regional population to identify potential markets
- patterns of common behaviour or attitudes (eg. is the issue of ageing audiences unique to your organisation, or common to other organisations and in other countries? Have other organisations faced similar problems with managing and developing subscription programs?)
- research done by others that may be of interest to you
- other projects, to see if there are tips or guidelines that will assist you in doing your own research
- making contacts with other individuals and organisations with similar issues or problems.

CASE STUDY

Using research to make decisions about interpretation
Port Arthur Historic Site (Tasmania)

The Interpretation Plan for the Port Arthur Historic Site (PAHS) makes extensive use of visitor research. Here are several examples:

1. Demographic profile

   Survey results over recent years indicate that three major market segments accounted for nearly 73% of interstate visitors to historic houses.

   Visible Achievers—32.1% of visitors between 30-50 years of age. 'Visible success stories,' they are self-confident and satisfied, enjoy recognition of their status, are prolific consumers and smart shoppers. Their travel and recreation are outward signs of their success.

   Socially Aware—23.4% of visitors. Tertiary-educated executives, they are socially responsible and politically active, adopt new ideas early and enjoy persuading others to their view. Tend to be high-income earners, senior executives and bureaucrats, with a strong interest in the arts and the environment.

   Traditional Family Life—17.2% of visitors. Over 50 but with active interests, most own their homes, children have left home, are satisfied with their standard of living, concerned about their health and holiday occasionally.

2. Implications for interpretation

   Interstate residents form the majority of PAHS visitors. They are often well-educated and well-travelled. They have experienced interpretation at other sites both nationally and internationally. Their leisure time is hard-won and valuable. We might infer that they expect excellent interpretation that respects their own knowledge and life-experiences and is thought-provoking.

3. Patterns of visitation

   The following figures are drawn from demographic surveys done over the past five years. 60% of visitors come to Port Arthur between December–April. Over half of the visitors to the site tend to be longer-stay visitors; that is, staying more than a week in the State. Around 50% of Port Arthur's visitors take the guided tour.

4. Implications for interpretation

   PAHS plans to concentrate the most intensive delivery of the widest range of programs during the busy periods, but also provide sufficient variety for quiet times. A self-guided tour is needed for those who don't take tours with guides. The site needs to be marketed more energetically as a place to stay for more than half a day or a day. This will be achieved by offering visitors more to see and do.

   Source: Port Arthur Historic Site Interpretation Plan (prepared 2001, revised 2005)

   http://www.portarthur.org.au/ pdfs/InterpretationPlan_revised.pdf

Museum Victoria and the Great Hall at the NGV

Some important sources of information on visitor research

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

The Australian Bureau of Statistics ‹http://www.abs.gov.au› produces a wide range of data collected from the Australian Census and other studies. While much of this information can be accessed free of charge, the ABS can also supply very detailed, specific information for a fee; for example, it can produce special charts or tables, or combine particular types of information to meet your specific requirements.

Consult the ABS website to see what is available, for example:

Report No. 4901.0 Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, Australia (released in 2004) indicates that in the 12 months prior to the 2003 survey it was estimated that 95% of all children (5–14 years old) used a computer and that 64% accessed the Internet.

This report also provides details on the number of children involved in organised cultural activities, such as playing a musical instrument, dancing, singing and drama. It details the amount of time they spend practising, attending lessons, etc. and looks at their cultural participation in comparison with their involvement in sports and recreational activities and time spent watching television and playing video games.

This type of information could be useful when planning programs aimed at your market. While the general information is free of charge, you might decide you want this information specifically for your State or region. You might contact the ABS to find out if they can provide the breakdown you want and how much it will cost to produce it.

Some examples of other types of ABS reports include:

- *4172.0 Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview*—a range of data from both ABS and non-ABS sources about cultural activities and industries. It presents cultural data on both a topic basis (eg. participation in cultural activities, employment in cultural industries) and a sector basis (eg. libraries and archives, performing arts).
- *3239.0.55.001 Population, Australian States and Territories*—population figures, including numbers of births and deaths
- Average weekly expenditure on specific cultural activities—eg. art galleries and museums, live theatre, cinema, etc.
- Number of people employed in the arts, and working as volunteers.

AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

Australia Council for the Arts <http://www.ozco.gov.au> is the Federal Government's principal arts funding and advisory body. The Australia Council for the Arts has produced a catalogue of more than 60 arts-related publications (from the Council and other sources) to assist artists and arts organisations.

Publications include information on artforms, such as new media arts, contemporary arts and crafts, music theatre, writing, visual arts and crafts and popular music. There are also publications on community arts issues, disability and the arts, employment and economics, industry statistics and legal issues in the arts.

About 15 publications specifically address arts marketing and audience development. All of these publications can either be downloaded from the Australia Council for the Arts site, or in some cases, ordered in hard copy. Of particular interest would be:

- *Access All Areas: Guidelines for marketing the arts to people with disabilities*
- *Arts Marketing: The pocket guide*
- *Australians and the Arts—Full Report*
- *Australians' Attitudes to the Arts*
- *What's My Plan? A guide to developing arts marketing plans*
- *Who's My Market? A guide to researching audiences & visitors in the arts*
- *The World is Your Audience: Case studies in audience development and cultural diversity.*

ARTS RIPPA

Arts RiPPA stands for *Arts Research in Progress or Planned Across Australia*. First published in 1989 as *Arts Research in Progress*, Arts RiPPA is an arts and cultural policy research digest that aims to improve the information flow between policymakers, researchers, arts organisations and educational bodies. It lists hundreds of research projects that have taken place (or are currently taking place) across Australia. Arts RiPPA includes both qualitative and quantitative research into arts audiences and participation, as well as analytical research into creative industry development, arts impacts, infrastructure support for artists and regulatory and policy developments.

Listings include the research organisation's name, the title and a brief description of the project, the start and completion dates and the project manager's contact details.

Excerpts from Arts RiPPA published on the Australia Council for the Arts website are:

Arts RiPPA—example 1

Griffith University—Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre
A Place for Art

The developments of society, technology and culture over the past hundred years have brought about landslides in the experience and perception of the arts. While museums, theatres and concert halls have been the hubs of artistic consumption in most western cultures since the nineteenth century, their position is now challenged by the emergence of alternative exhibition spaces, festival, community events and various forms of new media. This project intends to investigate traditional and contemporary forms of presenting and communicating arts and culture in Brisbane, in collaboration with major stakeholders, as a mapping exercise of various formats of presentation, their audiences and the underlying constructs.

Start: September 2004 Finish: September 2007

Contacts: Associate Professor Huib Schippers
Email: h.schippers@griffith.edu.au
Brydie Bartleet, Senior Research Assistant
Email: b.bartleet@griffith.edu.au

Partners/others involved: Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre, Griffith University; Centre for Public Culture & Ideas, Queensland Performing Arts Centre; Arts Queensland; Australia Council for the Arts.

Next stage of research: An indepth project to investigate challenges to traditional relationships between art and location across Queensland.

Arts RiPPA—example 2

Australian Bureau of Statistics
Survey of attendance at selected cultural venues and events

The ABS has recently conducted a survey to determine the characteristics of people attending a number of selected cultural venues and events and their frequency of attendance. The venues include museums, art galleries, cinemas, libraries, botanic gardens and zoos. Concerts, opera, musicals and other performing arts events are also included. Similar surveys have previously been conducted in 1991, 1995, 1999 and 2002. Information from the survey is expected to be released in early 2007.

Start: July 2004 Finish: early 2007

Contact: Jenny Dobak
Email: jenny.dobak@abs.gov.au

Partners/others involved: National Centre for Cultural and Recreation Statistics, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Source: Arts RiPPA, Issue 20, March 2005

<http://www.ozco.gov.au>

FUEL4ARTS

Fuel4arts <http://www.fuel4arts.com> is an arts marketing website that provides a free, membership-based community for artists, cultural workers and consultants.

The Fuel4arts website has links to sites around the world and includes case studies, research papers and reports, and publications (usually with an indication of the 'degree of difficulty' of the articles so you can determine which ones suit those with relatively little marketing experience and which are more advanced).

Fuel4arts also distributes a monthly newsletter, *Gas*, and has a number of specifically designed resources such as *Sauce*, a guide to effective promotion, campaign strategy, publicity, advertising, sales promotion and direct marketing. The site has an excellent search facility, so you can easily find articles and reports on visitor research.

COLLECTIONS AUSTRALIA NETWORK (CAN)

Formerly AMOL (Australian Museums and Galleries Online), the relatively new Collections Australia Network services 'all not-for-profit, public access collecting organisations in all sectors, including libraries and archives. CAN's services [are] targeted particularly at small and medium collecting institutions (SMCs) in regional areas'.

CAN's website <http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/> includes sections on:

- News
- Events
- Exhibitions
- Collections
- Stories
- Venues
- Sector information—reference documents, conservation and collection management tools, links to professional networks, and more.

The site also has an excellent search function.

ARTSINFO

The ArtsInfo program website <http://www.artsinfo.net.au> is officially closed, but what remains forms a useful menu, with a comprehensive list of links to State arts organisations' websites; for example, Arts NSW, Arts Queensland, Arts Tasmania, Arts Victoria, etc. On these sites you'll find the latest information on arts and audience research projects. ArtsInfo also has grants, project funding and federal arts projects lists.

OTHER ARTS ORGANISATIONS

Talk to other organisations to find out what research they have come across and what research they have carried out. It may be possible to share research information, or you might consider doing research together using the same questions and sharing the results. The DIY *Visitor Survey* included in this manual will enable you to do this by providing a questionnaire that can be used by a number of organisations, enabling them to share information and compare results.

Gather information from the Internet

Your own Internet searches

Using search engines to look for information may be time-consuming, but it can lead you down interesting and useful paths around the world. Search engines include Google, Yahoo, AltaVista, Lycos, Dogpile, HotBot and Ask Jeeves.

Place double quotation marks around groups of words to form a search phrase, and the engine will search for them amongst the millions of documents on file. For example, typing "visitor research"+"museums" in the Google search field brings up more than 19,000 results. Clicking on a few of the ones that sound interesting can start you on a journey of discovery.

CASE STUDY

Wolverhampton Art Gallery (UK)

Research and literature review—using search engines

One result from the search suggested above ("visitor research"+"museums") is an article from the Wolverhampton Art Gallery about a research project it undertook to:

...explore the ways in which visitors to Wolverhampton Art Gallery (WAG) talked about their experience, both of the art works that they looked at and of the museum itself. We wanted to find out how visitors made their experiences meaningful to themselves, and what interpretive strategies they used to do so.

