



Visitor Studies Association



Message from the President

Dear VSA Community,

I hope you and your families are hanging in there during these challenging times.

As an organization, VSA stands in support of #BlackLivesMatter and strongly condemns the senseless acts of violence being perpetuated against the Black community. It is our goal to promote informal learning centers as places of safety, hope, and peace for all by listening and responding to the voices of visitors and community members, including and especially people of color and marginalized communities. We support equity, inclusion, and racial justice in all of our communities and across the world. We recognize today, Juneteenth, as a historical and cultural celebration and additional time of learning. While VSA has taken some steps towards diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, we know there is much more we can and must do. Over the coming months, we look forward to sharing more of these plans with you, and also welcome ideas and feedback about what we can do to support you. Please don't hesitate to email me directly or contact our team at visitorstudies@visitorstudies.org.

For the last several months, VSA has also been focusing our efforts into developing a robust schedule of virtual learning opportunities. It's been great to see many of you at our webinars, web chats, and support groups. Throughout this year, we will continue to provide several events and activities each month on a range of topics. We look forward to continuing to offer these activities to support members through these unprecedented times and offer more resources around DEAL. While we will not have a formal virtual conference in 2020, rest assured that we are working hard already on plans for 2021. We hope these timely virtual learning opportunities will allow for us to stay connected and continue to gain new skills. Many thanks to the tireless efforts of our board and volunteer committees including Professional Development Working Group, Conference Planning Committee, and the Green Team for their work on these initiatives.

I am also pleased to announce that we will be hosting our annual July member meeting on **Wednesday, July 22 at 4pm ET**. During that time, we'll be sharing more about our financial picture and plans for the future. Please RSVP [here](#). While it won't be the same as being together in person, I hope many of you can join us!

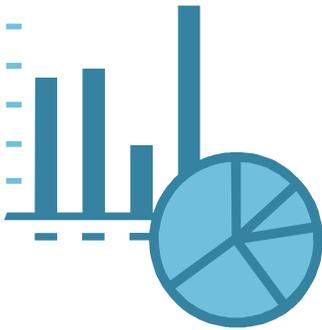
I know these are challenging times, as so many of our informal learning organizations are still feeling the financial pinch, and too many museum professionals are finding themselves laid-off or furloughed. During these times, we sincerely thank you for your support of VSA. VSA's best asset is our community and we want to continue to find ways to support you. We truly appreciate all of you for continuing to stay involved, attending our virtual learning opportunities, being a member, and taking our recent member survey. Read on for an update from Jill Stein, President-Elect, about some of the findings that we learned from that research.

All the best,
Elizabeth

Elizabeth Bolander
VSA President
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*Donate to Support VSA's
Continuing Programming
[Click Here](#)*

Key Findings from VSA COVID-19 SURVEY



Many thanks to all of you who responded to the recent VSA COVID-19 survey (April 2020), which helped us get a better understanding of VSA members' ability, needs, and interests around engaging with VSA in the current situation and in the near future. A total of 133 respondents completed the survey, with the vast majority (89%; n=118) being members.

Data suggested that COVID-19 has negatively impacted the visitor studies community. While the majority of respondents who worked for an informal learning institution were still employed (68%; n=75), many had experienced time and/or salary reductions, furloughs and layoffs, or concern that they would be laid off in the near future. For respondents who are self-employed or independent contractors, about one-fourth (28%; n=10) had the same or similar workload, but an equal amount said their work (income) is likely to decrease in 2020. Just under half of independent consultants (43%; n=15) suggested that their work had lessened or ceased altogether since the quarantine began.

The survey also sought feedback on how VSA could support the field during this time, particularly around potential virtual offerings. Respondents were most interested in webinars on specific topics (rating their interest in this offering as 4.07, on average, out of 5), particularly in the following areas: online evaluation methods, visitor needs around online programming, visitor perspectives around reopening institutions, and how to advocate for and create value around visitor studies at this challenging time. Respondents were less interested in in-person regional conferences (3.23, out of 5) or a virtual, multi-day international conference (2.77). See Fig. 1 below.

Professional Development

Did you miss **Google Analytics 101: Understanding Your Visitors' Behavior Online** webinar?

