21st Annual
Visitor Studies Association
Conference Program

July 15 - 19, 2008
Houston, Texas
Theory, Practice & Conversations
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<td>VSA Board of Trustees Meeting</td>
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<td>Marketplace of Ideas, Products and Services Poster Session</td>
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<td>11:00 – 11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Coffee Break in the Marketplace</td>
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<td>2:00 – 3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions – One</td>
<td>Bayou Ballroom A, Bayou Ballroom B, Bluebonnet B, Whitehall Room</td>
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<td>3:00 – 3:20 p.m.</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
<td>Bluebonnet Foyer</td>
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<td>3:20 – 4:50 p.m.</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions – Two</td>
<td>Bayou Ballroom A, Bayou Ballroom B, Bluebonnet B, Whitehall Room</td>
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<td>President’s Address and VSA Business Meeting</td>
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<td>9:00 – 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Featured Presentation: Ford W. Bell, President and CEO, American Association of Museums</td>
<td>Bluebonnet Ballroom</td>
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<td>Concurrent Sessions – Three</td>
<td>Bayou Ballroom A, Bluebonnet A, Cougar Room, Whitehall Room</td>
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<td>12:30 – 2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>April Award Luncheon</td>
<td>Bayou Ballroom B</td>
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<td>2:15 – 3:15 p.m.</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions – Four</td>
<td>Bayou Ballroom A, Bluebonnet A, Bluebonnet B, Whitehall Room</td>
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<td>3:15 – 3:40 p.m.</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
<td>Bluebonnet Foyer</td>
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<td>3:40 – 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions – Five</td>
<td>Bayou Ballroom A, Bluebonnet A, Bluebonnet B, Whitehall Room</td>
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<td>5:30 – 6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>VIP Reception (by invitation only)</td>
<td>Lawndale Art Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:30 – 9:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Taste of Texas at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft</td>
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<td>9:00 – 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions – Six</td>
<td>Bayou Ballroom A, Bluebonnet B, Cougar Room, Whitehall Room</td>
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<td>10:00 – 10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
<td>Bluebonnet Foyer</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions – Seven</td>
<td>Bluebonnet A, Bluebonnet B, Cougar Room, Whitehall Room, Gulf Coast B</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:10 – 1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Closing Conversation and Luncheon (ticket required)</td>
<td>Bayou Ballroom</td>
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Dear Colleagues and Friends:

It would be difficult to think of almost anyone in our profession who does not have an opinion about visitors, evaluation, and research. Many of us do this work because we have passion about what we do, and about the changes our work can bring for visitors’ experiences and outcomes. Visitor Studies Association is about this passion and channeling it to affect change by sharing our work with each other and the larger world.

Welcome to Houston and to your VSA conference. This year, more than ever, the conference is about the attendees. Just as in our work we often give voice to the visitor, in our conference this year, we want to give true voice to the visitor studies professionals and the professionals who create the opportunities for visitor experiences. Along with a tremendously exciting array of papers, we’re focusing much of the conference on the conversations that draw us together. The conference theme — Theory, Practice, & Conversations — is meant to make truly transparent what we want to achieve in these few precious days together. We want to explore the rigor and depth of the theoretical contributions being made through visitor studies. We hope to gain new and more vital insights into how theory and practice intersect around the visitor experience. We desire to learn about the practical and innovative approaches being used by our colleagues. And more than anything else, we want to spark conversations among old friends, new colleagues, students, academics, all of us across the board.

VSA leadership has been devoting tremendous energy to moving the Association forward through planning, addressing future needs, and building a solid base for growth and maturation. The Conference Planning Committee and Professional Development Committee have been committed to integrating the conference into the larger vision for the Association. Hence, the theme and the call for engagement in ever expanding ways.

Your charge is to engage—in the plenary gatherings where conversations drive the program; in the opportunities for hallway conversation; in the written thoughts of the conversation wall; in the quiet room; and in the program sessions that range from panels, papers, and posters to more intentional conversations in the roundtables, dialogues, and discussions. The old adage that you take from a conference what you put into it will never be truer than it is this year. So engage. Reflect. Think. Challenge. Enjoy. Have fun this week. Learn lots, share lots, and converse more. Looking forward to talking with you,

Kathleen McLean, 
President

Joe E. Heimlich, 
Program Co-Chair
What you need to know ...

REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION DESK
Check in at the Registration Desk, located in the Bluebonnet Foyer, for conference materials, badges, tickets, and information. Learn more about the Houston Museum District and other regional attractions from local hosts who will be on site to help you make the most of your visit.

Registration Desk Hours:
Monday, July 14, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, July 15, 8:00 – 11:00 a.m.
and 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday, July 16, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Thursday, July 17, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Friday, July 18, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

ABSTRACTS
The 2008 Abstracts publication, included in your conference bag, provides overviews of all papers and posters to be presented. Additional copies are available for sale at the Registration Desk.

QUIET SPACE
Looking for a place to review your notes? Do you need a moment to gather your thoughts? Houston A room is set up for you. No cell phones, no loud conversation, no meetings … step in and clear your mind. The Quiet Space is open from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. from Thursday, July 17 – Saturday, July 19.

