


A Survey for the Ball State University Art Museum

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Nancy M. Huth", is written over a horizontal dashed line.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

This project is the foundation for a processing of visitor information for the Ball State University Art Museum on campus located in the Art Building. The project chronicals the process of organizing a workable survey, actually receiving the information and the results of my survey.

The Ball State University Museum of Art's Mission Statement reads: In recognition of the importance of the educational environment , the Ball State University Museum of Art seeks to enhance the understanding of the visual arts by offering a direct experience that books, photographs, courses and lectures cannot provide. This is accomplished through:

- the acquisition, research and documentation of significant works of art representative of the major world cultures;
- the preservation of these objects through environmental control, protection from theft and damage, conservation and restoration;
- presenting an ongoing program of coherent exhibitions formed out of the museum's and other's collections;
- providing a broad range of educational programs, publications and materials consistent with the above; and
- encouraging community, state and national access and interest in the collections, exhibitions, programs and publications of the Ball State University Museum of Art.

This statement reflects that the museum does have an expressed interest in not only the university and its educational pursuits, but also concerns itself with the community, even beyond Muncie. Much work, time, energy and money are incorporated into the museum, but one aspect that little is known about is the kinds of visitors that the gallery attract. For the presentation of the information attained, I will explain the process and disclose the findings.

THE PROCESS

My advisor, Nancy Huth, who is the Curator of Education in the Ball State University Museum of Art, brought it to my attention that a survey of visitors had never been taken in this museum. As there was a need, I decided to formulate a survey, administer it and tabulate the data for the gallery to have for their information. It is important to know one's visitor's not only for the purpose of simply knowing who more specifically is traveling and utilizing the gallery, but it can also offer some insight in how to plan for future events that the gallery sponsors.

Ms. Huth and I spent time deciding what specific information would be useful to the gallery. Since this was to be a straight demographical survey, we decided on basically: sex, ethnicity, age, first time visitor, major, etc. for students and job -related questions for non-students. After obtaining the information that the museum desired, I need to consider how to pose the questions in a politically correct manner and how aesthetically the survey would look. Ms. Huth shared her museum survey files with me, which were helpful. The research that I consulted was: *Visitor Surveys: A User's Manual*¹, a yet to be completed survey from the

¹ Nichols, Susan, ed. *Visitor Surveys: A user's manual*. Professional Practice Series Technical Information Service. American Association of Museums:1990.

Cleveland Museum of Art² , and also and most importantly, the advice of Dr. Cathy Palomba. I sought her advice on the recommendation of Alain Joyaux, the Director of the Ball State Museum of Art, who has worked with her in the past.

Much time was spent in consultation with Dr. Palomba, Director of Research and Academic Assessment, who is knowledgeable about how to approach people and what specifically to ask in a non-threatening manner. Some aspects of data gathering to consider were: should I approach them standing, offering a small gift for their help, making it short and simple, having spaces for people to check otherwise they are wont to skip it, etc. We discussed what to say when approaching people and how to respond when they decline. The biggest portion of the time spent with Dr. Palomba was in the consideration of non-students in regard to inquiring of status and occupation. In no way, did I want to exclude people who work in the home or are retired. We spent much time dealing with the possibilities and anticipate answers and their categories. We also discussed that since the purpose was to obtain basic demographical information there would be no need to survey the groups that come for tours as most of the information is received before they even visit. The tours are scheduled and Ms. Huth collects the information needed, so in the realm of groups that the museum draw, she is already aware--it is the individual visitor of which nothing is known. After a few hours of discussion we had the format and the actual words that would be used for the actual survey.

On the recommendation of my advisor, Ms, Huth, I sought information from Wynola Richards, the Director and Assistant Provost of Affirmative Action on campus, for the appropriate way to ask about ethnicity with which Dr. Palomba agreed.

