

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

**VISITOR STUDIES GROUP CONFERENCE 2016**

16thth and 17thth March 2016, Royal Geographical Society, London

**Visitor Studies: It’s what you do with it!**

**The Visitor Studies Group**

The Visitor Studies Group is a membership organisation which champions 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 2016 will be a two-day event bringing together delegates from across Europe working in a wide range of cultural organisations (including museums, zoos, botanical gardens, libraries, galleries, unversities and visitor attractions as well as freelancers) and in a range of positions (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 2016 VSG Conference will be **Visitor Studies: It’s what you do with it!**

**How can visitor studies have real impact? How does visitor research influence decisions and contribute to effective change? How can we raise awareness of visitors studies and ensure that it has the profile it so rightly deserves?** These are questions that we in the VSG Committee are often asked. We have touched on these issues in previous Conferences: whether it was about understanding the relationships with stakeholders (2014) or understanding how visitor studies can embrace the changes surrounding us (2015). One of the key conclusions from both Conferences was that we need to become better at turning study outcomes into action and communication is an important part of that.

**We want the 2016 Conference to explore how to communicate research and evaluation findings internally and externally so that they lead to change, have real impact and lift the profile of visitor studies. Some of the issues we hope to address through this year’s sessions are addressed in the bullet points below.** This list is by no means exhaustive nor is it meant to be too prescriptive – we welcome input from all those who can address the theme in a creative and meaningful way drawing clearly on their own experiences.

* We are seeking examples of effective ways of delivering visitor research outcomes which have had an impact ie what happened as a result of a study?
* What skills have practitioners used/aquired to enable them to interpret outcomes and communicate them effectively within and outwith an organisations?
* How can we make data accessible so it speaks to our stakeholders (ie from mangement to funding organisations and from front-of-house staff to visitors)? What tools, tricks, methods of disseminating research are there inside and outside our sector, which can assist with this.
* How do we turn academic based research into usable practical application? We are seeking examples of successful partnerships between museums and academics.
* How can we demonstrate the value of research/visitor studies and where has this been done?

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 may not have gone as well as expected and where disseminating findings did not have the hoped-for impact. We can provide more intimate session formats if this feels more appropriate. Share your experiences and challenges with our delegates and contribute to the Conference.

**We are looking for contributions in a range of formats, lasting approximately 45 minutes to one hour each, such as case studies, presentations, workshops or panels. Opportunties to share and to engage fully with speakers and delegates is key to delivery. Please let us know what format best fits with your proposal – you may have other ideas which we would welcome, we want to make the conference as lively as possible**. If you are offering a workshop or interactive session 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. This has worked successfully in previous years.

**Please note that skills sharing and knowledge exchange with and between delegates should underpin the sessions.**

**Final date for proposal submissions is Friday 18 September 2015.**

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

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

**PROPOSAL**

**VISITOR STUDIES GROUP CONFERENCE 2016**

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| --- |
| Name |
| Organisation |
| Contact details (email address, telephone) |
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| Please indicate in which format you would wish to participate |
| Case study presentation plus Q&A | 🞎 |
| Interactive workshop | 🞎 |
| Panel discussion | 🞎 |
| Other format | 🞎, please specify: |
|  |
| Abstract clearly indicating how it reflects our Conference theme (maximum 300 words) |
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| Please communicate how you will deliver your session and what tools you will provide and/or require (maximum 300 words) |
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| Please tell us why you believe your paper should be included in the 2016 VSG Conference Programme and what delegates will find out as a result of attending your session (maximum 100 words) |
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| Short biography of proposed speaker/s or suggested panellists (maximum 100 words) |
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| Return to admin@visitors.org.uk by 18 September 2015  |

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 papers will be published on the VSG website after the conference.

The 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.