The research project was a joint venture between the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) at the University of Leicester, the West Midlands Regional Museums Council and Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Museum. The three bodies worked together to fund the project, develop the research plan, carry out the research and interpret the results. The full report is available online.

Source: Wolverhampton Art Gallery (UK)

http://www.le.ac.uk/museumstudies/bookshop/Making meaning 1.pdf

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The websites of other organisations, such as the Canada Council <http://www.canadacouncil.ca>, the Scottish Arts Council <http://www.scottisharts.org.uk>, the Arts Council of England <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk> and the National Association of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) <http://www.nasaa-arts.org>, USA, also feature contact information and web links to arts agencies and regional arts organisations.

You can also find commercial sites, proceedings from conferences and conventions, even annual reports and other useful information on the Internet. Before downloading information, check when the work was done, consider how relevant it is to your own region and organisation, and how the research was conducted. In most cases, when full reports are available you can check the executive summary or the methodology sections of the report to get this information.

Two notes of caution: while the Internet is a wonderful time-saver, it can also consume vast amounts of your time. You can spend hours checking out sites, moving from one site to another, going off in marvellous tangents and often finding wonderful—amazing!—and very useful information. Just be organised and know when to stop!

And the second note of warning? Remember that anyone can post anything on the Internet—just because it's there doesn't guarantee its accuracy. Material you download from government arts agencies is likely to be reliable, but you'd be wise to check the background of work posted by students, private individuals or organisations.

If you need advice on how to do research, the Internet can yield many worthwhile suggestions. It can also direct you to sites that are only interested in selling their services, and sometimes, to people with some fairly unusual views on how to do research. Handle with care!

The following is not a visual arts example, but it will give you an insight into how an innocent researcher can be mislead.

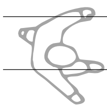
CASE STUDY

Information on the internet: A cautionary tale
History News Network (USA)
Do historians have a responsibility to warn the public about misleading websites?

This academic article by Randall Bytwerk, the author of *Bending Spines: The Propagandas of Nazi Germany and the German Democratic Republic* (Michigan State University Press, August 2004), is published on the History News Network website. Bytwerk highlights some potential problems with using the Internet as a research tool. The following is an excerpt:

For the last several years, anyone doing a Google search for "Hitler" gets, as the first result, the "Hitler Historical Museum". This claims to be an unbiased site devoted to historical truth. It is instead a neo-Nazi site. It is anonymous (the registered owner is "united. Thought"). Its mailing address is a strip mall in Herndon, VA. Many of its links are to other neo-Nazi sites, and its information is not entirely reliable.

Despite that fact, it is linked to by several thousand sites around the world, including some with .edu addresses. Although I can't determine its traffic, its #1 position on Google surely produces lots of visitors, most of whom will not realize where they have ended up. They will get a peculiar slant on German history. There are surely other dubious sources out there, but I use the HHM since it is a particularly egregious example.



Why should historians care?....

Source: History News Network

http://hnn.us/articles/23723.html

A simple survey and basic discussion groups will yield worthwhile facts about your visitors and an understanding of their experiences. However, more detailed information can be very valuable.

To understand the visitor experience I would like to know…

- What kind of experiences do they have when they visit?
- How do they spend their time?
- How do they behave when they visit? (Are they detailed-oriented people who read every label, or do they dart around from one thing to another?)
- What memories or lessons do they take away from their visit?
- What types of experiences would they like to have?
- What types of things interest them?
- What sorts of things would improve their visit?

To find out about your visitors' experiences you can:

- undertake observation studies
- conduct focus groups or one-on-one interviews
- invite people to visit and record their reactions.

Undertake observation studies

Observation (sometimes called *tracking studies*) is exactly what it sounds like—watching people, monitoring what they do and timing their activities. By directly observing your visitors' behaviour you can learn quite a bit about them.

Types of basic observation might include:

- Watching traffic flow into and out of your venue. (Where do people park? Where do they enter? Where do people wait for their friends?)
- Watching behaviour upon entry into your venue. (Do visitors immediately use the restrooms? Do they gather around the entry desk or move directly to the exhibits? Do they look in the shop area before entering the exhibition areas?)
- Watching behaviour and movement inside the exhibition areas. (Total time spent, time spent at individual exhibitions, order of visitation. Do visitors read captions? Do they fully use hand-held audio guides?)
- Watching visitors' reactions. (Do they discuss things with others in their groups? Do they come back to some things more than once? Do they react to exhibits in any noticeable way?)

Observation can be used at any time. The advantage of observational research is that it provides the observer with a natural, unstructured opportunity to see and understand how people behave and what they do.

CASE STUDY

Science Museum (UK)

Handy hints for tracking and observation

Orientation is one of the most important issues for museums. At the Science Museum (UK) they have conducted a series of studies to explore the issue. Useful data has been obtained from interviews, focus groups and from observing visitors in the galleries.

One of the most powerful techniques has been participant observation. An observer joins a group of visitors and accompanies them throughout their visit, acting as though they were part of the group, but not providing any help or suggestions.

Read about the research findings at their site.

Source: Science Museum (UK)

http://www.heritage365.com/articles/exit-strategy-visitor-orientation.asp

This type of research provides invaluable insights into the needs of visitors and the sort of problems they encounter (of course you need to ask their permission!).

On the other hand, observation is time-consuming. The observer must only observe—not interact with the visitors or try to influence or affect their behaviour. Your study will need to include a number of observations to ensure you cover a representative sample of the population.

And of course, there are ethical issues involved in observational research.

While you can conduct informal observational research just by being alert and watchful, strict and proper observational research means that you need to follow a few rules. If more than one person will be doing the observation you need to agree on a format for reviewing the results. This usually means an agreed approach about what will be looked for and the types of people being observed. Results are usually written as a report which includes information on:

- the setting or place of the research
- the identity of the observers
- a description of the types of people being observed
- a description of the types of actions being observed
- a review of the actions and any unusual or notable variations in actions
- a summary of what was observed.

LEGAL NOTE

Formal observational research periods are usually acknowledged by placing sign(s) in the entry area (or wherever the research is taking place) advising that visitor research is being conducted for the organisation and that visitors' privacy will be respected. Then, if someone wonders why there is a person in the foyer with a clipboard taking notes (or they think they are being followed!), they can be reassured that all is well. Filming or videotaping members of the public has major privacy implications, so it is generally not recommended.

CASE STUDY

Australian Museum (Sydney)
How to—tracking and observation studies

The Australian Museum in Sydney has used tracking studies for a number of special exhibitions, including a study of visitors to a special exhibition about bats in 2000. The study involved developing floor plans and survey materials for four sections of the exhibition. Researchers observed 20 visitors in each of the four sections, noting on floor plans where they stopped and the time spent in each section.

Researchers analysed the data using a spreadsheet to identify which exhibits were attractive to visitors, how written material was used, and to review lighting and traffic flow issues.

SAMPLE OBSERVATION SHEET

Exhibition name:
Observer name:

Date:

Time:

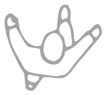
Visitor sex:	M	F					
Age:	under 10		11–16		17–25		
	25–40		40–65		65+		
Group size:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 or more
Group type:	children only		adults only		adults with children		

Behaviours observed:

Look	Notes:
Read label	Notes:
Read out loud	Notes:
Point at exhibit	Notes:
Talk	Notes:
Show/explain to another	Notes:
Interaction with exhibits	

(Floor plan marked to show travel patterns)

Source: Lynda Kelly & Allison Bartlett, AMARC, March 2002 (notes from presentation given at Museums Australia Conference, Adelaide)



Conduct focus groups or one-on-one interviews
In Section 2 we talked about simple discussion groups. Another tool, more popular in visitor research, is the *focus group*. The difference between a focus group and a general discussion group is that a focus group has some specific questions or proposals to examine (so, of course, you *focus* on these issues).

What are the best ways to use focus groups?
Focus groups can be helpful for:

- identifying your organisation or institution's specific strengths and weaknesses
- prioritising a number of options (eg. ideas for new exhibitions, changes to floor layout)
- generating new ideas, evaluating a number of ideas (eg. What could we do that we don't do now?)
- reviewing possible promotional approaches (eg. Here's two brochure drafts. Which do you prefer and why?)
- understanding how respondents feel about issues, the language they use, and the way they link concepts and ideas (eg. Why don't young people come to museums for fun?)

Recruiting focus group respondents
As noted in Section 2, your research objectives will define who you need to recruit for your focus group. For example, if you are studying younger visitors you will need to define an age group, perhaps 17–25 year-olds. You might wish to include full-time students, part-time students, young people working full- or part-time and/or unemployed people in that age bracket. You may then decide to have three focus groups: one each for students, employed and unemployed youth.

Use your existing database to recruit participants, or approach people at other locations such as libraries, school campuses, shopping centres, sporting venues, public transport hubs or other cultural venues. Carry identification, a business card or a printed information sheet you can leave with the people you approach, giving details of the time and location of the focus group.

LEGAL NOTE

As noted previously, if recruiting at another organisation's location or premises, make sure you have their permission to approach people.

Remember, people will expect to be reimbursed for giving you their time, so you need to consider the how much time is involved and what reward you will offer. (This group may not be interested in one of your T-shirts, exhibition catalogues or coffee mugs!)

Establish a timeline

It takes time and work to organise groups—as noted previously, you need to schedule about four weeks from start to finish (and perhaps longer if you are recruiting non-visitors) to recruit attendees, organise a venue, run the groups and analyse the results. Depending on the type of participants you require, recruitment could take at least two or three hours per group. If you simply wanted to recruit repeat visitors you could make calls from your database and recruit the number needed relatively quickly. However if you wanted, for example, a group of country-based older women interested in art history you might have to spend several days on this task.

Identify and invite participants

Focus groups usually consist of 8–10 people. If you have more than 10 people it can be difficult to moderate and control the group; if you have less than five, members of the group may feel self-conscious. As a general rule, you will usually need to invite at least 10 to make sure enough people show up—not everyone who agreed to come will necessarily attend. Make the benefits of participating clear up front.

If you are planning to do some research in the coming months, keep track of who comes, and try not to invite them again. Once people have participated in a focus group they have a heightened awareness of issues surrounding your facility—they won't be an 'ordinary visitor' again for probably a year or more. However, ask permission to keep their contact details so that you can invite them to future events.