EXPLORING HOUSTON
The following institutions will offer free general admission July 14-20 to conference delegates (must show conference name badge):
- Buffalo Soldiers National Museum*
- Children’s Museum of Houston*
- Czech Center Museum Houston*
- The Health Museum*
- The Heritage Society**
- Houston Fire Museum
- Houston Museum of Natural Science*
- The John C. Freeman Weather Museum*
- Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*

* located in the Houston Museum District
** located in downtown Houston

CONFERENCE EVENTS
Tickets are required for the following events. (Tickets are not available on site; however a ticket Exchange Board will be located in the Registration area. If you have an extra ticket or are looking for one, please check the Exchange Board). Buses will depart from the Smith Street Lobby entrance.

Dinner, Dancing and Dialogue: A Progressive Dinner in the Houston Museum District
Wednesday, July 16, 6:00 – 11:00 p.m.
FREE with full conference registration, advance reservation is required.
Sponsored by the Houston Museum District Association and Greater Houston Convention & Visitors Bureau.

A Night of Irreverence at The Orange Show Center for Visionary Art
Thursday, July 17, 7:00 – 9:30 p.m., $45
Taste of Texas at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft
Friday, July 18, 6:30 – 9:00 p.m., $45
If you’re interested in checking out Houston’s light rail system, meet at the Registration Desk at 5:15 pm. Houston Greeters will guide you from the hotel to the Craft Center via METRORail.

MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS, PRODUCTS, AND SERVICES
Join us in the Bayou Ballroom on Thursday, July 17, from 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. to learn more about resources available to help you better understand and serve visitors. Make sure to take some time to meet VSA conference sponsors and exhibitors – and you can check out the poster session at the same time!

11th Annual April Award Luncheon
Friday, July 18, 12:30 – 2:00 p.m., $40
Bayou Ballroom B

Closing Luncheon
Saturday, July 19, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m., Free
(advance reservation is required)
Bluebonnet A

2nd Annual Membership and New Attendees Coffee Talk
Thursday, July 17, 8:00 – 9:00 a.m., Free
(registration not required)
Bluebonnet Ballroom
New conference attendees, members and prospective members are welcome.

VSA COMMITTEE MEETINGS
Get involved in your association. Find out more about VSA Committees and how you can take part during the Marketplace on Thursday, July 17, from 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Several committees will also be holding meetings during the conference. A preliminary schedule is listed below. Please check the bulletin board at the Registration Desk for meeting locations and more information. To learn more about VSA Committees, see page 12.

Board Development Committee Meeting
Thursday, July 17, 12:30 – 1:45 p.m.

Professional Development Committee Meeting
Thursday, July 17, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Publications Committee Meeting
Thursday, July 17, 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Conference Planning Committee 2008/2009
Friday, July 18, 9:30 – 10:30 p.m.
Pre-Conference Workshops
Tuesday, July 15 – Wednesday, July 16

Tuesday, July 15

Full Day Workshops, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

How to Design Evaluation Studies
Conference Hotel, Whitehall Room
Kerry Bronnenkant, Senior Research Associate, Institute for Learning Innovation
Jessica Luke, Senior Research Associate, Institute for Learning Innovation
Melissa Wadman, Impact Evaluation, Office of the President, Liberty Science Center

Make the Most of Visitor Comments: How to Code Data
Houston Center for Photography, 1441 West Alabama
Elisa Israel, Research and Evaluation Manager, St. Louis Science Center
Jennifer Heim, Senior Research & Evaluation Associate, St. Louis Science Center

Get off the Island: Finding and Funding Your Research Team
The Jung Center, 5200 Montrose Blvd.
Kathleen Tinworth, Manager of Visitor Research and Program Evaluation, Denver Museum of Nature & Science

Delving into the Mechanics of Measuring: With a Focus on Attitude
Children’s Museum of Houston, 1500 Binz
Emma Norland, Senior Researcher, Institute for Learning Innovation
Joe E. Heimlich, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist OSU Extension@COSI

Half-Day Workshops, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Using Wikis for Project Management
Rice University, Sewall Hall, 6100 Main Street
Ies Koepfler, Graduate Student, University of Toronto, Faculty of Information Studies, Museum Studies Program
Nick Gamble, Graduate Student, University of Toronto, Faculty of Information Studies, Museum Studies Program

For those interested in walking as a group to the workshop, meet in the hotel lobby at 8 a.m. to be escorted by a Houston Greeter to Rice University.

Tuesday, July 15

Half-Day Workshops, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

What Research Tells Us about Working with Teachers
Children’s Museum of Houston, 1500 Binz
James Kisel, Assistant Professor, Science Education, California State University, Long Beach

Researching the Messy Real World: A Look at Quasi-Experimental Designs
Conference Hotel, Cougar Room
Mary Ellen Munley, Principal, MEM and Associates

Make the Most of Visitor Comments: How to Code Data
Houston Center for Photography, 1441 West Alabama
Elisa Israel, Research and Evaluation Manager, St. Louis Science Center
Jennifer Heim, Senior Research & Evaluation Associate, St. Louis Science Center

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“Are You Talking to Me?“ Can Results from Science Museums Be Useful to Art and Design Museums?
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 5601 Main Street
Sofie Davis, Audience Researcher, Science Museum, London

For those interested in walking as a group to the workshop, meet in the hotel lobby at 8 a.m. to be escorted by a Houston Greeter to Rice University.