Click [here](#) to gain access to the recording

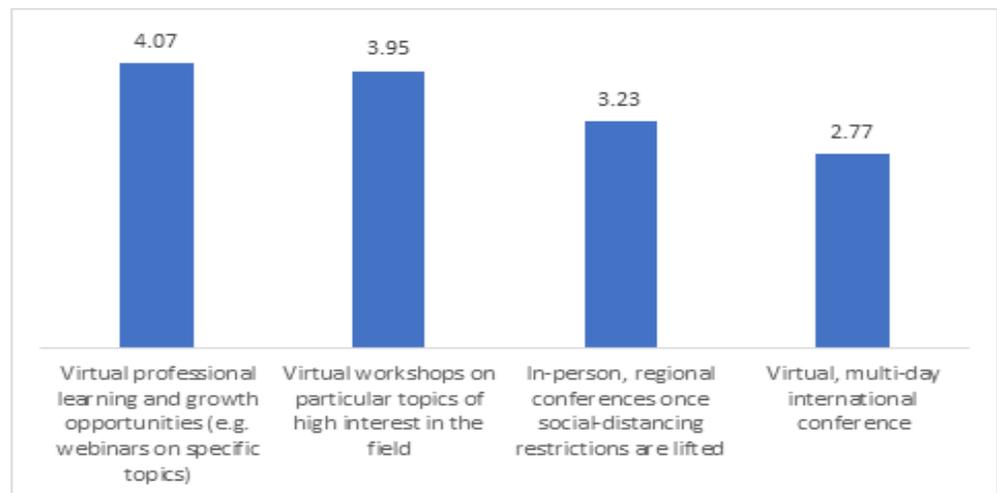
\$10/\$20 member/non-member

If you missed a recent web chat – or if you would like to see them again – please email visitorstudies@visitorstudies.org to receive a recording.

Recent Web Chats included:

- *Attending to DEAI in the Time of Coronavirus*
- *Remote Formative Evaluation*

Figure 1. Respondents interest in various (mostly virtual) offerings (5-pt. scale; n=133)



Members – **Book Club is Back** –
keep a look in your inbox for
more information or email
visitorstudies@visitorstudies.org

Membership Matters

VSA Membership Helps the Field and You

Helping the Field - and VSA

VSA is like no other association in our field. Our mission to understand and enhance learning experiences in informal settings through research, evaluation, and dialogue. Through the work of our members, visitor studies is now considered a vital part of museum practice.

VSA relies on memberships, conference registrations, sponsorships, individual donations, and webinar income to operate. Renewing memberships will help support the field and our colleagues in this difficult time.

The Effect of Postponing the 2020 Conference

Postponing the conference was a hard decision, but we felt it was necessary given our inability to predict when travel restrictions may be lifted, conference presenters' need to make decisions about their participation well in advance, and the toll widespread museum closures are taking on our field. The annual conference is critical to financing VSA's operations, allowing us to offer benefits to our community year-round. The loss of this revenue has required us to shift our focus to other ways we can support you and provide quality programming despite a significant loss of annual revenue.

Helping You

We know many of our members are experiencing employment insecurity due to the pandemic. This crisis has created a host of difficulties throughout the informal learning field. During these challenging times, we have been offering a range of ways for you to connect to VSA and each other:

Coronavirus Support Group Chats: Every other Friday, 2-2:30 pm ET. These free chats allow for informal discussion on a range of topics. Now open to members and non-members.

Coronavirus Support for Out-of-Work Evaluators: The Professional Development Working Group hosted three special web convening in April and May to support visitor studies professionals out of work due to COVID-19.

Upcoming offerings: VSA will continue offering as many ways for members to learn and engage virtually as we can. Look for regular announcements about webinars, web chats, and more throughout the rest of 2020.

Visitor Studies Journal and Web Chats Archive: VSA members have complimentary access to the journal archives through Taylor & Francis as well as our past web chat recordings, including those on useful evaluation tools, culturally responsive evaluation practices, and more. [Access here.](#)

Responding to the Needs of Our Members

VSA wants to be sensitive and responsive to our members during these uncertain times. If a member is not able at this time to join or renew at the full rate, we are pleased to extend the "Continuing Member" rate of \$50, an option typically reserved for retirees or individuals in a period of career transition that makes Full Membership not possible.

We are also offering a one-time, two-year Full Membership at the discounted rate of \$200.

Please note: These options are available for a limited time.

If you can join or renew your membership at the full rate, or if you have already renewed, thank you!

Your support of the Visitor Studies Association is critical as we collectively navigate a new future for public-serving, informal learning institutions. We look forward to continuing to meet your professional needs, and to connecting with you in person as soon as we are able.

As always, please reach out to us if you would like to discuss special circumstances to retain your membership. We value each and every one of our members.

Questions or issues with your membership, please contact visitorstudies@visitorstudies.org.

[Join or renew here](#)