If you are recruiting via telephone, prepare a written script in advance, call prospects at least a week before the proposed meeting and confirm their attendance again the day before. A typical recruitment script might say:

Hello, I'm [name] from xxx historical society. We are currently holding a number of discussion groups with local residents. This will help us plan for the future and improve our services.

We are looking for someone who is a full-time student and aged under 30—does this describe anyone in your household?

[If YES] *Would you be available to attend a group discussion on .... at ....? It will take about one hour. OR Would that person be available for me to speak with about this project?*

[If NO] *Thank you for your time. Would you be interested in participating in future research?*

Viewing Bugs Alive! (© Museum Victoria)

Conducting focus groups or one-on-one interviews

Conducting the focus group

PREPARE THE QUESTIONS AND BRIEF THE FACILITATOR

Prepare the focus group outline, making sure the most important issues are covered. The person acting as the facilitator should write a discussion plan in advance (see Appendix), keeping it short so that there is enough time to adequately cover each topic. While the aim is to make sure each focus group covers the same topics, you might modify the discussion outline for one or more groups if there are specific topics you want them to address; for example, a young mothers group discussing the school holiday program. The flow of the conversation may well be different in each group. Using a facilitator who is not directly connected with your organisation is helpful in maintaining neutrality and ensuring a more objective analysis of the results.

CONDUCT THE FOCUS GROUP

The facilitator introduces himself/herself to the group and provides some background on why the research is being done. Group participants are generally not introduced to one another.

After reassuring the group that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, the facilitator indicates that the session will be recorded (audiotape, videotape, notes, etc.) and advises the group that the discussion is confidential and that no comments will be attributed to individuals.

After confirming that everyone has agreed to the session being taped, the facilitator opens the discussion with a general question such as, what do they like to do in their spare time, or did they attend any festivals or events recently—or something similar. This sets the group at ease and provides an opportunity for everyone to contribute.

The facilitator's responsibility is to ensure that all members of the group can contribute, that all issues are covered and that sound group dynamics are maintained (no aggressive behaviour, strong argument or rudeness). At the end of the session the facilitator asks for any last comments and observations and thanks the participants for attending.

CASE STUDY

Australian Museum (Sydney)
Developing an exhibition—1

One of the aims of the *Biodiversity: Life Supporting Life* exhibition at the Australian Museum was to increase visitor access to—and use of—the natural history collections of the Museum.

To assess how this should best be done, a number of front-end evaluation studies were undertaken to see what visitors wanted to know about the Museum's natural history collections and scientific research.

The Museum undertook two focus groups with visitors to take an in-depth look at issues concerned with bringing a range of collections onto the Museum floor. The focus groups were taken on a tour of two different collections (marine invertebrates and fish) in the presence of the Collection Manager and then asked to discuss what they had seen and ask questions about the collections. A Museum scientist also spoke briefly to participants about the institution's research: what they do, how they do it and what got them interested in it in the first place. The aim of the exercise was to enable researchers to gauge what *the visitors* found interesting and how *they* [the visitors] would like to see this [material] presented in an exhibition about biodiversity.

The research generated many questions and highlighted areas of interest for visitors that were able to be subsequently explored in the exhibition. Four main categories of visitor interest/needs were identified:

1. Why do museums have collections?
2. How does a museum acquire a collection?
3. What are museum collections used for?
4. How are museum collections related to the outside world?

Source: Lynda Kelly, Evaluation Coordinator, Australian Museum, NSW, 'Developing access to collections through assessing user needs', paper presented at Museums Australia Conference, Albury, May 1999

http://amonline.net.au/amarc/pdf/research/collpap.pdf

MAKING USE OF AIDS AND MATERIALS

A focus group can be a good place to use aids of various sorts: copies of advertisements, examples of captions or signage, photos of various exhibitions or items from your collection. Hand out copies of an exhibition catalogue, use flashcards to prompt people about specific elements of your exhibitions or facilities, or circulate mock-ups of new materials, displays or designs.

Other techniques you could consider include:

– front end research (sometimes called *concept* research or *formative evaluation*)—showing people in target audience groups proposals of planned new exhibits (including drawings or photographs, floor plans, sample exhibits, etc.). This might entail showing several design options for a display or exhibit, and asking about their preferences

- commentaries in which new exhibitions are described in the format of an audio-guide and group members are asked for their opinion
- on-site tests, where groups visit a temporary or mock-up display (this is expensive and time-consuming to do properly!)
- web testing, involving either downloading your website or facilitating live access, and allowing respondents to comment or interact with it.

CASE STUDY

Museum of Science (USA)
Developing an exhibition—2

The Museum of Science in Boston, USA, uses a system they call 'Test Tube'. Generally used during the development of permanent exhibits, it includes three stages:

1. The first stage involves development of a rough table-top version of the exhibit. Developers observe and interview visitors while explaining the exhibit. If an exhibit cannot meet its education goal when it is fully explained, it is unlikely it can function as a stand-alone exhibit, and so it is reassessed.
2. In the second stage the Test Tube is used, a 176.5-square metre space that consists of an enclosed room with two entrances. The front wall is glass, and a curtain can be opened or closed to allow visitors to see what is occurring inside. The other walls are painted but otherwise bare to allow for a variety of treatments, from label copy to mock-up dioramas. Electrical sockets on each wall cater for components requiring power.

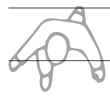
   A stationary video camera and VCR are often used for videotaping visitor reactions (a sign outside the door indicates that exhibits are currently being tested, and whether videotaping is occurring). Museum visitors have the option of visiting the Test Tube, or not—it's up to them. During this second stage, interactions are noted and changes made to labelling, instruction, etc.

3. In the final stage, the exhibition is nearly complete, usually installed in the location where it will be permanently displayed. The public is invited through for a final check, and observation, individual interviews and focus groups are conducted to gauge reactions.

   The Test Tube is a time-consuming process, but its value is now so well recognised that the Museum intends all permanent and many temporary and travelling exhibitions be put to the test.

Source: Museum of Science (USA)

http:www.mos.org/exhibitdevelopment/prototyping.html



When, why—and how—do you do one-on-one interviews?
Individual interviews provide very different information than would be gathered from group discussions. If you want to go into detail about specific attitudes or behaviour (for example, how someone felt about a controversial exhibition) it is sometimes better to talk to people individually so they feel don't feel pressure to conform to a particular group's opinion. Because the interviewer and the person being interviewed meet 'one-on-one' to discuss issues, there is a much higher level of personal interaction and opportunity for openness.

One-on-one interviews can also be useful for talking with your stakeholders. These sessions can provide an atmosphere of sharing and exchange and can reveal their opinions about what you are doing, what they like and don't like about your services, facilities, exhibition program or future plans.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

There are two types of interviews: *structured interviews*, in which all interviewers use the same carefully worded questionnaire; and *in-depth interviews*, where the interviewer has a list of things to cover during the course of a more informal conversation, but does not ask a defined set of questions.

INTERVIEW SKILLS

Interviews are useful when the information being sought is fairly complex, detailed or perhaps sensitive in nature. Because the contact is close and personal, the individual conducting an interview needs particular skills and experience in dealing with people, managing interactions and creating an atmosphere that encourages frankness. The interview situation is an excellent opportunity to use aids, including existing material and mock-ups of ideas and propositions.

ORGANISING INTERVIEWS

Individual interviews can be expensive and time-consuming. You need to recruit—identify the people (or categories of people) you want to interview and contact them. You will need to organise a meeting place (either at your venue or in some central, convenient location), set up the room and equipment (comfortable chairs, tape/video recorder, notepaper and pens, refreshments, etc.) and provide incentives—cash payments, free tickets, free snacks, complimentary merchandise such as exhibition catalogues, books or coffee mugs—to thank them for their time.

In addition to the actual time spent interviewing, usually there are periods of discussion beforehand amongst those who will be conducting the interviews, time required to draft interview questions or a detailed questionnaire, recorded transcripts or written notes to transcribe after the interview, and then meetings to discuss the results compiled from the various interviews. On the other hand, interviews do provide an excellent opportunity to explore topics, reactions and attitudes in depth.

LEGAL NOTE

As with observational research, privacy is an issue. Data collected at interviews must be handled confidentially and sensitively. Information that could identify a particular individual must not be distributed, and it must only be used for the purpose for which it was gathered.

CASE STUDY

Mathers Museum of World Cultures (USA)
Research can have many elements

Sometimes, a combination of research formats is used for complex projects. Mathers Museum of World Cultures in Indiana, USA, wanted to test a mobile computing tool called MUSEpad for people with disabilities. With the help of a grant, and working with the technology company that developed MUSEpad, Museum staff undertook a feasibility study that involved:

- research and a literature review
- observation studies of people using the equipment
- surveys of people with disabilities and their carers
- focus groups of people with disabilities and their carers, both with and without the equipment
- participatory design (asking people what they wanted in such equipment, and how it should look and work)
- design mock-ups
- concept testing of the finished product.

The research helped the Museum design equipment that worked more effectively to meet people's needs. Along the way the team resolved problems related to the design of various types of mobility equipment, the size and shape of equipment, the touch screen, types of images used and sizes of text.

Source: Mathers Museum of World Cultures (USA)

http://www.archimuse.com/mw2006/papers/sumption/sumption.html

Invite people to visit, and record their reactions
Another increasingly popular way to learn more about visitors and non-visitors is to actually invite them to visit, and then record their reactions. A number of projects and studies have attempted to identify ways to approach non-users and understand more about their attitudes towards facilities. Such methods can also be used with your current visitors, or sub-sets of those visitors (eg. young people, people from non-English-speaking backgrounds, etc.)