Wednesday, July 16

Half-Day Workshop, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Developing Learning Outcomes
Holocaust Museum Houston, 5401 Caroline Street
G-Gina Koutsika, Head of Gallery Learning, The Natural History Museum, London

Half-Day Workshop, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Getting Published
Museum of Printing History, 1324 W. Clay Street
Jan Packer, Senior Research Fellow, School of Tourism, University of Queensland
Roy Ballantyne, Professor, Head of School of Tourism, University of Queensland

Registration is required (Fee: Full Day Workshop – $125 Member, $155 non-Member; Half-day Workshop – $65 Member, $80 non-Member). Registration may be available on-site pending space availability. For more information, please visit the Registration Desk.

Attendees are responsible for transportation to and from workshop locations. Please check for transportation information, including those seeking shared taxi rides, at the Registration Desk.
## Conference Schedule

### Wednesday, July 16

**6:00 – 11:00 p.m.**

**Dinner, Dancing and Dialogue:**

A Progressive Dinner in the Houston Museum District  
**FREE with full conference registration**

Converse with colleagues and explore three of Houston’s finest museums to kick-off the conference. The evening begins with cocktails and hors d’oeuvres at the Children’s Museum of Houston, one of the top Children’s Museums in the country. Then it’s on to an elegant dinner among the masterpieces at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, where you’ll be treated to a unique performance by the Houston-based Hope Stone Dance Company. Created especially for VSA, this interpretation of visitor experience through dance is sure to spark further dialogue. The celebration wraps up with dessert and dancing under the dinosaurs at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, followed by a special after-hours flashlight tour of the museum!

*Sponsored by the Houston Museum District Association and the Greater Houston Convention & Visitors Bureau, this event is free with full conference registration. Pre-registration is required. Buses depart at 5:30 p.m. Meet at the Smith Street Lobby entrance.*

### Thursday, July 17

**8:00 – 9:00 a.m.**

**2nd Annual Membership and New Attendees Coffee Talk**  
Bluebonnet Ballroom  
**Sponsored by:**  
Don Harrington Discovery Center and Gallagher & Associates

VSAs Membership Committee invites new attendees, members and prospective members for coffee and conversation! This is an opportunity to meet other members, network with colleagues, see what VSA membership is all about and share your ideas about how VSA might better serve your needs. Hope to see you there! Don’t miss this opportunity to see old and new friends and to win fabulous door prizes.  
*Free. Registration is not required for this event.*

### 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

**Welcome and Opening Group Plenary**  
Bluebonnet Ballroom  
**Sponsored by:**  
Graduate Program in Museum Studies at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and Fort Worth Museum of Science and History

This year’s opening plenary is designed to bring the memorable hallway, cocktail and dinner conversations directly into the conference. Share your thoughts and find out what your colleague’s are pondering through structured conversation. You’ll have the opportunity to stretch your thinking and your creativity as you delve into new ideas and approaches through short presentations mixed with small group interaction. This should be one of the best opening sessions ever as the speaker is ... YOU!

**11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**Marketplace of Ideas, Products, and Services**  
Bayou Ballroom  
**Sponsored by:**  
Institute for Learning Innovation

Stop by the Marketplace and meet conference sponsors and exhibitors. Find out more about the resources that are available to help you better understand and serve visitors. While you’re visiting the Marketplace, stop by the VSA Committee Tables and learn how you can become more involved in VSA.

### Poster Session

**Bayou Ballroom**  
**Sponsored by:**  
Studiocode

- **Are We Talking about the Same Thing? Language and Culture Issues in Cross-Sector Partnerships**  
  Elizabeth Cook

- **Bringing Evaluation into the Fold: Evaluating Exhibitions at the Columbus Museum of Art**  
  Victor Yocco

- **Defining Enjoyment in Zoos: A Review of Findings and Methods in a Q-Methodology Study**  
  Jessica Sickler, John Fraser

- **Evaluation of Science Café Meetings in the Research Triangle Area**  
  Stephen Bitgood

- **Facing the Challenges of Evaluating Programs on the Exhibit Floor**  
  Kelly Lidinsky

- **Focus Group to Go: The Pros and Cons of Recruiting External Community Groups**  
  Elizabeth Daigneault

### Getting the Dialogue Started: Lessons Learned from the Development of a Statewide Interest Group

**Toni Dancu, Alicia Duncan**

- **LibraryThing: Sharing Books, Making Connections**  
  Cate Rhodes, Marcie Benne

- **A New Light on Old Data: Re-examining Melton’s (1935) Findings**  
  Stephen Bitgood, Renee Burt

- **Tools and Methods behind a Rigorous Video-Analysis Research Project**  
  Adam Allen Klinger, Sue Allen

- **Using Games as Data Collection Tools**  
  Erin Johnson, Jessica Sickler

- **Whose Museum is it Anyway? Why Community Engagement is Vital for Creating a New Museum in the 21st Century**  
  Sam Graves

### 11:00 – 11:30 a.m.

**Coffee Break**  
Bayou Ballroom

### 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

**Lunch (on your own)**

### 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

**Concurrent Sessions – One**

**Whitehall Room**

**Meeting in the Middle: Teaming External and Internal Evaluations to Achieve Goals**  
**Kathleen Tinworth**

This presentation chronicles two successful examples of an internal evaluator working with external evaluators at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science. Lessons to be shared include: how to develop and maintain positive working relationships, how to achieve consistency in methodology, design, and data collection, and how to put it all together to accomplish valid and reliable results.

