



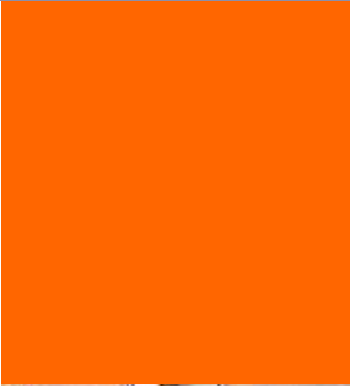
An Amazing Treasury of Adventure and Whimsy

memories and motivations of library patrons

Susie Wilkening
July 2010

Some Big Questions

Why this study?

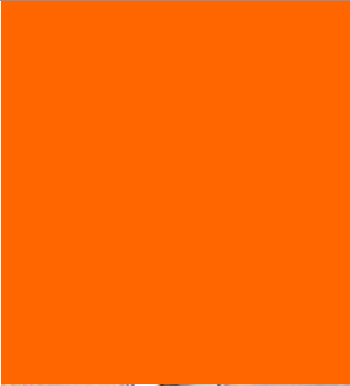


- Why do patrons visit libraries?
- What are the perceived value of libraries to their communities?
- How do childhood library experiences affect adult library visitation?
- Do childhood library experiences affect the needs, motivations, and expectations of patrons?
- Can research on library patrons better inform museums . . . and vice versa?

The Research

Why this study?

- South Shore study of library patrons
 - n = 1366 respondents
 - respondents recruited via library e-mail lists
 - 5 libraries on South Shore of Massachusetts



Previous Research

Why this study?

- Reach Advisors museum surveys
 - 2010 national museum visitors study (n>40,000/103 museums)
 - 2008 Connecticut Cultural Consumers (n>4,400/ 24 CT organizations)
 - 2008 outdoor history (n>5,500 / 13 US museums)
 - 2008 Association of Science-Technology Centers (n>15,000 / 50 international museums)
 - 2007 Association of Children's Museums (n>5,000 / 33 US museums)



Why We Are Here Today

Why this study?

Overview of results

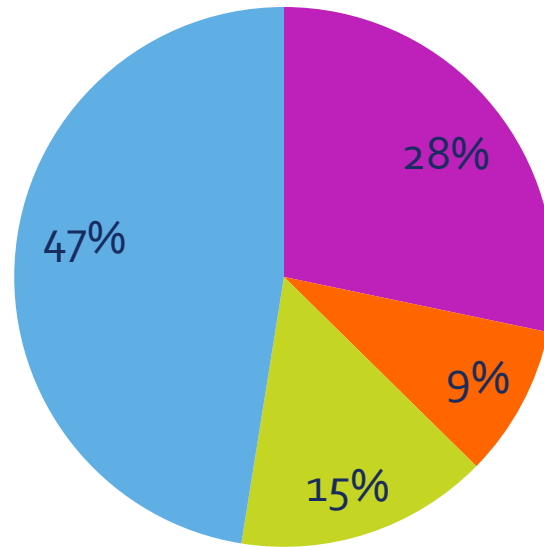
- Who responded
- Customer satisfaction
- Library activities
- Library visitation, motivations
- Childhood library experiences



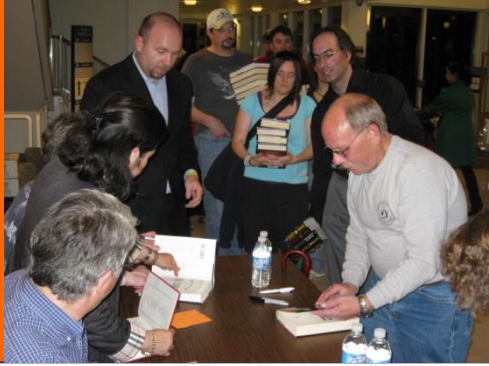
who cares about libraries?

Who Responded?