At the Public Galleries Summit in Wagga Wagga, NSW, in 2005 (presented by Museums & Galleries NSW in association with the Regional Galleries Association of NSW), Gerri Morris from Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (UK) discussed a number of approaches that can be used to understand non-visitors. Some of her suggestions (which could be equally interesting if applied to current visitors) included:

© Museum Victoria

- accompanied visits—inviting groups (or individuals) to visit your facility. Talk to them before they arrive and gain an understanding of what they expect from the visit. Meet them again after the visit and ask for their impressions.
- mystery visits—like mystery shopping at retail outlets, ask people to visit your facility and then report back on their experience from the time they plan their visit until the time they depart after it. They might report on the ease (or otherwise) of getting information about your facility, the service and attitude of staff, finding their way around and overall impressions.
- fulfilment maps—invite people to visit, provide them with a list of the exhibits and ask general questions about what they expect to get from their visit. Afterwards, ask them to revisit their originally comments and reflect, revise or confirm them.
- vox pops—give visitors a small dictaphone to use as they move through your facility, so that they can record their views on the experience.
- control map—ask people to draw a map of their physical path through the gallery, identifying 'pinch points'—places where they felt they needed help or explanations (eg. 'I felt confused about where to go next' or 'I didn't understand why these items were in this spot', etc.).
- Post-It note exercise—(best done when others will not be in the facility). Give visitors Post-It notes and pens and ask them to write comments or responses to the visit and stick them on the walls as they move around the facility. They can comment on anything from lighting and comfort levels to interpretation materials and exhibition design.

CASE STUDY

Field Museum (USA)
Research can challenge your assumptions,
or What do museums really 'do'?

A research project for the Field Museum, Chicago, USA, aimed to answer a number of questions, but primarily: *How do museum visitors understand and think about the scientific research that goes on behind-the-scenes?* In-depth interviews were held with 113 visitors and there were a number of interesting findings, including:

- Most visitors rarely thought about what goes on behind the scenes.
- Most visitors greatly *under-emphasised* the size of the Museum's collections, regularly guessing it in the thousands (rather than the approximately 20 million specimens that are currently held).
- Visitors tended to grossly *over-estimate* the percentage of collections on display: they estimated about half, whereas the figure is closer to one-tenth.
- Few visitors indicated that the purpose of collections was for original research: they believed that items were not on display because of rotation or preservation, that they were 'too valuable' to put on display, or that collections were stored away for label writing!
- Many wondered whether what they were seeing on display was 'real'—there were some doubts about this.
- Visitors said that the Museum no longer collected things because of difficulties with governments: they believed that much of the collection had been acquired illegally in the past.
- Most visitors failed to realise that researchers went on field trips and that this is a major research function, as well as a way of adding to Museum collections.

The researchers concluded that most images that visitors conjured up were not very accurate: they did not recognise that the Museum employed large numbers of research scientists active in collecting and researching, and that this latter function is a primary role for the Museum. Their major finding was that visitors spoke about the Museum as a place to *display or exhibit objects*, rather than as a research institution.

Source: Lynda Kelly, Evaluation Coordinator, Australian Museum, 'Developing access to collections through assessing user needs,' paper presented at Museums Australia Conference, Albury, NSW, May 1999

http://amonline.net.au/amarc/pdf/research/collpap.pdf

Section 5—Much, Much More Information about Conducting Surveys

If your organisation has carried out some basic research, but now requires more detailed information, you probably need to consider doing more complex surveys. This Section will give you an overview of more advanced quantitative research techniques.

There are some decisions to make. You may want to undertake the additional research in-house, or you might consider engaging a professional research company. Do you have staff with training and qualifications in research, or whose job description includes visitor research? You may be ready to move from 'the basics' to the next stage.

We've done the basics and now we want to do more. I'd like to...

- conduct specifically designed surveys
- conduct surveys on- and off-site
- process survey results.

Conduct specifically designed surveys

Why do you want to do additional research?
Effective market research is focused and practical. You don't collect information 'just for information's sake'. So the decision to carry out research has to be based on the intention of gathering useful information to help make decisions.

Start by identifying the key challenges or problems that are facing your organisation right now. This is called *defining the research problem.*

Defining the research problem does not mean deciding what results are required (if you already know the answer to the question you don't need to do research!); it means being clear about the reason for undertaking the research, and the way in which the results will be used. Generally, we use market research to help us make better decisions, review past activities, identify missed opportunities and plan future activities.

There are three elements involved:

1. Defining the issue—for example, a downturn in visitor numbers.
2. Defining the questions: Why are visitor numbers declining? Why are visitors staying for shorter periods of time?
3. Developing the research methodology—deciding what type of research you will do, and how it will provide an answer to the marketing problem.

Defining the issue—and the questions

Defining the research issue is very important. It is generally a good idea to spend a generous amount of time on this, and to discuss it with others; for example, you might ask and discuss whether visitor numbers are down because:

- it has been some time since there was a new exhibition
- tourist numbers are down in your town overall
- school group visitation has dropped significantly

– your organisation has begun charging an entry fee.

Consider all the factors that may have changed, and all those that could impact on the situation. For an organisation looking at visitor numbers this could include:

OPERATIONAL ISSUES:

– exhibition schedules and the numbers of special exhibitions
– accessibility of the venue
– entry charges
– themes and subject matter of collection and exhibitions
– quality of delivery (displays, videos, labels)
– breadth of collection, research facilities
– staff and volunteers.

PROMOTION AND REPUTATION:

– choice of media for advertising
– quality, content and frequency of editorial coverage
– language and imagery used in promotions
– effectiveness of promotions in reaching your target audience
– reputation
– word of mouth.

PAST EXPERIENCE:

– visitors' positive or negative past experiences
– adults' memories of childhood experiences.

EXTERNAL FACTORS:

– lack of time
– family commitments
– other priorities.

An important point about research is that you should be able to use the results to make decisions and changes. Therefore, reduce the things you decide to research (called the *variables*) by eliminating the ones you cannot change. For example, if there is nothing you can do about your location, asking people if they would like it changed is a waste of time.

There is also no point in undertaking research if the time and cost of doing the research are greater than the prospective benefits that could arise from it.

For example, a Board member has suggested you offer a 10% seniors discount during Seniors Week. You could undertake market research, design a survey for older people to measure their interest, recruit interviewers and conduct surveys at a number of local shopping centres, analyse the results, prepare a report and present it to the Board for consideration. But it might just be easier—and cheaper— to trial the discount during Seniors Week and monitor the results.

Conduct surveys on- and off-site

Developing the research methodology

There are many types of research you can do, so the more clearly you can define the problem, the easier it will be to select the most effective research format. The steps in developing the research proposition are:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Identify the potential causes of the problem.
3. Consider alternative actions that could solve the problem.
4. Identify any existing information that can help you solve the problem.
5. Identify what additional information you need to gather.
6. Consider any issues or constraints that impact on what you can and can't do, or can and can't change.
7. Decide how you will use the research results to solve the problem.

CASE STUDY

Bendigo Heritage and Arts Group (Victoria)

Developing the research proposition

Identify the problem

The Bendigo Heritage and Arts Group initiated an audience development project to increase visitation to Bendigo's heritage, arts and cultural attractions by people from the surrounding Central Victorian region and to obtain information on likely regional audiences. Local visitor numbers were not as high as the Group felt they should be, given the overall population in the region.

Identify the potential causes of the problem

Previous research by members had shown high levels of awareness of facilities, but this didn't necessarily translate into visitation. While people in surrounding communities saw Bendigo as a key service centre, they did not seem to consider it a centre for culture. There was still the apparent belief that 'going to Melbourne' was important for some activities, and Group members sensed that locals didn't fully appreciate all the cultural offerings available.

Consider alternative actions that could solve the problem

Several options were considered, including advertising campaigns, free tickets, various options for 'sampling' arts products, the development of cultural ambassadors and incentive programs of various types. The final decision was to develop an incentive 'invitation' for residents, which entitled them to discounts and free admissions and required anyone taking up the offer to complete a basic questionnaire. Those who did were subsequently sent additional, more detailed surveys.

Identify any existing information that can help solve your problem

Many of the Bendigo attractions had collected information about their audiences, and the special 'invitation' offers were based on this knowledge. The Group used existing electoral roles to obtain names and addresses for a mailout to more than 20,000 regional residents.

Identify what additional information you need to gather

The survey attached to the invitation asked about respondents' frequency of visitation to Bendigo, when and why they visited, and whether or not they had previously visited any of the attractions. The researchers tracked the number of invitations redeemed and venues visited. A supplementary questionnaire gathered data on satisfaction with the venue and intention to revisit.

Consider any issues or constraints that impact on what you can and can't do, or can and can't change

The results of the surveys provided insights on public attitudes and reactions to the participating properties, and the project, in itself, raised public awareness of Bendigo's cultural attractions. One outcome was an indication that price, rather than distance, was a key barrier to attendance.

Decide how you will use the research results to solve your problem

The results indicated that some communities had higher levels of interest and attendance than others. Since then, advertising campaigns and other programs have been conducted, some targeting these specific areas and others aimed at raising awareness across the region in general.

Source: Bendigo Heritage and Arts Group (Victoria)

Once you have defined the marketing problem and the research problem, you are ready to choose the most appropriate research methods for the project. For surveys, there are a number of options (listed overleaf).

Section 2 outlined information about sample sizes and processing surveys, focusing on the DIY *Visitor Survey*. However, if you are using a different type of survey, you will need to consider the format, develop the questionnaires and decide how to process the results. Some of the methods you might consider are listed on the following pages.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

METHOD	WHO	WHERE AND WHEN	RESOURCES	CONSIDERATIONS
Telephone	Current, lapsed, and potential visitors	At home (do not call people at work) Call at different times of the day to get a cross-section of respondents	—up-to-date, accurate contact list —access to telephones and quiet work area —questionnaire and computer to input data, or space to write in answers to enter into computer later —introduction script —interviewers	—allow six names for one completed interview (600 names to get 100 completed surveys) —can be done quickly, results available quickly —some people regard telephone surveys as an intrusion
Face-to-face intercept (interviewing on-site)	Current, potential and non-visitors (outside other venues)	At the entrance or exit of venues, in the foyer, on the street, at public transport hubs	—questionnaire —interviewers —identification	—people may have limited time; short questionnaires —need trained interviewers —data needs to be transferred to computer later —care to ensure a representative sample is obtained —permission to use other venues and locations
Face-to-face appointment	Current, potential and non-attenders	At agreed meeting place, eg. at their home, at venue	—questionnaire —interviewers with identification and transport if travelling to respondents —interview space, services and facilities if interviewing on-site (coffee/tea/quiet seating, etc.) — Permission to use other venues and locations	—can take more time, go into more detail —can use visual aids —potential no-shows at agreed time —takes longer for each interview; more organising, liaison —security for interviewers visiting off-site locations

METHOD	WHO	WHERE AND WHEN	RESOURCES	CONSIDERATIONS
Self-completion (distributed at your facility)	Current visitors	On-site or home, questionnaires distributed before or after a visit	—questionnaire and pencils or pens —people to distribute questionnaires —can be either completed immediately and deposited in marked boxes, or taken home and posted back using Reply Paid (budget for postal costs)	—must be (and look) easy to complete —can distribute large number —easy to reach whole audience, difficult to reach only particular segments —watch for discarded questionnaires and littering —people feel rushed or busy, may not take time to complete —on-site returns are quick; postal returns can be slow —need to key responses into database; minimise need for handwritten answers
Email	Current, lapsed	Office or home (if sent to homes, Friday catches people during the weekend when they may have more time)	—need accurate, up-to-date addresses — well-designed questionnaire for on-line responses	—inexpensive, if done in-house —generally low response rates —bias towards Internet users

Designing your questionnaire

Designing an effective questionnaire is a challenge. It must look simple, flow smoothly from question to question and not be too long. Collect as many examples of questionnaires as you can from other sources and refer to them when designing your own. A good questionnaire is:

- appropriate to the target audience—the language and length must suit your audience. A 20-page survey distributed to visitors as they are leaving will not generate a good response. Consider the needs of children, adults and those for whom English is a second language.
- clear—make sure each question can only be interpreted one way and that the instructions are clear. The questionnaire's simple layout and design should suggest that it is easy to complete.
- the right length—the questionnaire should be easy to complete in the time available. If it is a telephone survey, allow about five minutes. A survey completed in the entry foyer should be shorter than one designed for a face-to-face appointment.
- tested—after you create the questionnaire, try it out on a number of people to see how they react. Surveys almost always undergo a number of drafts before the final 'simple' result is achieved.