**Museums as a Setting and Test Ground for Student Research**  
**Judith Larsen, Kesha Williams, Regina Hall**

The University of Cincinnati and the children’s and natural history museums at Cincinnati Museum Center collaborated to create a class that engaged students in research and practical design to enhance informal learning. Program developers will share the preliminary results, challenges, and benefits of this partnership.
Bayou Ballroom A
Action Research in an Informal Science Setting: Lessons from Zoo Educators
Lisa-Anne DeGregoria Kelly, Leah Pohl

Action research serves as a bridge between research and practice whereby educational practitioners conduct research in order to test strategies to solve challenges present in their instructional practice. In this session presenters share firsthand experience introducing and applying action research in a zoo setting.

Bayou Ballroom B
Visitor Panels: Interpreting and Incorporating Formative Evaluation in Institutional Planning
Daryl Fischer, Julia Forbes, Frank Lopez

Hear from two very different institutions that have used visitor panels to gather feedback in a way that allows internal team members to have direct contact with audiences, process qualitative data, and use it in planning. Presenters share the process and techniques, and reflect on the successes and challenges of this approach.

Bluebonnet B
Leveraging Evaluation Beyond a Single Project
Cecilia Garibay, Christina Schmidt-McKee, Lynn McRainey, Leticia Perez-Castellanos

Evaluation often focuses on assessing a specific project with results from a single study typically aimed to inform that one initiative. There are situations, however, when it is possible to leverage a project-specific evaluation in order to inform other activities in the organization. This session brings together two evaluators and two practitioners to discuss such possibilities. Using examples from three institutions and relevant literature, this session will help practitioners begin to vision evaluation beyond a single project model.

3:00 – 3:20 p.m.
Coffee Break
Bluebonnet Foyer

3:20 – 4:50 p.m.
Concurrent Sessions – Two

Whitehall Room
Engage and Educate Visitors while Collecting Data: How Cell Phones are Transforming the Museum Experience
David Asheim, George Ramirez, Damon Waitt, Steven Gemmel, Darren Rudloff, Margaret Fischer

The use of cell phones in museum settings provides the opportunity or new ways of learning about and evaluating visitor experience. Hear from organizations that have utilized cell phones in their visitor experiences and learn about the challenges and benefits of the cell phone as a tool for interpretation and data collection.

Bayou Ballroom B
Conversations across Disciplines: From Theory to Practice – The Spiral Model
Margaret Evans, Martin Weiss, Judy Koke, Martin Storksdieck, Jeff Kennedy

The gap between research, theory, and exhibit design is often difficult to bridge. In this panel presenters discuss the way in which they bridged this gap in the development process for “Life Changes,” an NSF-funded traveling exhibit. Panelists will describe an iterative exhibit development process, called the spiral model, in which the phases of research, design, and evaluation were repeatedly revisited. The opportunities and challenges that were encountered during the project experience will be addressed.

Bluebonnet B
Developing, Validating, and Implementing Standardized Evaluation Instruments: A Conversation
Rick Bonney, Kate Haley-Goldman, Kirsten Ellenbogen

The idea of developing “standardized” evaluation instruments to allow comparisons of audience characteristics across projects is often discussed among educators and evaluators. Designing such instruments is fraught with challenge. Such variation exists across audiences and project goals and objectives that designing “one size fits all” instruments is nearly impossible. Through deconstruction of specific examples, presenters will examine the feasibility of using standardized instruments. Discussion will consider whether the field might design, test, and offer standardized evaluation strategies that could be used to develop instruments that would enable comparisons, but could be tailored to specific types of evaluations and audiences.

Cougar Room
Swap Stories: How Do You Overcome Real-World Challenges in Logic Modeling?
Marcie Benne, Scott Ewing, Cate Rhodes

Discuss real-life challenges and tactics when using logic models in exhibit and program development processes in this participant-driven session for evaluators who want to provide and gain practical advice on common challenges to using logic models. Session facilitators will briefly share information about logic model use and benefits in informal settings, then facilitate peer discussion around challenges and tactics for using logic models in complex, imperfect, dynamic development scenarios. Serving as an evaluator requires artful techniques; let’s swap stories about our art.

7:00 – 9:30 p.m.
A Night of Irreverence at The Orange Show Center for Visionary Art, $45

Explore the creativity, ingenuity and independent spirit of The Orange Show. This zany outdoor maze-like monument was envisioned, designed, and created by one man, and sets the stage for exploring the creativity and quirkiness of visionary art. Put on your sneakers, t-shirt and shorts and experience Houston’s local color at this informal event under the Texas stars. While you explore you’ll feast on some of the city’s best Mexican food and music.

Pre-registration required. Includes dinner, entertainment, and transportation. Cash bar will be available. In the event of rain, this event will be held at an alternate venue. Bus departs at 6:30 p.m. from the Smith Street Lobby entrance.
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| 8:30 – 9:00 a.m. | President’s Address and VSA Business Meeting  
Bluebonnet Ballroom |
| 8:30 – 9:00 a.m. | Keynote Presentation: Dr. Ford W. Bell  
Bluebonnet Ballroom  
Sponsored by: Informal Learning Experiences and the following members of The Museum Group – Carol Bossert, Daryl Fischer, Mary Kay Ingenthorn, Mary Ellen Munley, Judy Rand, Paul Richard |
| 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. | Coffee Break  
Bluebonnet Foyer |
| 10:00 – 10:30 a.m. | Concurrent Sessions – Three  
Whitehall Room  
Taking Action towards Inclusion: Educators and Researchers Working Together to Achieve Universal Design  
Christine Reich, Anna Lindgren-Streicher, Amy Grack Nelson, Susan Sunbury |
| 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Innovative Evaluation Plans: Means to Facilitate Partnerships between Museums and Schools  
Giuseppe “Pino” Monaco, Jessica Luke, Johanna Jones |
| 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. | 12th Annual April Award Luncheon  
Bayou Ballroom B  
Luncheon sponsored by Operand |

Education has been a centerpiece of Dr. Bell’s life for nearly 40 years. A respected academic and researcher, he has lectured and published extensively. Since 1995, he has served as a Clinical Assistant Professor of Oncology at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine and lectured on a wide variety of topics before foundations, medical associations and universities. He has advocated extensively for science learning, conservation and community health initiatives through his affiliation with a wide range of organizations.