Who Responded

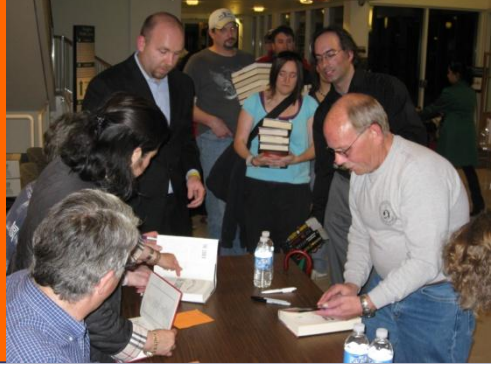


- Moms
- Dads
- Adults <50, no minor children
- Adults >50, no minor children



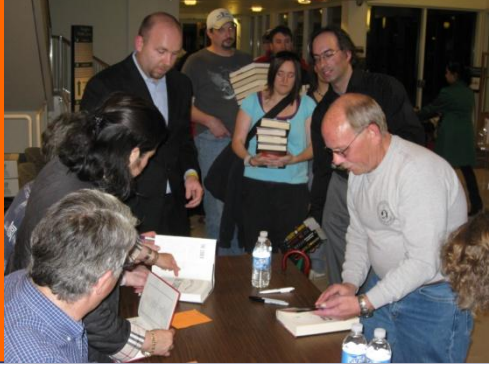
Who Responded

- Sample consistent with museum studies
 - About half over 50
 - Overwhelmingly female – 75%
 - Well-educated- 84% with college degree
 - Affluent – >2/3 earn more than MA median
 - Overwhelmingly white – 91%
 - Yet 17% minorities, indicating *some* mixed-race households



Who Responded

- Sample consistent with museum studies
 - Respondents with minor children in the home responded quite differently than those without
 - It's all about life stage



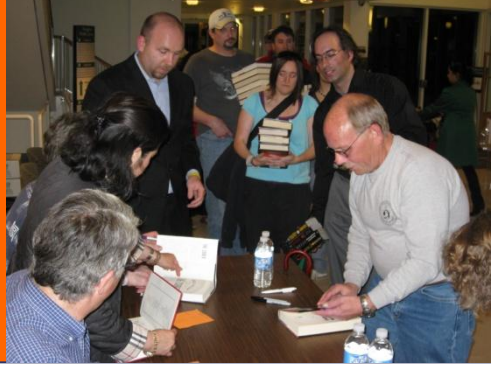
Why They Visit the Library

Family Respondents:

- 67% - Learning for children
- 56% - Entertainment options
- 53% - My curiosity/love of learning
- 42% - Children love it
- 41% - Immersion in good story
- 32% - Fun
- 16% - Pursuing subject interest
- 12% - Career resources

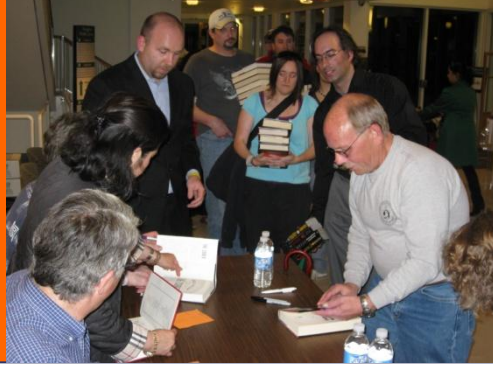
Adult Respondents:

- 70% - My curiosity/love of learning
- 53% - Immersion in good story
- 48% - Entertainment options
- 28% - Fun
- 24% - Pursuing subject interest
- 13% - Career resources



Some Good News

- 71% visit >once/month
- 84% borrow books for adults
- 80% say good facility
- 47% say staff cares
- 43% say brings community together
- 53% say needs met
- Net Promoter Score: 75
 - Museums = 53; also higher than large-scale study in *Public Libraries*



Some Not-So-Good News

- 40% say good programs for adults
- 24% say good programs for children
- 6% say good programs for tweens and teens
- Moms are generally most negative about library

borrowing, programs

Library Activities



Materials Borrowed

Family Respondents:

- 77% - books for adults
- 63% - books for children
- 49% - movies/media for adults
- 42% - movies/media for children
- 37% - museum passes
- 28% - books for tweens/teens
- 16% - movies/media for tweens/teens

Adult Respondents:

- 88% - books for adults
- 58% - movies/media for adults
- 21% - museum passes
- All others <10%



Other Activities

Family Respondents:

- 40% - programs for children
- 29% - studying/working on own
- 27% - periodicals
- 27% - computers/Wi-Fi
- 25% - reference
- 22% - programs for adults
- 17% - none

Adult Respondents:

- 41% - programs for adults
- 35% - periodicals
- 32% - reference
- 28% - computers/Wi-Fi
- 21% - studying/working on own
- 21% - none



Perceptions of Collections

Family Respondents saying “good selection”:

- 54% - books for adults
- 58% - books for children
- 30% - movies/media for adults
- 31% - movies/media for children
- 36% - museum passes

Adult Respondents saying “good selection”:

- 69% - books for adults
- 38% - movies/media for adults
- 35% - museum passes



Perceptions of Collections

Family Respondents saying “needs work”:

- 18% - movies/media for adults
- 14% - movies/media for tween/teens
- 15% - movies/media for children

Adult Respondents saying “needs work”:

- 14% - movies/media for adults



Perceptions of Collections

Family Respondents saying "N/A":

- 7% - books for adults
- 20% - movies/media for adults
- 27% - museum passes
- Children's/tweens/teens as expected based on age of children in home

Adult Respondents saying "N/A":

- 2% - books for adults
- 14% - movies/media for adults
- 40% - museum passes
- Children's/tweens/teens as expected based on grandparenthood, ages of grandchildren



Gap with Tweens and Teens

- Despite 59% of parents having a tween or teen in the home:
 - Only 6% say they participate in tween/teen programs
 - Only 24% say good selection of tween/teen books
 - Only 14% say good selection of tween/teen movies/media



Museum Passes

- Primarily used by families
- Awareness gap
 - “The questions about museum passes were a surprise. I'm a very regular user and have never been made aware of such a program.”



What Museums Enjoyed?

Family Respondents:

1. Zoos and aquariums
2. Science centers
3. Art museums
4. Children's museums
5. Historic sites and natural history museums (tied)

Adult Respondents:

1. Art museums
2. Historic sites
3. Botanical gardens and arboretums
4. History museums
5. Zoos and aquariums

to patrons, to communities

Importance of Libraries



Why Are Libraries Important? (Choose One)

- 46% - provide public with free access to a wide variety of information
- 27% - opportunities for lifelong learning
- 11% - learning opportunities/resources for children
- 6% - immersion in stories
- 4% - resources to individuals, including research, job seeking
- 3% - place for community to come together



Family Respondents vs. Adult Respondents

- Family Respondents more likely to select learning opportunities for children
- Adult Respondents more likely to select lifelong learning, free public access



Why Free Public Access to Information?

- 30% - Central to democracy/great equalizer
 - “I think public access to information, education and resources is critical to a democracy!!!!”
 - “It means that no matter what a person's background, we all have access to information for free, including books that were for some reason or another in the past banned. I find this kind of privilege and freedom to be a very important thing for us and something admirable, that we are given this opportunity. Actually, I would have chosen most of those reasons that were listed, but this is definitely an important aspect of a library. :-)”
- 27% - Cost prohibitive for people otherwise
 - “I do not have the money to buy all the materials I want and need to read nor the space to store it all in my home.”



Why Free Public Access to Information?

- 19% - Key to life-long learning/enrichment
 - “Too many would stay in the dark or uninformed without access to the information and services provided by a public library. They would miss opportunities.”
- 15% - People would not have access to info otherwise
 - “Access to learning materials should not be limited by income. A free public library is a great socio-economic equalizer.”
- “No-brainer from an economic point of view -- sharing materials among citizens. Probably the most cost-effective way that our government spends our tax dollars”



Why Lifelong Learning?