How many people do I need to interview?

Refer back to Section 2 for information on how many people to interview (and legal issues that you should consider). Basically, for most research, a sample size of between 100 and 200 is sufficient. Remember to do 10 or so extra interviews in case you discover later that some are incomplete or unusable.

Heide Museum of Modern Art (image: Jim Lee Photo 2004)

Maximising the value of your surveys

Research can provide you with an excellent opportunity for establishing on-going contact with people who have not visited your organisation or institution before. It is also a means to increase the involvement of current visitors. You might consider adding a second component to the survey asking if the respondent would like to be added to the mailing list, receive your e-newsletter, participate in future research or find out about becoming a volunteer.

If the survey asks questions about age, income or education levels, your respondents may feel comfortable about volunteering that information in confidence—but less so when asked to add their name and email address for further contact. Consider including a separate card or form for contact information and future follow-up. Respondents can indicate their interest in being further involved without being concerned that the person who contacts them later knows about their family composition, marital status, income or occupation, etc.

CASE STUDY

Heide Museum of Modern Art (Melbourne)

Consider incentives carefully

Incentives can be a good way to encourage people to participate in a survey. Consider things that people might like, such as exhibition catalogues (from past exhibitions), gift vouchers for the shop or café, or even a behind-the-scenes tour. Obviously, the less cost involved the better—but consider 'hidden costs' as well.

In 2003, Heide Museum of Modern Art decided to offer a prize draw to those who filled out a self-survey to win a free Heide Family Membership. Membership subscription sales dipped during the survey period because respondents preferred to delay joining Heide Membership in case they won the free Heide Membership in the draw.

The Lesson:

Think about the incentives you offer to encourage people to respond to your survey. Make sure you consider both obvious and 'hidden' costs.

Source: Heide Museum of Modern Art (Melbourne)

Heide Museum of Modern Art (image: Jim Lee Photo 2005)

Process survey results

Entering data and producing reports

Once the questionnaires have been completed, the next step is to enter the data and analyse the results. If you are processing the data in-house, you might use a program such as Microsoft Access or Excel, MacSurvey or PowerTab. However, setting up programs and buying specialist software can be time-consuming and expensive. Find someone who is familiar with the programs to get you started—a knowledgeable volunteer, student or someone with computer skills will be very useful!

Another option is to send the data to a professional research or data-processing company, however they would probably prefer to be involved in the project from the beginning so that they can advise on questionnaire design. If you ask them to process the data only, they will generally present the results in the format you specify, but without any analysis.

Processing the results

Once you have accumulated the required number of questionnaires, the real work—and the interesting part—begins. Check through all the questionnaires to make sure they have been completely filled in. If some are only partially completed—the answers to one or two questions are missing—you may decide to use them, but add a 'no answer' category for the blanks. If, however, more than a few questions are incomplete, it is probably best to discard that questionnaire.

CASE STUDY

Melbourne Athenæum
Allocating the required resources

While conducting surveys is the most visible element of doing research, processing them is just as important. When the Melbourne Athenæum's new Executive Officer joined the Library, the first thing she implemented, being a 'marketing person', was a detailed postal survey of the organisations' 800 members, covering membership attitudes, potential new services and incentives for recruiting new members.

Calculating 'standard response rates', she planned to process about 60–90 questionnaires and organised a work experience university student to assist. However, strong, loyal, long-term members (in many cases 30 years or more) were supportive—imagine her surprise when 568 responses were received.

There was no plan or schedule in place for processing that quantity of questionnaires. Consequently, the project took longer than expected and analysis and recommendations were delayed by several months.

The Lesson:

Talk to staff, members and volunteers and try to get a feel for what the likely response rate in your organisation will be. You will probably get a higher response rate if you survey members, friends or volunteers than if you survey the general public.

Source: Melbourne Athenæum, Inc.

Coding answers
Closed questions (the ones where respondents answer *Yes* or *No* or tick a particular answer from a list), are very simple to enter into a computer. For open-ended questions (where people answer in their own words) you need to pre-code the results. This means going through the questionnaires to get a broad sense of response categories, and then setting up headings to cover them.

For example, written responses to the open-ended question: *What did you enjoy most about your visit today?* might include:

- *I liked the penguin exhibition*
- *The whole place*
- *The audio about penguins*
- *The tour guide who told us stories about the old days*
- *The history of the region and the pioneers*
- *The pictures of the penguins*
- *The helpful staff who answered questions*
- *The information about the problems of global warming hurting the penguins*
- *The video on penguins, they are cute!*

- *The diaries of the early settlers*
- *Everyone was very nice.*
- *The gift shop and restaurant*
- *The display about the history of the region and its settlers*

In analysing those answers, the following categories become apparent:

THE TEMPORARY PENGUIN EXHIBITION:

- *I liked the penguin exhibition*
- *The audio about penguins*
- *The pictures of the penguins*
- *The information about the problems of global warming hurting the penguins*
- *The video on penguins, they are cute!*

THE STAFF:

- *The tour guide who told us stories about the old days*
- *The helpful staff who answered questions*
- *Everyone was very nice.*

THE PERMANENT HISTORICAL DISPLAYS:

- *The tour guide who told us stories about the old days* (can be listed twice)
- *The history of the region and the pioneers*
- *The diaries of the early settlers*
- *The display about the history of the region and its settlers.*

OTHER:

- *The whole place*
- *The gift shop and restaurant.*

It is best if only one or two people code open-ended questions to ensure consistency.

Interpreting the data

Depending on the system you use, interpreting the data can be as simple as pressing a button or as complex as writing your own program.

Other types of statistical analysis that you can do yourself (in addition to computer-generated information) include looking at the total number of responses to a question and determining:

- the *median response* (the mid-point—half the respondents are below and half are above this response)
- the *mode*—the most frequently occurring answer.

Queues outside the NGV

(Example)

Q5 Before today, how many times had you visited this Gallery in the last 12 months?

Times attended in past 12 months	**Number of respondents** ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY	**Total number of visits** NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS MULTIPLED BY NUMBER OF VISITS	**Proportion** % OF TOTAL SAMPLE WHO VISITED EACH OF THE OPTIONS
Three times	10	(10 people X 3 visits) = 30	10 people ÷ 120 = 8%
Twice	20	(20 people X 2 visits) = 40	20 people ÷ 120 = 17%
Once	40	(40 people X 1 visit) = 40	40 people ÷ 120 = 33%
Never	50	(50 people X 0 visits) = 0	42 people ÷ 120 = 42%
Total	120 (Total number of people who filled in the questionnaire)	110 (Total number of visits by all respondents)	100%

MEAN	Total number of visits ÷ Total number of survey respondents	110 ÷ 120	0.92
MEDIAN	(as many answers above this number as below)		
	Approximately half the sample above and half below this point		Once
MODE	The most frequently given answer		Never

Cross-tabulation analysis
In addition to looking at the answers as a whole, you can look at various sub-categories. Dividing the questionnaires into various categories (for example, reviewing them by age categories or by frequency of attendance) can provide additional insights into audience behaviour or attitudes. However, as we noted previously, this is not recommended for sample sizes of less than 50.

You may want to simply separate the questionnaires into different categories and generally review them, just to see if any interesting patterns emerge.

Some tips for making analysis easier

- Edit the questionnaires as they come in, placing the correct codes against the open-ended questions, checking that all the questions are completed, etc.
- If you are conducting a large number of surveys, enter the results into the computer regularly, rather than waiting until you have accumulated an enormous (and daunting) stack.
- If you decide to undertake sophisticated analyses, obtain appropriate assistance to set up the required computer programs. (Remember, however, that you may eventually have to explain complex mathematical information to others in your organisation. Make sure you understand the methodology.)
- Check the data as it comes in to see that it makes sense. Do percentages total 100 percent? Are there some odd or unusual answers that warrant checking the original survey or conducting other investigations to determine the context for such anomalies? (For example, your survey shows that an unusually large number of older people attended an event, and it seems out of line with normal patterns. Perhaps you should check if the survey occurred during Seniors Week.)
- Examine the final data for patterns and answers to key questions and write the results of the study.
- Allow plenty of time for analysis and report writing. Once the questionnaires have been administered, people within an organisation often get very excited about the results and want information quickly. Allow time to enter the data into the computer, analyse the information and write the report.

If you do not have the in-house capability to handle the analysis of the survey, or you want particularly detailed mathematical analysis or complex cross-tabulations, ask for help early on. Most individuals or companies who analyse data prefer to be involved from the very start—that is, from survey design to sampling decisions.

Section 6—I Think We Need Professional Help

While it is fairly simple to do basic research, there may come a time when you decide you need additional research, and that you would prefer to hire a professional research company to do the work. If your budget allows, this makes good sense.

I would like to hire market research professionals to help us. How do I…

- find a market research organisation
- brief a market research organisation
- monitor what they are doing.

To successfully use a market research professional you need:

1. to know how to write a research brief
2. a detailed checklist on managing a research project.

