CALL FOR PROPOSALS

VISITOR STUDIES GROUP CONFERENCE 2019

Thursday 7th and Friday 8th March 2019, National Gallery, London

Visitor Studies: Reflecting the Wider World, Advocating for Change?

The Visitor Studies Group

The Visitor Studies Group is a membership organisation dedicated to championing excellent visitor experiences. We promote dialogue, facilitate debate and through skills-sharing opportunities provide continuing professional development for those working in visitor studies and related areas. Our annual conference is the key event for our members to engage with each other and to address those issues which impact visitor studies and the organisations within which we work.

The VSG Conference

The annual VSG Conference 2019 will be a two-day event bringing together delegates from across the UK, Europe and beyond working in a wide range of cultural organisations (including museums, galleries, zoos, heritage sites, botanical gardens, libraries, universities and visitor attractions) as well as cross-disciplinary consultants (including audience research, evaluation, audience development, visitor studies, learning, education, community engagement and others).

The format of the two days is influenced by feedback we have received from delegates attending previous VSG Conferences. On each of the two days we will begin with inspirational keynote speakers who will set the tone and address our theme. Thereafter, the format ensures that delegates share skills and experiences through case studies and in a variety of interactive session formats. There is ample opportunity for networking (during and after each day's programme) and to gain insight into, and influence, the work of the VSG Committee.

The Conference Theme

The theme of the 2019 VSG Conference will be **Visitor Studies: Reflecting the Wider World, Advocating for Change?**

At the 2019 Visitor Studies Group Conference, we seek to explore, interrogate and understand how emerging trends – especially those borne from audience research both within and outside the sector – can help us to think about cultural organisations and the work we do.

As visitor studies practitioners seeking to understand the broad identities of our visitors, how can we respond to developments in the wider world to change our institutions and better engage with the lived experiences and needs of visitors? This could be responding to research around the digital or social time experiences of visitors, or to the ever-changing communities living and working around us. How can we use these insights to better reflect the world surrounding our organisations, and how can audience research help us change to better engage with the lived experiences and needs of visitors? Looking beyond the cultural sector, what – in an ever-changing world – can we learn from other sectors about adapting and repositioning ourselves in relation to emerging trends?

Importantly, how does all of the above impact on audience and visitor evaluation practitioners and the work we do? Do we need to redefine what success looks like – and how we capture it? What role does research play in this? How does the experience of visitors in our exhibitons and engagement programmes change?

Some of the issues we hope to explore are addressed in the bullet points below. This list is by no means exhaustive, nor is it meant to be too prescriptive.

- How is our visitor – and indeed the 'the visit' – changing? How are we addressing these changes in our institutions? What role does visitor – and non-visitor – research play in this?
- What are the emerging trends that cultural organisations such as museums, galleries, zoos, heritage sites, botanical gardens, libraries, universities and visitor attractions should be aware of, and how should we respond to them?
- How do funders respond to emerging trends and research, and how does that impact on the work of practitioners like us?
- How are visitor studies practitioners, evaluators and research practitioners learning about these trends and incorporating them into visitor studies?
- How do we modify our research methods to capture these new outcomes?
- What are the new and innovative research methods being implemented to work with audiences that are traditionally under-represented in our institutions?
- How have external trends been/ are being used as a catalyst for reimagining the visitor experience within your institution? What were the challenges? What were the successes?
- What can we learn from other sectors who readily adapt to the changing habits of their audiences? How might design practice and process be understood as research methodology, and how can this be applied in museums?
- What opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration have been – and are presently – being utilised between museums and external agencies/ institutions to help advocate for institutional change to meet changing visitor needs?

We encourage you to bring fresh perspectives from both inside and outside the sector that can help us begin to make sense of, and respond to, emerging trends and methodologies. We welcome input from all those who can address the theme in a creative, participatory and meaningful way to share their own experiences.

Session Types

We welcome submissions from those who can share success stories with our delegates but also those submissions which provide honest accounts of where a study or approach may not have gone as well as expected. We can provide more intimate session formats if this feels more appropriate. We want to facilitate the best format to share your experiences and challenges with our delegates and contribute to the wider Conference discussion. We also seek practical sessions that delegates can be inspired by and take away tools and tips to directly apply to their own work.

We are looking for contributions in a range of formats which can include, but are not limited to:

- discussion sessions/ provocations
- practical workshops
- skills-based workshops/ training
- panel/ roundtable discussions
- case studies
- PechaKucha session (20 slides shown for 20 seconds each)

Opportunties to share and to engage fully with speakers and delegates is actively encouraged to support and facilitate meaningful knowledge exchange. Please let us know what format best fits with your proposal – or you may have other ideas which we would welcome.

If you are offering a workshop or interactive session, these should last approximately 45 minutes to one hour, and we will seek details of how this will be successfully delivered. On reviewing all submissions the VSG Committee may ask speakers whose sessions may have a similar approach/theme to collaborate, something which has worked successfully in previous years.

In lieu of a poster session, we are also looking for submissions for a PechaKucha whereby delegates can share research findings from live – or recently completed – research projects over a glass of wine at the end of the first day.

Final date for proposal submissions is Friday 5th October 2018

Please use the attached form and email your ideas to: admin@visitors.org.uk

Please note that VSG is a member organisation and as such cannot offer speakers attendance at the event free-of-charge. There will be, however, a discounted rate for speakers available when booking opens.

Contact Nicole at admin@visitors.org.uk for more information or if you have any questions.

PROPOSAL

VISITOR STUDIES GROUP CONFERENCE 2019

All submissions will be judged by the VSG Committee and you may be contacted to discuss your proposal in further detail and shape it to fit into the overall conference programme.

Conference presentation or papers will be published on the VSG website after the conference.

Name:	
Organisation:	
Contact email:	
Contact telephone:	

Please indicate in which format you would wish to participate:	
Discussion session/ provocation	
Practical workshop	
Skills-based workshop/ training	
Panel/ roundtable discussion	
Case study	
PechaKucha session (20 slides shown for 20 seconds each)	

Please provide an abstract of your proposal being sure to clearly indicate how it reflects our conference theme (maximum 100 words). If you are successful in your submission we will include this in the conference programme.

Please explain how you will deliver your session and what tools you will provide and/or require, including any wifi, roaming microphones etc. (maximum 300 words)

Please tell us why you believe your paper should be included in the 2019 VSG Conference Programme and what delegates will find out as a result of attending your session (maximum 100 words)

Short biography of proposed speaker/s or suggested panellists (maximum 100 words)

Return to admin@visitors.org.uk by Monday 1st October 2018