- 24% - Keeps you young/active
 - “It is how we stay young!”
- 20% - Personal growth/better person
 - “Lifelong learning leads to lifelong improvement. I am a better mother, better wife, better me when I'm challenging my brain and learning about the world as I go.”



Why Lifelong Learning?

- 10% - Citizenship/democracy
 - “To me learning and education help a person find fulfillment in life and equip them to be better citizens and community members.”
- 10% - Learn about/keep up with world
 - “Because everything is interesting. Because we live in the Universe, and why turn our backs? Because to cease to learn is to begin to die.”



Why Lifelong Learning?

- 10% - Enjoyable
 - “we come alive by learning, feeds our soul”
- “I don't want to die a moron.”
- “Because I'm tired of ‘stupid,’ and don't want to become part of that emerging popular group.”



Why Learning Opportunities for Children?

- 37% - Instill love of reading/learning
 - “I believe that reading and books are crucial to children's development, especially in the technological world we live it. I think instilling in a child a lifelong love for books and learning is crucial and one of my most important jobs as a parent.”
- 31% - Part of learning experience/learning resources
 - “The more we can do with our children to help them to reach adulthood with all the tools necessary for success - the better job we have done as a family and a community.”



Why Learning Opportunities for Children?

- 18% - Free/affordable
 - “We have a small house and limited resources. Visiting the library and being able to read and take out so many different books, movies, CDs, etc. is a huge treat. I think it is so great to walk in with my kids and they act like they are at a candy store. That is how much fun they have there. I hope they always feel that way about libraries and reading!”
- 11% - Safe/nice environment

books books books

Childhood Library Experiences

How Often They Visited

Childhood Library Experiences

- 39% visited libraries at least weekly as children
- 29% said 2-3 times/month
- 13% said monthly
- 7% said every few months
- 13% said rarely, never or cannot remember



Earliest Library Memory

Childhood Library Experiences

- Median, mode = 5; mean = 6
- Mom most likely to take them to library
 - 68% remember moms
 - 12% remember dads
- But 16% remember school field trips
- Few negative memories, <1%



Memory Themes

Childhood Library Experiences

- 35% - looking at/reading/favorite books
 - “I saw and realized that there is a wonderful world of books in the library which developed in me a lifelong love of reading. I took out some "Ramona" books.”
 - “I never felt so wonderfully excited as a child when visiting my hometown library The walls and stacks of books full of secrets, adventures and stories of children who went to magical places, heartwarming family stories and imaginary friends all tucked between the shelves. I loved to talk to the librarians about new books and offer my opinion on them.”
 - “I liked science fiction as a child. I lived next door to a library. I can remember being excited about going next door and getting a new book with which I could escape to Mars, Jupiter, etc., and participate in another adventure.”



Memory Themes

Childhood Library Experiences

- 34% - checking out books
 - “I remember that my mother would let me loose in the children's section and tell me I could pick any books I wanted to bring home. After I carried close to my weight in books to the check out, she modified that to any books that I'll have time to read at home.”
 - “I remember walking to the library by myself every Saturday, picking out books, and feeling satisfied that I was in control of my entertainment and had some autonomy in my life.”
 - “I was utterly amazed that I was allowed to take 6 children's books home with me. What was even more astounding was that after I read them, I could turn them in for 6 more. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. ”
 - “I lived in a small town, Brentwood, NH. Our library was open one afternoon and evening a week the p-t librarian wrote our names on the card, but for me she said she was going to "give me a number to make it easier" since I took out so many books. I was number 1! I loved Wednesday - library day - growing up.”