How to write a research brief

The results you get from hiring a professional market researcher will be only as good as the information and guidance you supply in the first place. The briefing is critical, and monitoring the work along the way will ensure you get what you pay for. Of course this does not mean that the research will obtain the 'results' that you ideally want—it means the research company will give you accurate, reliable data.

You do not need to specify the methodology of the project. It is the responsibility of the consultant (who is, after all, the expert) to make recommendations. If you outline the research problems and objectives, the research company will propose the best way to achieve the desired outcomes.

Your research brief should include:

1. an introduction and background information about your organisation
2. the need for the research project
3. the objectives of the research
4. the target audiences (who you want to research)
5. a timetable and 'ballpark' budget figures. While you do not need to specify a budget, research companies will appreciate having a rough idea of whether it is a 'shoestring' project or whether you can afford more complex (and costly) methodologies.

When you hire a professional research organisation, they work with you to do what you want (and what your budget can afford), but their work generally encompasses:

- developing a questionnaire
- pre-testing the questionnaire on a small sample
- hiring, training and briefing interviewers
- setting the *sample size*
- conducting the survey
- validating the work
- processing the data and preparing pre-agreed tables, charts, etc.

Within these steps, certain money-saving initiatives may be possible;

for example, rather than hiring professional interviewers, the research company may be prepared to train and brief your volunteers; and depending on your budget constraints, they might supply the raw data only, or process the data or analyse it for you, or process, analyse and make written recommendations. The research company's ability to undertake these activities will depend on the quality of the research briefing and their understanding of the sector and of your organisation's specific issues.

The research company should respond to the brief with a written proposal that contains:

- a review of their understanding of your requirements
- information on other work they have performed of a similar nature or with comparable clients (and references if you asked for them)
- a clear outline of the proposed research methodology to be used, including the number of interviews, where they will be done, and by whom
- a list of people who will work on the project and their qualifications and experience
- a detailed work schedule
- a detailed cost breakdown.

In comparing the proposals you receive, you need to consider:

- the research company's understanding of the brief and the issues
- the logic and clarity of the proposed research methodology and sample sizes
- the way in which they propose to deliver the results
- their ability to meet the timing and budget (including regular interim reporting and updates)
- their demonstrated ability to do the work, based on past achievements
- the quality of people assigned to the project
- your sense that they understand your needs and that you can work with them.

Where do I find a research company?
Finding a research company that can help you is not all that difficult. You can search the Internet, of course, for organisations in your city or town, brief several and then compare their proposals. However, the most useful approach is to contact other museums, galleries and arts cooperatives and ask for recommendations. Which research companies have they used? What sort of research did they require? How did they evaluate the outcomes, and what was the organisation like to work with? Were the personnel helpful? Proactive? Did they meet deadlines? Did they meet budget? Were there any communication problems or issues?

CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING A RESEARCH PROJECT

If you are planning a major research project, by all means talk to several market research organisations, and ask questions!

Here is a simple checklist for your discussions with a research company:

1. PLANNING AND RESEARCH DESIGN

- ☐ Does the company appreciate the need for detailed client briefings? Will they take time to understand what you need and want, even if you don't know the proper technical jargon?
- ☐ Will they explain the methodologies to be used, and why they have chosen them? Will they explain their decisions in clear, understandable language?
- ☐ Who will design the questionnaire? Does that person understand the cultural sector and the language that is required for the project, considering both the research objectives and the survey's target audiences?
- ☐ How, when and where will the questionnaire be pre-tested? (Pre-testing is critical and needs to be done using the same locations and respondents as the final questionnaire.)
- ☐ What is the process for briefing and training interviewers? Will there be training for this specific questionnaire?
- ☐ How will the interviews be conducted? Will the interviewers be at the front entry area? Will they approach people before or after they leave the souvenir shop or the exit area, and inside the gallery or just outside?
- ☐ How will the results be presented? Will you receive a computer printout of the results? Discuss the type of data analysis you require, including the number of cross-tabulations, as this needs to be factored into the costing. (For example, analysing the answers by age, place of residence and education level of respondents requires more work than just presenting totals for each question; and cross-tabulating questions on visitation with questions on visitation to specific exhibitions would be more costly too.) Discuss the analysis requirement early in the project.

2. CONDUCTING THE ACTUAL SURVEYS (SOMETIMES CALLED THE *FIELD WORK*)

- ☐ Who will manage the interviewers when they are doing the interviews 'in the field'? (A supervisor should be available or on call in case there are any problems and to make sure that the interviewers are on schedule.)
- ☐ What security and quality checks are done in relation to interviewers? Do they hire experienced, trained, presentable and competent people? Is the organisation confident that the interviewers are responsible and honest? (They may be in areas that are normally unaccessible to the public and in places where objects, money or merchandise are accessible.) Will interviewers wear identification?

- ☐ Is the interviewing process monitored? Are there checks to ensure the interviewers are doing their work properly, approaching the right people, asking all the questions, recording the information correctly?

3. THE INTERVIEWERS

- ☐ Who does the company employ as interviewers? (Some companies use students, or casual or part-time interviewers who may be retired or no longer working full-time. Some research companies match the interviewer to the type of respondent; for example, employing younger personnel to conduct interviews with young people.) Are they trained and experienced?
- ☐ How many interviewers will be employed? (Will there be a large number of interviewers, each of whom has to complete a relatively small number of interviews, or will there be only a few, who will have to complete a large number of interviews each?)
- ☐ How are interviewers paid—by the hours worked or the number of interviews completed? (Generally speaking, hourly rates are better, as there is no temptation to rush respondents or manipulate data. Some interviewers have been known to ask half the questions, then make up the other answers to 'speed things up'; others have been known to take the questionnaires away, sit down with a cup of coffee and complete a dozen or so in half an hour! While most interviewers are conscientious, it is important to know how they are being paid.)

4. RESULTS

- ☐ How will the results be presented? (Some research organisations may give you a copy of the computer printout once the questionnaires have been tabulated—often pages and pages of numbers. Others present the results for each question, including the number of people who responded, percentage analyses of the results and cross-tabulations that have been agreed on.)
- ☐ How many copies of the research data and final report will be supplied?

Once you have selected a research company and the project has begun, stay in touch. Make sure that the periodic reporting agreed to at the beginning of the project occurs, and feel free to ask questions along the way. If you are uncomfortable about anything or have any concerns, raise them immediately, rather than waiting until the end of the project. This is critical if you have any concerns during the field work/interviewing phase.

Plan ahead in terms of how you want information analysed. Costs will increase if the research company has to re-process results because you change your mind and now want many more cross-tabulations, etc. And of course it is too late after the research has been completed to remember some other critical questions you wanted to cover! Spend time at the beginning of the project to get it right, rather than trying to fix problems or errors of omission at the end.

Section 7—Presenting Research Results

Doing the research is only part of the whole visitor research exercise. Analysing it and preparing a report that will enable you to make effective use of what you have learned is just as important.

To present research in the most effective way possible I need to know how to…

- analyse research and make recommendations
- prepare research reports
- distribute research reports
- present effectively to stakeholders.

To report research successfully you need to understand:

1. report preparation and contents
2. writing up your results
3. conclusions and recommendations
4. presenting the results to others.

Report preparation and contents

Before you begin writing the research report, consider the audience:

- How much do they need to know? (What level of detail should you provide?)
- How much time will they have to read the report?
- How much do they understand about visitor research?
- How will they use the results?

A typical format for a formal written report includes:

- Executive summary—highlights of the research
- Introduction—background to the research
- Research objectives—what the research was intended to achieve
- Methodology—the type of research, number of surveys, when and where the research was conducted, etc.
- Results—research findings
- Summary, conclusions and recommendations—the conclusions reached as a result of the research
- Implementation—how your organisation will use the research
- Appendices—a copy of the survey, focus group discussion guide and any other detailed information that is required.

Writing up your results

Some tips for writing your research report are:

- Keep the audience for the presentation in mind. Avoid using technical terms unless you believe they will be understood.
- Arrange the results in logical order (usually, the order in which you asked the questions). For example, under a heading such as *Visitor Profile* you would include all the demographic information questions (age, gender, sex, place of residence, education levels and income); another section titled *Visitor Patterns* would present information on frequency of visitation.

- Use graphics if they make the data easier to understand and for presentations. You can easily create charts and graphs using standard computer programs and there are also excellent sites on the Internet. One popular site is <http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/graphing>, which is specifically designed for very young students and makes preparing a variety of graphs so easy that even adults can use it!
- Keep the main report as simple and straightforward as possible. Use appendices for detailed information.
- Borrow information from other sources to make your research more meaningful. For example, you could compare your survey results for the age of your audience with the results of published studies from local council census information, to identify any differences.
- Use the summary, conclusions and recommendations section of the report to interpret the results of your survey and share what you think are the implications for your organisation. For example, if respondents have consistently complained about being kept on hold for bookings for a blockbuster exhibition, you may recommend that additional staff be hired, additional telephone lines be installed, or booking hours extended.
- Once you have prepared the report, archive all the relevant material, including questionnaires, and make copies of the computer databases and the results. You may want to refer to the questionnaires again, perform other types of cross-analysis or analyse information about sub-groups.

More on graphs, charts and tables

Using various types of visual aids can be very helpful in presenting research results. Visuals make results easier to understand, more interesting to read, and can highlight key findings. The most common types of visual aids are graphs, charts and tables.

When preparing graphs, charts and tables:

- always provide a short written commentary to help people understand the visual
- give all tables, charts and graphs a number and a heading
- write the question out in full so the reader knows exactly what was asked
- state the size of the sample on every table, chart or graph
- include non-response replies
- remember that people may photocopy the report or print it in black and white, so colours or patterns must be clear in these formats
- don't overdo the amount of information on any one item so that it becomes difficult to read or understand.

If someone in your organisation has computer skills, they can produce a wide array of visuals from your data, such as pie charts and graphs. These are also effective in Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, but remember—don't get carried away with graphics for the sake of graphics.

The Jewish Museum of Australia

CASE STUDY

National Gallery (UK)
Using research to emphasise your organisation's contribution to the community

Visitor research carried out at the National Gallery in London highlighted the important economic impact of the Gallery's 2004–5 exhibition, *Raphael: From Urbino to Rome*, on London's tourism industry.

This exhibition attracted a significantly high number of visitors from outside London: 47% from within the UK and a further 17% from abroad, with many of these trips involving overnight stays in the capital. Of these visitors, nearly half (47%) planned their trip to London mainly to see the exhibition.