As President & CEO of the American Association of Museums, Ford Bell brings an impressive record of scholarship, community engagement, proven leadership and a passion for championing museums as places of lifelong learning and enjoyment. Bell’s career extends from the humanities to the nonprofit worlds. His many public service endeavors underscore his commitment to developing organizations and strengthening communities. Bell will share his perspectives on the future of museums and the importance of visitor experience in shaping that future.

Bluebonnet A  
Discussing NSF’s New Framework for Planning and Evaluating Impacts  
Sue Allen, Alan Friedman, Cecilia Garibay, G-Gina Koutsika

The Informal Science Education program at NSF is developing a new online monitoring system to help the field synthesize its findings, and to assist the NSF in understanding its overall impact on STEM education. In 2007, ISE program officers invited a group of evaluation experts to write a guidebook that describes, for potential project PI’s and summative evaluators, how to apply this system to various types of projects. This session provides an overview of the motivation, process and content of the guidebook, an opportunity for extended Q&A by potential ISE-fundees and evaluators, and a place for the airing of concerns and responses from the visitor studies field.

Cougar Room  
Applying Behavioral Economic Theories to Visitor Behavior  
Stephen Bitgood, Krista White, Renee Burt, Stephany Dukes

This session will provide an overview of behavioral economic theory and describe how it has been and can be applied to visitor choice behavior in museums. Presentations will include an overview of behavioral economic theories and in-depth examination of the temporal discounting model, optimal foraging theory, and the matching law.

"Today, more than ever, museums are an integral part of the foundation of our civic life in America. They help us understand each other, as well as ourselves, and in doing so allow us to face the challenges of the future, grounded in the lessons of our shared history."  
– Ford Bell

The 2008 April Award recipient is Sofie Davis, Audience Researcher at The Science Museum, London. This year’s featured speaker, Julie I. Johnson, will reflect on the past and look toward the future to provide a snapshot of visitor studies in the present; the theories, practice, and conversations that will allow visitor studies to continue to influence informal learning settings. Ms. Johnson is Distinguished Chair of Museum Leadership at the Science Museum of Minnesota. She serves on the VSA Board of Directors as Vice President for Professional Development, is co-chair of the CAISE steering committee, and is a former NSF program officer.
Researchers in visitor studies face a number of challenges in attaining validity and reliability including small sample sizes and limited time and budgets. Enhancing reliability and validity is important for the credibility, accuracy, and usefulness of their work. Methodological triangulation – the collection and use of various sources of data to address a question of interest – is a key way in which reliability and validity can be enhanced. This session introduces and discusses three examples of how triangulation has been used in visitor studies research.

**Bayou Ballroom A**

**The Relationship between Exhibition Environments and Visitors’ Behaviors**

Betsy Adamson

This presentation shares the results of a study conducted at Explora that looked at the relationship of physical environments to visitor behaviors in an informal learning setting. The research question addressed whether or not the presence of space-defining walls among the exhibits influenced visitor behavior at the exhibits.

**Post-Visit “Action Resourcing”: Promoting and Supporting Visitors’ Adoption of Environmentally Sustainable Behavior**

Roy Ballantyne, Jan Packer

Research indicates that although participants in eco- and wildlife tourism experiences often leave with heightened awareness of conservation issues and intentions to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors, only a minority translate those intentions into action. This presentation identifies stages in the learning process and proposes a strategy for facilitating the translation of good intentions into the adoption of everyday sustainable actions.

**Bluebonnet A**

**Symbiosis or Culture Clash: Research in Museums**

Minda Borun, Suzanne Gaskins, Tsivia Cohen, Kirsten Ellenbogen

What keeps researchers from undertaking museum-relevant studies and what keeps museum practitioners from understanding or applying research? Why is it important to do research distinct from evaluation? Museums are rich environments for basic research while at the same time they pose a number of obstacles. Moreover, research, while trying to answer larger questions, is not intended to address the more immediate questions that museums, as complicated businesses with a range of visitors, need evaluation to answer. Given this, why and how should museums incorporate research—whether initiated from within or developed from collaboration with academics or other museums? Presenters discuss strategies for making research studies more practical and relevant both to researchers and to practitioners.

**Bluebonnet B**

**The Use of Community Facilitators to Enhance Visitor Outcomes: Findings from Space**

Kathleen Tinworth, Robert Jakubowski

In collaboration with the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, researchers from the Colorado State University evaluated the role that community members trained as gallery facilitators had on visitor experience in an interactive space gallery. Based on these findings, the presenters will discuss the use of gallery facilitators and their potential impact on visitor outcomes.

