



Report from the VSA Conference Houston, Texas: 2008



Sofie Davis
Senior Audience Researcher
Science Museum

Visitor Studies Association



- Professional organization focusing on visitor experience
- (Museums / zoos / nature centres / historic sites / parks / other informal learning settings)
- Committed to enhancing visitor experiences through research, evaluation, and dialogue

VSA 2008 “No fear, no dread”

‘Theory, Practice & Conversations’

- Workshops
- Sessions
- Marketplace of Ideas, Products and Services
- Networking
 - Over 200 people
 - » From across the US and 8 other countries



VSA 2008

The Houston 'Museum District'



And...NASA



VSA 2008

**A great chance for meeting people
(...networking)**



Dinner, Dancing and Dialogue

VSA 2008

A great chance for learning and sharing knowledge and experience...

- “Delving into the mechanics of measuring: With a focus on *attitude*”
- “Action Research in an Informal Science Setting: Lessons from Zoo Educators”
 - “Visitation by Gays and Lesbians: Findings from a Pilot Study”
- “Can Segmenting Our Visitors Inform Our Work?”
 - “Where Am I? Using Untours to Learn How Under-represented Populations Experience a Visit”



Thank you VSG



VSA 2009 !

VSA conference 2009

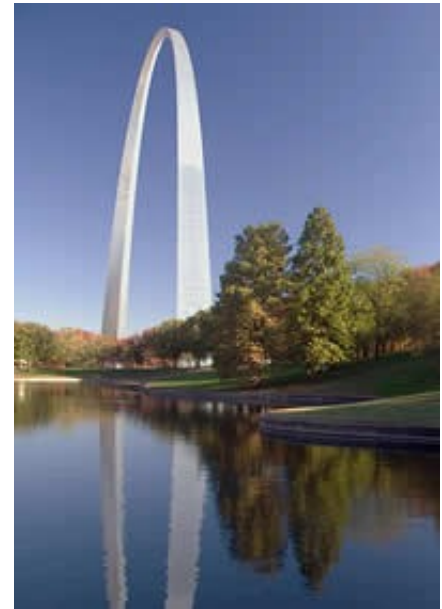
What: 'Relevance, public value, impact'

When: 21 – 25 July 2009

Where: St Louis

Any questions?

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VSA 2008

PAPER: 'Universal Design Research: People with visual impairments evaluate tactile exhibits for an aquarium'

- Ellen Giusti, working with Centre for Universal Design and North Carolina Aquarium
 - 15 tactile models tested with sighted people, those from the blind / low vision community
 - Raised line / Bas relief / Full round
 - Tactile models effectively illustrated information about fish body forms
 - Full round: provided most information to all participants

VSA 2008

PAPER: 'The relation between exhibit environments and visitors' behaviour'

- Betsy Adamson, Explora (Albuquerque)
 - Did the presence of walls by exhibits influence visitor behaviour?
 - Exhibit holding time compared walls / no walls
 - Walls = significantly longer stay times at exhibits and in area (nearly double that with no wall)

VSA 2008

PAPER: 'Applying Behavioural Economics to Visitor Behaviour'

- Stephen Bitgood, Jacksonville State University
 - An overview of behavioural economic theory and how it can be associated with visitor behaviour
 - Temporal discounting / optimal foraging / the matching law
 - Costs for visitors = Time and Effort
 - Benefits for visitors = Satisfying curiosity
 - Choices are dictated by perceived rewards