Therefore, because of *Raphael: From Urbino to Rome*, about 69,187 visitors came to London and spent money here. Their resulting extra spending on refreshments, shopping, accommodation and travel represented valuable income for the city. This boost to London's economy is a dramatic illustration of the power of art to generate economic benefits.

Source: National Gallery (UK)

http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/about/press/2005/economic_impact.htm

CASE STUDY

State Government of Victoria
How others use research to emphasise your organisation's contribution to the community

The Victorian Government's strategy to increase tourist numbers through the traditionally quieter winter months by funding major events *The Producers* and *The Impressionists* generated a massive economic windfall of almost $43 million to Victoria.

On the last day of *The Producers*, The Minister for Tourism and Major Events, John Pandazopoulos, announced details about the economic impact of both events, which were part of the Government's multi-million dollar *Melbourne in Winter* campaign of 2004:

The Impressionists *exhibition and the hit musical* The Producers, *combined with an aggressive interstate and international tourism marketing campaign, have made this the best winter in Melbourne ever, attracting over 680,000 visitors*, Mr Pandazopoulos said.

...The Impressionists—*the first exhibition in the* Melbourne Winter Masterpieces *series—generated $25.7 million for the Victorian economy, with a total of 380,235 visitors, including more than 78,000 interstate and international patrons.*

This exhibition is the most successful event of its kind ever, generating the largest attendance of any exhibition to be held in Australia. Likewise, The Producers *smashed records to become one of the longest-running shows in Victoria, attracting more than 300,000 people, including 59,000 interstate and overseas visitors during its eight-month run.*

The Government invested $250,000 in cooperative marketing funds to attract interstate and New Zealand theatregoers to Melbourne and for that investment we have seen the Victorian economy buoyed by more than $17 million.

Source: Media Release, Minister for Tourism, John Pandazopolous, 14 November 2004.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations are the 'action' part of the project. Collecting the information is only part of the objective for practical visitor research—the information must be used in some concrete way.

A research report provides

- background (the Introduction, Research Objectives and Methodology)
- findings (the Results)
- and—most importantly—conclusions and recommendations (the Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations, and Implementation sections of the report).

Findings

Findings are the results of the research activity—the statistics or results arising from focus groups or other research. Findings are reported without interpretation or judgment.

For example: *60% of visitors are over 65 years of age.*

Conclusions

Conclusions are linked to the findings and are based on information and knowledge held by stakeholders. Conclusions interpret findings and put them into relevant context; highlight key results; identify issues that were examined; show that the objectives of the research were fulfilled; and state what was learned from the research.

For example: *Our visitor demographic is significantly older than the local community population. This would indicate that we are not meeting the needs or interests of significant components of our local catchment.*

Recommendations

Recommendations are actions for consideration. Making recommendations requires knowledge concerning the context in which decisions will be made and the alternatives that could be considered. Recommendations are usually made after the findings have been circulated to key stakeholders and they have had the opportunity to meet, discuss and reach conclusions about them.

For example: *We need to introduce exhibition programs that will appeal to younger, non-English-speaking members of our community to encourage their increased involvement and attendance.*

Presenting the results to others

There are a variety of ways you can report the results of surveys, including:

- a formal written report with appendices and an executive summary
- a summary report, featuring highlights and major findings
- a talk with illustrated presentations (using overheads or Microsoft PowerPoint)
- a workshop and/or seminars
- information on your website
- media releases.

You may want to use a combination of these methods. Generally, the formal written report is the main document, from which other elements can be extracted, repackaged and presented in various formats. Present the report in person to your Board and other key stakeholders, so you can go through it with them, answer questions and make sure they understand its contents.

When you have completed the research, and if you are prepared to share the findings with others, consider sending out a media release—the media seems to favour releases that include figures and research results. Another option is to place an article in your own or industry newsletters, and post the information on your website.

You may wish to have a fairly simple report for front-of-house staff and volunteers, a detailed report and presentation you can make to your Board, and other information for the website and media releases to the public. Having all the material in the formal report makes it easier to develop other materials.

CASE STUDY

Horsham Regional Art Gallery (Victoria)
Using your research for practical reporting

The Horsham Regional Art Gallery, like most cultural facilities funded within a local government environment, has Council reporting requirements to satisfy. In meeting Victoria's 'Best Value' guidelines, the Horsham Gallery's Director made excellent use of visitor research to support the organisation's activities. Here are some edited excerpts from that report:

BEST VALUE

SERVICE REVIEW REPORT

1. Introduction

Service Description: Horsham Regional Art Gallery is a high quality, professionally run public art gallery that organises a varied programme of exhibitions and events and maintains a valuable and growing collection of Australian art and photography.

General:

Currently the Gallery is hosting or producing around 30 temporary exhibitions per year. It is regarded as one of the best public galleries in rural Australia and has recently again had its full Accreditation status renewed by Museums Australia and the Australian Tourism Accreditation Authority. It was the second gallery in Victoria to achieve this, and remains amongst a handful of Accredited Victorian public galleries.

The staff consists of Merle Hathaway, Director (full-time); Trevor Smith, Curator (full-time); Leticia Parker, Administrator (.7); Allison Tully, Education Officer (.5); Glen Critchley, Curatorial Assistant (.2). There are also around 30 volunteers who staff the gallery in pairs on weekends.

2. Analysis Conducted

- Staff and Committee of Management meetings to discuss issues and make recommendations.
- Horsham Regional Arts Association discussion of role of Gallery
- Surveys administered and analysed over the past years
- Personal interviews with visitors to the Gallery, mainly conducted by the Director
- Verbal and email feedback from artists and other user groups and individuals and comments in Visitor Book
- Benchmarking over many years with other similar public galleries

- Existing reviews: Museums Australia Accreditation process first conferred 2001, renewed 2004; annual reviews conducted by Arts Victoria in relation to funding; and by the National Gallery of Australia for site accreditation.

3. Key Findings

- That Horsham Regional Art Gallery has an excellent record of management of its facilities and care of its collection.
- The gallery's role within the community is often used as a role model for other galleries and organisations (Arts Victoria and Museums Australia). The Education Officer is particularly important in establishing and maintaining links with a wide variety of community groups, as well as schools.
- The gallery staff continues to seek ways to improve and is open to change.
- Visitor satisfaction remains high.

4. Addressing The Six Principles

1. All services must meet quality and cost standards set by Council.

Horsham Regional Art Gallery operates on an extremely small budget while retaining its reputation as one of Australia's best rural public galleries. This is achieved mainly by its dedicated, hard-working staff. Most staff are working at levels far exceeding the responsibilities outlined in their respective band levels of the Victorian Local Authorities Award 2001. An increase in salary would give them a sense that Council values their efforts, and ensure that when staff are replaced that standards remain high.

The gallery's ongoing viability depends on retaining the Arts Victoria annual operations funding. To do this the gallery must maintain high quality services. Maintenance of Accreditation status with Museums Australia will ensure best quality practice in all areas of museum management, accountability, promotion and accessibility.

Benchmarking exercises continue to show that this gallery's output is at least on a par and often exceeds that of other public galleries of similar size and population bases. …

2. All services must be responsive to the community.

Visitor surveys, notes in the Visitor Book and discussions with visitors, artists and the local community continue to show a high level of satisfaction with the gallery. Visitor attendances reflect an especially high number from the local community…

As can be seen above, visitor research contributed in a practical and valuable way to the Horsham Regional Art Gallery's reporting for funding and ongoing support.

Section 8—Making the Most of Your Research

You've finished the research and written the report. Now what? There's no point in doing research just for the sake of it!

Circulating the results

Research engages people and makes them think about you and your organisation. Participants in the research gave their time and input—so did Board members when they approved the project, and the staff and volunteers who conducted the surveys and input the data.

One of the reasons for doing research is that it provides you with information about how people are feeling and reacting to your products and services. If you asked them about their levels of understanding of the permanent collection but have no intention of doing anything about it, there was no point in asking in the first place.

All these people invested time and effort into this project, so don't let them down. Circulate the results of the research, along with advice on what will happen next and what plans are in place as a result of the research.

Schedule a meeting with relevant staff, Board members or volunteers to review the research and discuss its implications. Highlight the main results and discuss the issues that have arisen. What can you do with the information? How can you make it work for your organisation? If there is a lot of information, you may have to prioritise the results and deal with the most important issues first.

Make enough copies of the report to share with everyone who needs to see it. It may be useful to send out media releases about the research inviting additional comment or feedback. Consider making presentations to appropriate groups such as other arts organisations, the local council, your sponsors and, of course, your staff and Board.

Memory Grid at ACMI/ACMI Screen Gallery

CASE STUDY

Federation Square (Melbourne)
Using research to show success

Although plagued by controversy throughout its development, Federation Square in Melbourne is an undeniable success. In the first 12 months since opening, the Square received overwhelming interest from local and international tourists and designers.

The success of Federation Square is reflected in the number and diversity of visitors it has attracted in its short life. Federation Square is Victoria's second most popular tourist attraction (behind the city's Crown Casino), attracting 6–7 million visitors in 2003—almost double original estimates. The square attracts visitors of all age groups, with an even representation of men and women.

Federation Square's visitors are both locals and tourists, with over half the visitors being Melburnians and 32% from interstate or overseas. Approximately 90% of people surveyed reported liking all, or at least parts, of Federation Square.

With attendance levels of 1.8 million at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), 800,000 at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) and the 700,000 at the Visitor Information Centre, it is important to note that 40% of visitors did not go to Federation Square for these attractions, but were drawn by other factors (including the public square).

Source: Federation Square, A Case Study in Architectural Design

http://www.business.vic.gov.au/busvicwr/_assets/main/lib60040/05_federation_square.pdf

CASE STUDY

Longreach Powerhouse Museum (Queensland)
Using research to improve advertising and promotion

The Longreach Powerhouse Museum in outback Longreach, Queensland, conducts visitor surveys during the tourist season (about three months of the year) every two years. The visitor survey is a fairly simple self-completion questionnaire that includes questions on:

- visitor point of origin
- last town visited
- next destination
- mode of transport
- other attractions visited in Longreach
- how the visitor heard about the Powerhouse Museum
- like and dislikes about their Powerhouse visit and any suggestions to improve visit.