**Using the Educator Voice and Evaluation to Improve Exhibit Design Practice**

Elizabeth Kunz Kollman

This session presents a study conducted to discover how educators scaffold and support visitor use of an engineering design activity in order to improve the creation of stand-alone exhibits. The discussion will focus on the benefits of using practitioners, and not just visitors, as sources of data and on increasing understanding and application of the ways in which research can be used to influence exhibit design.

## Congratulations to recipients of the April Award and Student Scholarships

The April Award and Student Scholarship programs help bring new talent to the field of visitor studies and the Visitor Studies Association. VSA is pleased to welcome the following recipients to their first Visitor Studies Conference:

12th Annual April Award: Sofie Davis, The Science Museum, London. Meet Sofie at the April Award Luncheon on Friday, July 18. The April Award was established by Dr. Marilyn (Molly) Hood to honor the memory of her longtime research assistant April Lahn.

2008 Student Scholarships:

- Sarah Cohn, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- Preeti Gupta, CUNY Graduate Center
- Tammy Messick, Brigham Young University

The Student Scholarship program supports first-time conference attendance for active students interested in the field of visitor studies.
3:40 – 5:00 p.m.
Concurrent Sessions – Five (cont.)

Building Visitor Advocacy: Not Only Are They Visiting but They Are Also Talking about Us!
Carolyn Meehan
Based on a study conducted at Museum Victoria, this presentation provides a methodology for identifying museums’ advocacy drivers — those attributes that will make visitors more likely to recommend visiting. The session will also describe how outcomes of the research are directly linked to the work of the organization to effect changes that are visitor-driven.

Towards Creating Sustained Dialogue Relationships with Visitors
Theano Moussouri
Visitor Studies uses a range of approaches and methods for teams to ‘listen to visitors’ and introduce empirical evidence into decision-making. This presentation posits that the influence of the team’s perceptions about the museum-visitor relationship extends to the choice of methods used to conduct visitor studies. Focusing on a recent formative evaluation, the presenter will discuss how in-gallery evaluation and audience panels facilitates a dialectic between the team and the visitors, and results in new partnerships.

Bayou Ballroom A
Practicing Interpretive Planning: Intentions vs. Actions
Preethi Mony, Joe E. Heimlich
Based on a study conducted at a state forest in the Midwest, this presentation examines an ongoing interpretive planning process to compare theory and practice. The findings show that most participants were not familiar with the theory of interpretive planning, and as a result many of the steps of the process were omitted. Expectations were divergent; however, participants felt satisfied with the overall progress and believed that goals would be met. Findings of the study will be further discussed.

Let’s Make it Human: Evaluating Impact and Outcomes of First-Person Enactors
Kathleen Tinworth
This presentation focuses on a study of the qualitative and quantitative impact of first-person enactors on visitor experience at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science’s showing of “Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition.”

The rationale and hypotheses behind the research project, design and methodology, data collection, analysis and results will be outlined.

Bluebonnet A
Beyond Entrance Fees: Using Economics to Understand Visitors’ Experiences at Museums
Caren Oberg, Leticia Perez-Castellanos
Visitor studies continues to seek new ways to understand visitors’ motivations for participating in museum experiences. Through the examination of two recent evaluation projects, this presentation illustrates how the study of incentives, a key idea in economics, can be used to explain visitor motivations for participation, especially when traditional models of motivation do not strongly indicate or explain visitor behavior.

Attracting New Citizen Scientists: One Project, Multiple Entry Points
Stephanie Thompson, Rick Bonney
Citizen science is intended to be, in part, a tool for educating the public and affecting positive behavioral change. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s extensive suite of citizen science projects has traditionally attracted audiences already possessing extensive bird knowledge and engaging in conservation-friendly behaviors. This presentation reviews findings about the Lab’s newest citizen science project, NestWatch, which included in its design an examination of making citizen science accessible to a broader audience.

Bluebonnet B
Roundtables
These roundtable discussions present works in progress and offer an opportunity to discuss in small groups a variety of methodologies and approaches.

- Using Rubrics to Quantify Qualitative Data
  Stephanie Downey
- A Question of Standards: The Role of the Museum in Public Education
  Becky Seabrook
- Mission Related Indicators as a Product of a Zoo Educator Professional Development Program
  Lisa-Anne DeGregoria Kelly
- Using Multiple Measures to Define Success for a Special Exhibit
  Jon Deuel, Steven Yalowitz

Cougar Room
Where Am I? Using Untours to Learn How Under-represented Populations Experience a Visit
Emily Meyer, Preethi Mony, Nadya Bennett, Victor Yocco, Josh Hause, Scott Stuckman

Many studies have indicated that under-represented populations are not visitors because they do not “see themselves” in the museum. This study shares findings and insights obtained through using untours with one targeted minority population at two different institutions to try to find out what seeing themselves would mean for a museum of art and for a conservatory and garden.

Universal Design Research: People with Visual Impairments Evaluate Tactile Exhibits for an Aquarium
Ellen Giusti

Learn about research conducted as part of the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shore’s project to develop a tactile exhibit with user initiated integral audio descriptive information. In addition to providing information in a way that is not currently available in aquaria, this project informs the testing and development of tactile exhibit elements based on universal design best practices, which are applicable to other types of informal learning environments.