Once a final design was established and created, the museum had them printed and cut in half. We had decided that half a page should probably not be to intimidating for most people to fill out. I consulted with the museum and we decided that I would spent as much time as I could in administering this survey. I would be the one to conduct all parts of it, as there had been some discussion onwhether the art guards, employees of the art gallery, would be a part of this process. We decided that it was not the job of the art guards and did not want to force the responsibility of gathering data if they were not comfortable approaching people.

The next phase was the actual execution of the survey that much time and consideration had gone into to prepare it correctly. There are two entrances to the art museum. One is from the second floor inside the art building and the other has a large, elegant stone staircase that attracts visitors from the outside and is accessible since it is one of the borders of The Quad. I decided to place myself and conduct the

² The Cleveland Museum of Art: The Getty Grant Program. Interim Report of Visitor Studies Program: 1990.

survey from the information table that is in the middle of the 1st floor of the gallery, which insured that I would easily be able to notice all people who came into the gallery.

The weekend before I started the survey, Ms. Huth had spent time in a museum that asked her to fill out a survey and for doing so, they offered her a free postcard of one of the works in their museum. Noticing that as an excellent gesture, we adopted the same sort of compensation procedure.

It took a level of boldness to approach people and not sound nervous. Confidently approaching people puts them more at ease and more prone to filling out the survey. Having the advantage of an outgoing personality made the survey somewhat easier than it could have been. When I would see someone enter the gallery, I would gather a pencil, a postcard, and a survey card. I made an effort to not be overenthusiastic, as I did not want to be overpowering when approaching them. I considered that the art museum is a quiet place and no one expects someone to run up to them.

When people came into the gallery, I would give them time to take their coat off or take a moment to get familiar with the surroundings if they obviously had not been to the museum in the past. Art museums can be a place of high intimidation if unfamiliar. To the other extreme, students who had been in the museum many times were more difficult to stop from whisking past me, especially if I did not know the student. Overall, I was very pleased with the responses of people. Generally, people were pleased to receive the postcard and therefore, willing to help out. Only a few times did I feel like I was truly imposing, but after they realized how short the survey was they seemed to not be so bothered. Only a total of four people declined to partake in the survey.

Even though the questions that were asked were not intensely personal, I maintained a level of privacy. I would accept the completed survey and immediately turn it over, mark the date and time. I wanted to turn it over so the person would not think that I would tally or even look at their information right there. I also chose to write the date and time on the back of the card in front of them, so if they would know exactly what I was writing. It is actually more so they are comfortable and know that I was not writing some extra comment about them. Perhaps, it was a consideration that most people did not notice, but I noted that others seemed curious as to what I wrote and I am glad to took the precautions. I would have not wanted to write on the back later and have the person see me and what what I was writing about them.

Something that I would do differently is to not capitalize 'Ethnic Category'. It gives the appearance that that is what is most important to the gallery, but also it made the subsequent directions more difficult to note. In the same style and size are the instructions to the survey-takers to choose the box that is appropriate for them. The

choice is either 'full-time student' or 'other patrons' and people seemed to not see that so easily since the instructions did not stand out as much. I noticed that many students proceeded to fill out both boxes. When I noticed this happening, I started giving more explanation after they said they would be willing to fill it out. I simply asked if they were full-time students and specifically directed them to one box or the other.

I spent no less than one hour and no more than three hours in one sitting. Most of the time was between 9am-11am. The dates that I spent in the gallery were: 4/3, 4/6, 4/7, 4/11, 4/12, 4/13, 4/14, 4/12, and 4/29.

I divided the results onto two main sections: Students and Non-students. Within those two sections, both are divided further into male and female. It should be noted that in not every case did the person fill out every space should it be noted that some of the numbers do not add up to the number of persons surveyed.

THE FINDINGS

STUDENTS--female

68 female students were surveyed.

First time visitors: 8 **Non-first time visitors:** 60

Number of times visited in the past 12 mos.: 0(3x), 1(5x), 3(4x), 2(5x), 3, 4, 5, 6(3x), 7, 10(3x), 12, 15, 20(3x), 25, 33, 100.