According to the Powerhouse's Director, Gary Deakin, the surveys are extremely valuable when making advertising decisions—such as which regions of Australia to target, and which publications are most likely to reach their potential audiences. In addition, feedback on exhibitions has helped the Museum decide 'how to expend scarce resources on creating exhibits that appeal to our visitors.'

Source: Longreach Powerhouse Museum (Queensland)

Interactive exhibits at the Longreach Powerhouse Museum, QLD

CASE STUDY

Lovell Diversion Gallery (Western Australia)
Keeping track of sales and visitors helps run a profitable commercial gallery

Lovell Diversion Gallery is a commercial gallery in Kununurra, Western Australia. Gallery owner Nadeen Lovell utilises a feature on her QuickBooks accounting software to track sales. QuickBooks is a database, so if she enters the data from each sale she can perform quick searches by State and capital city to report on where her customers are and identify the most viable locations for interstate exhibitions.

Nadeen also tracks how customers pay—by cash, cheque or credit card—which has long-term impact on prices charged (because of credit card commissions, time required to process cheques, etc.).

The gallery records the number of visitors on a daily basis and the time of their visits. This allows Nadeen to adjust her daily, weekly and seasonal hours. She and her staff also talk to visitors, observe their reactions, movement around the gallery and comments so that the gallery can provide feedback to artists. She also keeps in regular contact with the Kununurra Visitors Centre to see if her visitor numbers reflect numbers through the KVC generally, or whether she is losing market share. If the gallery's market share is slipping she reviews her marketing activities and tries new ideas.

Source: Lovell Diversions Gallery (Western Australia)

ACTING ON YOUR RESULTS

What if the results show some negative feedback or things that you feel are controversial or problematic? In these circumstances, consider carefully how you will write the research report, in order to create the most positive 'spin'. For example, you could highlight the fact that negative information will be used to change an unfavourable situation and redress problems that have been identified. You could also indicate that the issues are now acknowledged and that your organisation is reacting to them in a positive way.

If there are major problems, of course, you might decide that the document will remain confidential, for the information of management and the Board only. In that case, it is important to let people know the work has been completed and that the Board is reviewing and addressing the issues. However, it is rare to uncover serious problems from visitor research. Most of the time research gives you a sound basis for making positive announcements about new programs, facilities, services or changes and improvements to your existing activities.

If the results are very positive (everyone loves your work and what you do!) then make the most of it by sending out a media release and celebrating your success with the world.

The important thing is to use the results to plan future activities for your organisation. Regularly review activities and conduct follow-up research to make sure the changes have been effective and the results positive.

DOING IT ALL OVER AGAIN!

The more often and regularly you do research, the more you'll have a strong database for benchmarking activities, visitors' likes and dislikes and your ability to understand, and promote to, target audiences.

The more you know about your visitors, the more you'll be able to assess their needs and match those to your organisation's mission and vision. This will lead to long-term success, expanding visitor numbers, and the most effective use of resources.

Appendix

Sample focus group discussion guide
Suitable for a non-visitor focus group in discussion about a specific museum or gallery. *(Moderator's script is in italics.)*

Introduction—10 minutes
Introduce yourself and explain that the purpose of the discussion is to learn more about how people spend their leisure time and the things they like to do during their leisure time.

Moderator: My job is to facilitate the discussion and make sure everyone has an opportunity to contribute. There are no right and wrong answers.

MENTION:

- that the session is being taped, videoed or observed so that you do not have to take notes
- housekeeping issues (safety, emergency procedures, etc.)
- confidentiality measures.

Let's begin by introducing ourselves. Please take turns to tell us:

- *your first name*
- *whether you have children aged 3–18 in your household*

(or other qualifying questions relevant to the particular discussion).

Activities and interests—15 minutes
I am interested in learning about how you spend your leisure time.

- *What are some of the things that you like to do?*
- *What are the factors you take into account when planning leisure activities (entertainment, education, family, cost, transportation, length of time, etc.)?*
- *Do you go into the CBD to attend or participate in leisure activities?*
- *Where do you get information on what events and other leisure activities are taking place?*

Perception of gallery/museum—50 minutes
I would like to learn more about your perceptions of the [name of] gallery/museum.

- *Have you heard about it?*
- *Have you considered going there?*
- *What do you imagine it would be like if you visited the gallery/ museum? Why?*
- *Is there anything the museum could do to encourage you to visit?*

Allow each focus group member to respond, then investigate more fully by discussing the following considerations:

- Physical—cost, hours, buildings, welcome, signage
- Social—activities, social events, evening events, youth activities, children's or family activities
- Cultural—exhibitions or programs, ethnic programs.

Promoting the gallery/museum—10 minutes

If the [name of]gallery/museum could do only one thing (other than free or reduced price entry) to persuade you to visit, what would that one thing be?

Here is some promotional material for the [name of] gallery/museum.

- *What do you think about it?*
- *What do you like or dislike about this material?*
- *Do you have any suggestions on ways to promote the gallery/ museum?*

Show the focus group members [name of gallery/museum] publications and literature and note their responses.

Thank you and close

Go around the room and ask each participant if there is anything else they would like to add to the discussion.

Glossary

Analytical research—seeks to understand the how and why; for example, motivations and barriers to attendance, etc.

Audience segmentation—dividing the audience into specific groups; examples include double-income-no-kids, empty-nesters (no children at home), young people, retirees.

Appendices—information that supplements the main text of a book, report, etc.

Attenders—people who have visited your venue. In research terms this group is usually segmented into those attend frequently, regularly, occasionally and those attending for the first time (or once only).

Bias—factors that influence research findings, preventing unprejudiced, objective results. Bias can occur as the result of the kinds of questions asked, the way questions are asked or by the sort of people in your sample (that is, if the sample does not represent your visitors).

Charts (pie, bar, line)—charts are visual representations of research findings, such as a *pie chart* (a circle divided to reflect proportions of a total), a *bar chart* (compares values over a number of categories) or a *line chart* (compares values over a number of categories but more usually over time).

Closed question—a question where the respondent selects and answer from a list provided (opposite of *open-ended question*).

Coding answers (or code numbers)—each possible answer for a closed question has a number assigned to it; the number is used for data entry purposes.

Contingency—allowing some leeway in a plan to accommodate unexpected circumstances, such as additional costs.

Convenience Sampling—surveys that are conducted where visitors gather; for example, entry area, café.

Cross-tabulation—tables that compare information relating to segments within your sample; for example, how younger people vary from older people in terms of their interest in the performing arts.

Data analysis—the interpretation of the information and statistics gathered during research.

Data entry (or input)—entering the answers to questions into a computer program.

Demographic—social information relating to age, income, marital status, ethnicity, etc.

Descriptive research—describes your visitors and their characteristics at a particular time.

Dichotomous questions—a question where the respondent must select from only two choices in response to a question; for example: *Are you male or female?*

Double-barrelled questions—a question where two ideas are contained within one question; for example: *Do you like the venue and the seating?* These should be avoided.

Executive summary—a brief summary of the key elements of your research and the results and recommendations included in the research report. Designed so that readers can grasp the pertinent information quickly.

Focus group—moderated discussions with a target audience to find out more about their attitudes to a particular set of issues.

Incentive—benefit offered to encourage a person to participate in a research program.

In-depth interview—a research interview that goes into more depth about a particular issue. Usually includes a number of open-ended questions and can be flexible in structure.

Intercept interviews—interviews where people are approached on the street or as they leave a venue.

Introduction script—agreed wording that a researcher uses to introduce the research to a person about to be interviewed.

Market intelligence—information that has been gathered from a range of sources about the marketplace as a whole or your audience in particular.

Mean—the average response; for example, the average number of times people attended live theatre in the past 12 months.

Median—the mid point: half of the respondents are above and half are below a factor such as a particular age bracket.

Methodology—the system devised to implement a research program.

Mode—the most frequently occurring answer to a question.

Multiple-choice questions—a multiple-choice question provides a list of circumstances you would like respondents to consider with regard to the question asked. Respondents can be asked to select one only, select all that apply, select the most important, or rank the factors in order of importance.

Net count—the total number of people who respond in a particular way; for example, the number who said the experience was 'extremely enjoyable' or 'very enjoyable'.

Neutral or 'mid-point' code—if people are asked to rank an experience on a scale (for example, 1–5), the mid-point (3) allows people to say it was 'neither/nor' (neither bad nor good).

No-response category—people who do not answer a question are put into a category titled 'no response'.

Non-attenders—people who have not visited your facility.

On-line surveys—surveys conducted via a website or by email.

Open-ended question—a question that allows respondents to formulate their own response. It does not provide a list of choices to select from (opposite of *closed question*).

Potential attenders—people who do not currently attend but are thought to be likely to attend in the future because of their interests or demographic.

Primary research—obtains information from an original source (the target audience) for a specific purpose.

Qualitative research—explores how people think or behave and why, and is usually conducted through open-ended questioning. Requires a skilled interviewer or moderator who is trained in interpreting the findings.

Quantitative research—counts the number of people who behave in certain ways or hold certain attitudes. Attributes must be measurable.

Quota sampling—targets are set for completed responses from specific categories of people. Quotas are set to be representative of the known population.

Random sampling—everyone has an equal chance of being involved; for example, every third person on a list.

Recruitment—enlisting people to be part of a research program; usually related to booking interview times or attendance at a focus group.

Relative frequency—the proportion (percentage) of respondents who give a particular response.

Repeat visitation—visitors who return to your facility more than once.

Representative sample (or unbiased sample)—a sample that reflects the make-up/composition of your visitors and is not skewed to one particular type of person.

Respondent—the person answering questions in a questionnaire.

Sample size—the number of people who completed a questionnaire or participated in a research program.

Scaled response questions—questions where a person is given a scale on which they can rate their approval or disapproval, agreement or non-agreement, etc.; for example, 'extremely enjoyable', 'very enjoyable.'

Screener question—a question asked at the beginning of an interview to verify whether the respondent is part of the target audience.

Secondary research—research conducted by organisations other than your own.

Self-completion questionnaire—a questionnaire that the respondent completes in writing.

Sub-category—a group of people within the total sample who share a certain characteristic, such as age.

Survey software—a computer program designed for the input of data gathered during market research.

Tabulation—the process of creating a table that sets out data under column and row headings.

Tracking research—research conducted over time that monitors any changes in the marketplace; for example, attitudes to, or support for, your facility.

Variations—changes or differences over time or within sub-categories of data.

Visual aids—pictures or written words used during face-to-face interviews or focus groups.