Memory Themes

Childhood Library Experiences

- 24% - children's section/room and/or activities
 - “I remember the summer reading clubs. Every summer would have a new theme, a colored sheet of paper with, say, a haunted house background, and then every week I'd give a short report on what I read and get stickers. There were some prizes/event at the end, which I can't remember, but, man, I loved the theme sheets and stickers.”
 - “My fondest memory was the Summer Reading Club. We'd read . . . and . . . upon completion & summer's end we'd share in a summer celebration and were rewarded with Book Club Ribbons of Achievement. I still have mine. My favorite book: Miss Hickory By Carolyn Sherman Bailey. I have that too.”
 - “Story time, lots of books and remember just a pleasant place to go to”



Memory Themes

Childhood Library Experiences

- 17% - awe/grandeur/scale/amaze
 - “The library was an awe-inspiring place in Kansas City, MO....all those books and stories....a million other lives that I could live”
 - “It smelled wonderful. Like old books and wood. There were large glass windows and high, high ceilings. The books went on forever!”
 - “I remember thinking that the library was so huge - even then I was impressed with the heavy, grand architecture. I liked the smell of the books and the paper, almost intoxicating.”
 - “The round dome of the Roslindale branch of the BPL was wonderfully impressive. And to think I could walk there all by myself and take out as many picture books as I could carry! Never ceased to amaze me.”



Memory Themes

Childhood Library Experiences

- 11% - library card
 - “I got a library card! They let me choose whatever book I wanted (and there were lots to choose from), and I got to take it home with me!”
 - “We got our first library cards.....we were encouraged to protect them with our life.”
 - “I remember being so excited to have a library card which was encouraged by the librarian on a visit to my elementary school. I felt so grown up, so powerful having so many choices and so respected by the library staff.”
 - “all I remember is having to sign my name on my first library card-which i still have, i'm now 46”
 - “The worst punishment that my parents could think of for me for minor infractions, was to take away my library card for a week, and it really hurt!”



Memory Themes

Childhood Library Experiences

- 8% - wonderful librarians
 - “Very supportive children's librarian, who would ask me ‘Where are you going this week?’ I was going places in my mind and imagination. And the librarian knew it!”
 - “I remember the librarian showing an interest in me and showing me the books she thought I would like. She always had a book put away for me when I came each week. I think this is what led to my love of reading forever.”
 - “. . . the kindly Librarian . . . asked me to sign my name on a form--a first--and she handed me the card, shook my hand, and welcomed me to the community of the world's readers. I think I was eight. That card meant more to me than anything except maybe my bicycle and dog.”



Memory Themes

Childhood Library Experiences

- 8% - wonderful librarians
 - “I was blessed to have Ms. Fleming working in my former library, from my childhood to adulthood. As a child, she always greeting me by name and with a smile. As a child, my favorite time was story hour in which we would gather around in a circle on the floor. You could hear a pin drop as every child's eyes were fixated on Ms. Fleming as she flipped the pages of our new adventure. As a "tween" she would help me find ALL of the books on my suggested summer reading list. As a young adult, I spent almost every afternoon doing my homework at the library, with Ms. Fleming occasionally having to remind us that we were in a library and needed to whisper. As an adult, she would greet my children by name and could suggest at least 5 books that would be appropriate for their age level. Or would suggest books for my son when he decided he needed to read everything about trucks, baseball, and then dinosaurs. Unfortunately for librarians . . . Ms. Fleming has set the bar high, really high!”



Memory Themes

Childhood Library Experiences

- 5% - smell
 - “The smell of books in a library has always given me a happy feeling”
 - “Loved the smell and the cool, quiet feel with the heavy wooden tables and chairs”
 - “I read so much as a child, it was wonderful. Just the smell of the library was intoxicating.”



Other Memories

Childhood Library Experiences



- Not-so-wonderful librarians
 - “I hated it! It was very scary place and librarians were very mean. I always felt like I was bothering them if I had a question. I went for school research.”
 - “You could not touch anything. You could only whisper and that was only to the woman in the room that you were in. You had to sit in a chair and not move. Guess what, I still came back!”
- “I was always excited by books, and what I'd find. I loved the cards and the date stamp on the pencils..went home and filled my books with little pockets and cards and played library.”
- “I looked forward to the Book Mobile as much as I did the Ice Cream Truck!”