Age: under 18: 3; 18-25: 55; 26-35: 1; 36-50: 1; over 50: 0.

Ethnicity: White: 56; Black: 2; Hispanic: 2; Asian/Pacific Islander: 2.

BSU Student: yes: 63; no: 2--Shenandoah Middle School and Sinclair College

Year: Freshman: 15; Sophomore: 14; Junior: 14; Senior: 14; Graduate: 0.

If here for a class, identify: AHS 262/Nancy Steele-Hamme: 12; AHS 252/Ken Davis: 9; ENG/O'Hearn: 7; AFA 101/Judy Wojek: 5; HIST 150/Dr. McClune: 3;

MATH/Parkinson: 3; AED 399/Polly Wolfe: 2; Printmaking/Serojini Johnson: 2;

HONRS/Dr. Edmonds: 2; Painting: 1.

Major: Graphic Design: 10; Art: 7; Art Education: 7; Elementary Education: 6;

Photography: 5; Architecture: 4; 3-D Design: 4; Undecided: 4; Spanish: 2; Speech Pathology: 2; Accounting: 1; Metals: 2; Fashion/Marketing: 1; Anthropology: 1;

Biology: 1; English: 1; General Studies: 1; Japanese: 1; Physical Education: 1;

Reason for visit: assignment: 17; sketching: 8; had free time: 8; class in gallery: 7;

see collection: 5; student show: 4; work in gallery: 4; visit friend: 2; showing

friend the museum: 1; helping friend: 1; seeing how art people do art: 1; view

15th-18th c./pre-Columbian collection: 1; admire specific sculpture: 1; use A.R.T.S.:

1.

58% of the students surveyed were female.

88% of the female students surveyed were not first time visitors.

81% of the females students were in the 18-25 age bracket.

82% of the female students surveyed classified themselves as 'White.'
93% of the female students surveyed were Ball State students
22% of the female students surveyed were freshmen.
68% of the female students surveyed were in the gallery for a class.
56% of the female students surveyed had art-related majors.

STUDENTS--males

54 male students were surveyed.

First time visitors: 5 **Non-first time visitors:** 49

Number of times visited in the past 12 mos.: 0(2x), 1(2x), 2(2x), 3, 4, 5, 8(2x), 10(2x), 12, 15, 20(3x), 25, 64, 200.

Age: Under 18: 2; 18-25: 45; 26-35: 1; 36-50: 1; over 50: 1.

Ethnicity: White: 49; Black: 4; American Indian: 1.

BSU Student: yes: 47; no: 2--Eckard College and West Carrollton High School.

If here for a class, identify: AHS/Ken Davis: 11; HIST 150/Dr. McCrane: 7; AFA 101/Judy Wojek: 6; AHS 262/Nancy Steele-Hamme: 5; ENG/O'Hearn: 2;

Poetry/Hamilton: 1; Painting: 1; AHS/Ron Rarick: 1; Classics and Latin: 1.

Major: Graphic Design: 6; Undecided: 6; Psychology: 4; Art: 4; Architecture: 3;

Elementary Education: 3; Art Education: 2; 3-D Design: 2; Photography: 2;

Political Science: 2; Metals: 2; Telecommunications: 2; Criminal Justice: 1;

Physics: 1; Drawing: 1; German: 1; Natural Resources: 1; Philosophy: 1;

Journalism: 1; History: 1; 3-D Design: 1, Actuary Science: 1, Computer Science: 1, Printmaking: 1.

Reason for visit: assignment: 15; class: 11; curiosity: 9; student show: 4; drawing class: 3; working: 2; looking for someone: 1; visiting BSU: 1; giving tour of campus: 1; with friend: 1; study break: 1.

44% of the students surveyed were male/

91% of the male students surveyed were not first time visitors.

83% of the male students surveyed were in the 18-25 age bracket.

91% of the male students surveyed classified themselves as 'White.'

87% of the male students surveyed were Ball State students.