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
VIP Reception (by invitation only)
Sponsored by Independent Exhibitions
Lawndale Art Center

Bus departs from the Smith Street Lobby entrance at 5:15 p.m.
6:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Taste of Texas at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, $45

Calling all cowboys, cowgirls and city slickers! Saddle up for a hoot’ and hollerin’ good time at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft in the Houston Museum District. Chow down on authentic Texas BBQ, beer and wine. Rustle up local art in CraftTexas 2008, an annual juried exhibition showcasing the best in Texas-made contemporary craft. Do-si-do with resident artists as they demonstrate the dynamic world of their process and craftsmanship. Sashay through the museum’s outdoor craft garden and boot-scot with the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo entertainers.

Pre-registration required. Includes buffet dinner, one beer or wine, and bus transportation. Bus departs at 6 p.m. from the Smith Street Lobby entrance. If you’re interested in checking out Houston’s light rail system, meet at the Registration Desk at 5:15 pm. Houston Greeters will guide you from the hotel to the Craft Center via METRORail.

Saturday, July 19

8:00 – 8:50 a.m.
Visitor Studies Editorial Board Meeting
Houston A

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
Concurrent Sessions – Six

Whitehall Room
Front-End, Formative and Longitudinal Research from Liberty Science Center’s Science Now, Science Everywhere Project
Wayne LaBar, Jim Katz, Kate Haley-Goldman

Hundreds of museums have invited visitors to use their own handheld technologies, such as MP3 players and mobile phones, within the museum environment. Use of this technology in informal learning raises many questions. Are visitors willing to use their own devices? What are the barriers to using these devices in the museum? What kind of content should museums be providing? Are museums able to engage teenagers – specifically – with science center content through the medium of the mobile phone? Research focusing on these and other questions will be discussed from the perspectives of the institution, researchers, and evaluators.

Bluebonnet A
Talk amongst Yourselves: A Study of Mediation and Activity
Joe E. Heimlich, Emily Meyer

Mediated learning is about changing how people think: this session is designed to help change the way participants think about mediated learning experiences. The use of three forms of mediation will share the findings and conclusions from a study on preferences for mediations by youth in a science center. This will be followed by a group discussion of the role of mediation in museums.

Remember the Time When... Investigating Associations and Connections Made by Visitors at Museums and other Sites
Ashley Harris

By capturing the associations and stories that people create while at museums the research presented in this session seeks to identify common structures or elements that are used in creating a ‘narrative’ of the on-site experience. The presenter explains how she has studied visitor behavior using the theory of intertextuality, a premise commonly used in literary theory to illustrate how texts are created from other previous texts.

10:00 – 10:30 a.m.
Coffee Break
Bluebonnet Foyer

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Concurrent Sessions – Seven

Whitehall Room
Moving from Objectives to Outcomes: One Museum’s Journey
K. Allison Wickers

The Detroit Institute of Arts re-opened last year after a comprehensive rethinking and reinstallation of its exhibitions. Staffers believe the project is noteworthy for its: commitment to accessibility—attempting to address the needs of a broad audience; investment in evaluation—employing two full-time staff and three consultants; use of interdisciplinary development teams—including curators, educators, and marketing staff; integration of interpretation in the galleries—placing all interpretive materials near works of art; and scope—covering 150,000 square feet of exhibitions. This session shares 20 lessons learned over the course of the project, and is intended to spark discussion about relationships between project management, interpretation, and evaluation in exhibition development.

Cougars Room
Small Changes, Big Impacts: Important Lessons Learned for the Design of Mechanical Interactives
Sofie Davis

Through an inside look at the re-opening of Launchpad, the most popular gallery of the Science Museum (London), find out how evaluation played a significant role in enriching visitor experience. Through the formative evaluation conducted, new lessons were learned about interpretation, methods of supporting social interaction, and the ways in which small design changes can improve visitor experiences.

Research in Visitor Studies Applied to Electronic Curriculum Development for Better Learning in Formal Education
Betsy Price

This presentation examines the ways in which research in visitor studies can be applied by teachers to evaluate the learning quality of electronic curriculum and to improve the effective use of the curriculum in the classroom.

20 Lessons Learned in Five Years
Matt Sikora, Swarupa Anila, Kenneth Morris, David Penney

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The presentation will discuss the pre and post 9/11 evaluation findings and their incorporation into the exhibition development and design. Preliminary results of the summative evaluation will also be shared.
Perceived Value of Zoos and Aquariums. Whether marketing models such as segmentation have any relevance to museums and other cultural organizations. This presentation will explore findings from a pilot study conducted to lay groundwork for more gender studies of visitors. This session shares findings from the pilot study as well as the challenges identified in the instruments and methods.

Can Segmenting Our Visitors Inform Our Work?
Carolyn Meehan

Starting with the principles of segmentation – what it is, advantages and disadvantages of different types of segmentation – this session will discuss whether marketing models such as segmentation have any relevance to museums and other cultural organizations. This presentation will explore the benefits and limitations of segmenting cultural audiences, the use of segmentation in developing communication messages and delivering exhibition experiences, and the methods by which satisfaction is tracked.

Visitation by Gays and Lesbians: Findings from a Pilot Study
Joe E. Heimlich, Judy Koke

One of the demographics rarely included in visitor studies is gender, even though gender can be an important component of a visitor’s identification with an institution. A pilot study of gay and lesbian visitors to cultural institutions was conducted to lay groundwork for more gender studies of visitors. This session shares findings from the pilot study as well as the challenges identified in the instruments and methods.

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Bluebonnet B
Restorative environments, particularly in natural settings, have been found to have a combination of attributes that facilitate recovery from mental fatigue. This presentation explores the extent to which museums, art galleries, aquariums, and botanic gardens possess the attributes to provide restorative experiences.