Key Memory Takeaways

Childhood Library Experiences

- It's all about the books
- Make that library card moment special
- Tangible mementos are fundamental
- The kindness of a librarian to a child is a miraculous thing



Something About Dad . . .

Childhood Library Experiences

- Respondents 5.5x more likely to remember going to library with mom than dad
- But memories with dad are more vivid, emotive, positive
- Representative mom memories:
 - “I attended library school at the Thomas Crane Public Library in Quincy. I remember listening to stories while my mother could take time to find books for herself.”
 - “My mom loved and still loves the library. I don't really remember, but most likely she took me to the children's section to borrow books to take home.”



Something About Dad . . .

Childhood Library Experiences

- Representative dad memories
 - “. . . My father worked off hours so he cared for us on many days and his love of the library was instilled in us.”
 - “Morning out with my Dad at the public library - sitting on floor looking at books. Special. Exciting.”
 - “My father used to take my siblings and I to the library every Saturday when we got our chores done. It was a great reward and a special time to spend with my father. I had a blast.”
 - “My father went to the library every two weeks (the time limit for borrowing books) and usually took me with him. Since we went in the evening, the children's room was closed, so I did not borrow my own books during those visits. No matter, watching my father select his books from that magical place has fostered my lifelong love of reading”.



Something About Dad . . .

Childhood Library Experiences

- Men are more likely to remember visiting with *their* fathers
- While this sample is small . . .
. . . we have seen the same pattern in museums



Something About Dad . . .

Childhood Library Experiences

Current research hypotheses:

- Dad's intrinsic interest and motivation for visiting libraries and specific museums increases interest and engagement of children . . . creating memorable experiences for children, particularly sons



or, libraries are important

Final Thoughts

A Treasury of Adventure and Whimsy



- Respondents LOVE libraries, and the ideals they represent
- Life stages make a big impact on how library used, perceived
- Create memory-making moments around staff, library card, programs

A Treasury of Adventure and Whimsy



- “I hope I have expressed my love and support of a wonderful local library.”
- “Our library is the one place I really appreciate my tax dollars at work!”
- “Hurray for libraries! If I weren't able to borrow books for free, I'd be broke.”
- “I want to thank all librarians for standing up against the illegal demand for lender information made by the government under the Patriot Act.”
- “This library is an important place in my life, it's architecture, amazing historic interior and enjoyable collection influenced my move to th[is] community.”
- And from our museum survey . . .
 - “Museums and libraries are the keepers of civilization.”

Questions or copies of presentation slides?

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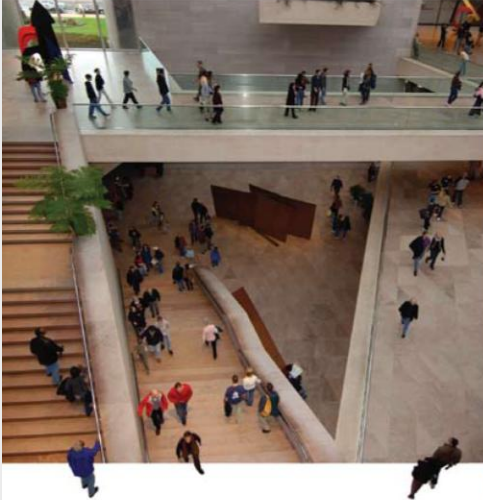
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Life Stages of the Museum Visitor

Building Engagement Over a Lifetime

By Susie Wilkening and James Chung



THE  AAM PRESS



Life Stages of the Museum Visitor: Building Engagement Over a Lifetime offers a rich array of new data about how and why museum visitors behave as they do at different stages of their lives, and how museums can respond to the changing needs and perceptions of their Respondents.

By Susie Wilkening & James Chung
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