65% of the male students surveyed were in the gallery for a class.

44% of the male students surveyed have art-related majors.

OTHER PATRONS--females

18 female non-students were surveyed

First time visitor: 5 **non-first time visitors:** 8

Number of times visited in the past 12 mos: 1(2x), 3, 5, 8, 24, 250.

Age: Under 18: 0; 18-25: 2; 26-35: 5; 36-50: 5; over 50: 5.

Ethnicity: White: 14; Asian: 1.

City/State: Muncie: 4; Anderson: 2; Greenfield: 2; Selma: 1; Yorktown: 1;

Connersville: 1; 1; Daleville: 1; Denver, CO: 1; San Antonio, TX: 1; Tulsa, OK: 1;

Elkland, MO: 1; Champaign, IL: 1; Carrollton, OH: 1.

Status: working: 6; retired: 3; other: 2.

Occupation: teacher: 3; housewife: 2; retail sales: 2; college professor: 2; visiting professor: 1; administrator: 1; register nurse: 1; certified dental assistant: 1; secretary: 1; artist: 1.

Reason: student show: 8; own interest: 3; visiting son: 1; buy postcards: 1; teaching class: 1; helping student/husband: 1.

Income: under 25,000: 4; 25-45: 5; 46-75: 3; 76-100: 2; over 100: 0.

51% of the other patrons surveyed were female.

44% of the other female patrons surveyed were not first time visitors.

Of the other female patrons, each age bracket of 26-35, 36-50, and over 50 each had 28%.

78% of the other female patrons classified themselves as 'White.'

22% of other female patrons surveyed were from Muncie.

33% of other female patrons surveyed were of working status.

44% of other female patrons surveyed were seeing the Student Show.

28% of other female patrons surveyed fell into the 25,000-45,000 household income bracket.

OTHER PATRONS--males

17 male non students were surveyed.

First time visitors: 4 **Non-first time visitors:** 11

Number of times visited in the past 12 mos.: 0(2x), 2(2x), 6, 7, 8, 50.

Age: Under 18: 0; 18-25: 4; 26-35: 3; 36-50: 2; over 50: 7.

Ethnicity: white: 15.

City/state: Muncie: 7; Indianapolis: 3; Anderson: 1; Tipton: 1; Noblesville: 1; Pennville: 1; Elkland, MO: 1; Champaign, IL: 1.

Status: working: 10; retired: 1; other: 1.

Occupation: teacher: 5; business forms/sales: 1; cook: 1; accountant: 1; professor: 1; quality control specialist: 1; software developer: 1.

Reason: visiting campus: 5; just to visit: 3; work related: 1; student show: 1.

Income: under 25,000: 4; 25-45: 4; 45-75: 3; 75-100: 1; over 100: 1.

49% of the other patrons surveyed were male.

65% of the other male patrons surveyed were not first time visitors.

41% of the other male patrons surveyed were over 50 years old.

88% of the other male patrons surveyed classified themselves as 'White.'

41% of the other male patrons surveyed were from Muncie.

59% of the other male patrons surveyed were of working status.

29% of the other male patrons surveyed were in the gallery since they were visiting the campus.

Of the household income brackets, both under 25,000 and 25,000-45,000 each had 24% of the male patrons surveyed.

That concluded my survey. The Ball State Gallery will be able to have a better idea of who they serve. It is not the end of the information that they will want, but they do have some idea at this point. They can see that many more students from other majors are in the gallery than at least I anticipated, for example. As it typical for the time that the Student Show is up, there are many people in specifically to observe what the university is producing. They will hopefully be able to take some of this information and better know how to serve the community and students for offer the best service and allow people to see this museum, which is of such high quality.

I want to thank the Ball State University Art Gallery for all their cooperation for the duration of this survey. I would also like to thank the Ball State University Honors College, Dr. Palomba, and Mrs. Richards. Specifically, I want to thank Nancy Huth for all the help she was and for allowing me work under her as that is always a pleasure.