Finding Common Ground within Communities: Value Connections between Zoos and Communities of Faith
Jessica Sickler, Kathleen Condon

This presentation will delve into findings from one study part of a three-year IMLS-funded research project at the Wildlife Conservation Society, assessing the Perceived Value of Zoos and Aquariums. The study examined the connections, conflicts, value, and relevance of zoos and aquariums to spiritual and faith-based communities and traditions in the United States.

Cougar Room
Risk Business: Linking Risk Communication Theory and Research with Environmental Education and Communication Programs
Sheila Luey, Jenny Klaflki

Visitors to Banff National Park are often motivated by the possibility of seeing bears and other large animals during their visit. This session presents an overview of research assessing the effectiveness of educational programming intended to help visitors understand the importance of bears to the ecosystem and the risks entailed in approaching bears too closely. Discussion will include: the theoretical background to the study; a summary of the methodology and analysis of the data; and a description of how the findings and the theory were applied to assess the efficacy of educational programs and make modifications.

In This Together: Evaluators and Practitioners Creating Quality Reflective Programming
Erin Stafford, Mary Wedow

The Evaluation & Planning team at the Museum of Science & Industry is committed to using research and evaluation to inform program development and understand audiences. In this presentation, the internal evaluator and a member of the program staff share their perspectives on the ongoing formative evaluation of the Teacher Professional Development Series. Team members discuss challenges and successes of their work, and how their method has led to changes in programming and practice.

Gulf Coast B
Evaluation is a Connection between Marketing and Mission
Linda Wilson

Marketing is an increasingly important part of cultural institution planning. Using examples from the Shedd Aquarium, this presentation focuses on how marketing, public relations and sponsorship programs are evaluated, and explores the connections between market-related aspects of an institution and exhibit and program evaluation.

Conference Schedule (cont.)

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Concurrent Sessions – Seven (cont.)

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Thank You 2008 Conference Sponsors

The Visitor Studies Association 21st Annual Conference is supported by businesses, organizations, and individuals committed to understanding and serving visitors in informal learning environments. Please make sure to support those whose work furthers VSA's vision of a world where lifelong learning is embraced, and where learning in informal settings benefits individuals, communities, and society at large.

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The Board Development Committee recruits, trains, and nurtures board members for the efficient and effective operation of the board. The committee reviews the organizational chart annually and makes recommendations to the Executive Committee regarding the structure and organization of board committees. This committee is also responsible for the care and feeding of the current board. This might include making recommendations about professional development opportunities, social activities, board orientation, new member training, awards, commendations, board member departures (i.e. gifts), etc.

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Chair, Matt Sikora
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The Membership Committee works collaboratively with other VSA Committees and Task Forces to: gather input from the membership at regular intervals; maintain a current membership profile and track and project trends in that profile; identify members’ needs for programs, services, and benefits; identify potential members, crafting strategies to attract and serve them; develop and implement strategies to build and retain membership; work with Association Manager regarding policies and procedures related to membership management and retention.

Resource Development Committee
Chair, Robert “Mac” West
Vice Chair, Caren Oberg
Members: Conny Graft, Karen Graham, Jeff Kennedy

The Resource Development Committee organizes, coordinates, and facilitates all planning and implementation related to the financial growth and development of the organization including increasing earned income, contributed income, and in-kind contributions. The committee insures that all fundraising efforts are consistent with the mission and goals of the organization.
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Chair, Nikki Andersen
Vice Chair, Judith Larsen
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Conference Planning Committee Members: Joe E. Heimlich, Elisa Israel, Cheryl Kessler, Judith Larsen, Caren Obeg, Monica Rhodes, Jessica Sickler, Robert “Mac” West
The Conference Oversight Committee oversees the conference site selection, program, and logistics for each annual VSA conference and serves as VSA board liaison for those functions. This committee is responsible for setting the strategy and logistics for future conference site selection. The committee provides guidance to the Conference Planning subcommittee and Local Host Committee, both of which are convened annually to design, recruit, and organize the conference program for the following year.

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Members: Rick Bonney, Kathy Condon, Rita Deedrick, Jennifer Dewitt, Lynn Dierking, Kelly Lidinsky, Dale McCreedy, Emma Norland, Kathleen Tinworth, Amy Rack Nelson, Angela Wenger
The Professional Development Committee is responsible for providing training and growth opportunities for VSA members and other museum professionals. The Committee develops, organizes, and facilitates all training opportunities and professional development for VSA including workshops for VSA members and others interested in the discipline, visitor studies training for other organizations, certification recommendations, etc. This committee is responsible for facilitating the workshops that are a part of the Annual Conference.

Publications Committee
Chair, Martin Starksdieck
Vice Chair, Jim Kisiel
The Publications Committee provides oversight for all publications related to the mission of VSA. This includes serving as the VSA liaison with Francis and Taylor (publishers of the association’s journal Visitor Studies), working with the editors and editorial board of the journal, and overseeing facilitation of the VSA website. This committee is also responsible for development of the Conference Abstracts publication and all other publication-related VSA activities and strategies.

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Chair: Dorothy Chen-Courtin
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Working with Committees as needed, the Marketing and Public Relations Resource Group supports increased awareness and positioning of VSA core activities including professional development, conference, publications, membership, and overall mission. The MPRRG also coordinates all aspects of the E-News.
Visitor Studies Association

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