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# Visitors' Voices

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE AASLH VISITORS' VOICES AFFINITY GROUP

June 2012 Volume 4

## WE NEED YOU!



Visitors' Voices is run by volunteers and the old adage, "many hands make for light work," holds so true! Do you have a little extra time you could devote to helping our cause? Being on our steering committee involves quarterly committee calls, writing a few brief newsletter

articles, and working on other occasional projects. Most of all, it is fun and rewarding because you get to network with colleagues from across the country and take pride in knowing that you've made a difference. Do we expect all steering committee members to be experts in audience research and evaluation? No, absolutely not. In fact, we like to have a variety of experience levels on the committee so our audience is accurately represented. If you are willing to serve on the steering committee, please contact Cherie Cook at your earliest convenience at [cook@aslh.org](mailto:cook@aslh.org) or 573.893.5164.

## Survey Results

In our previous issue, readers from small institutions were asked to complete a five-minute survey in order to help Visitors' Voices as we embarked on a project with the



## Visitors' Voices

*Visitors' Voices* is a quarterly e-newsletter for members of the Visitors' Voices affinity group. Membership in the group is free. Join us by either [updating your record](#) in AASLH's database or [creating a new one](#). Be sure to look for the list of affinity groups and click on Visitors' Voices.

## Want to Learn More?

Check out our web page at [www.aslh.org/visitors-voices.htm](http://www.aslh.org/visitors-voices.htm) to learn more about the Visitors' Voices affinity group.

**Small Museums Toolkit  
Now Available**

Small Museums Committee to address the needs of small museums and sites in the area of visitor research and evaluation.

A total of 136 people answered the survey. Results revealed that respondents want to learn more about evaluation and visitor research. They indicated that visitor feedback, while important both to funding sources and to the overall well-being of an institution, is often lacking especially at small, volunteer-based organizations. Casual, one-on-one conversations and anecdotal observations are ways in which visitor research is typically conducted. Respondents said they had little time and experience with conducting formal evaluation and they would appreciate instruction on how to develop simple, low-tech visitor surveys. To review a summary of the survey results please visit <http://bit.ly/visitorsvoices>

Armed with the survey results, Visitors' Voices and the Small Museums Committee have since drafted a survey instrument that can be used by small museums to evaluate their special events. Special events was chosen as the survey focus because it is a more narrow topic (compared with a general visitor survey) and thus shorter. Several local history organizations volunteered to test the survey with their visitors this summer and report back with their comments about the instrument. We'll share the survey instrument and results in Salt Lake City as part of the session, "What Do History Museums Need to Know About Their Visitors?" on October 4, 2012. We'll then distribute the final draft of the survey instrument in the next issue of this newsletter so members can use the survey at their institution.

### Visitors' Voices in Salt Lake City

The AASLH Annual Meeting is headed west this year as members will gather October 3-5, 2012 in Salt Lake City. This year's theme is *Crossroads: Exploring Vibrant Connections Between People and Place*. The meeting promises to offer many opportunities to learn, network, explore, and be rejuvenated about the work we do in state and local history. Visitors' Voices members may be particularly interested in the following events:

- "What Do History Museums Need to Know About Their Visitors?" concurrent session on Thursday, October 4 at 1:30 p.m. As a field, we acknowledge that evaluating our activities and using visitor studies to inform our exhibits, programs,



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### Join the Discussion

To join the Visitors' Voices discussion group, go to the [Visitors' Voices homepage](#) and click on the "Join" button.



[Check out Visitors Count!](#)

The most comprehensive visitor research tool available to mid- and large-sized history organizations!

### More AASLH Resources

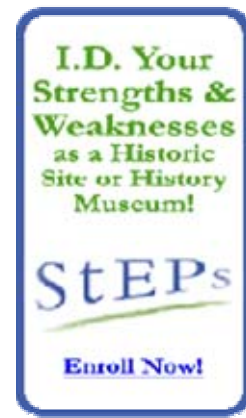
publications and other efforts is a best practice worth pursuing. This interactive session aims to inspire participants to think about *what* small local history organizations really need to know about their visitors and audiences and *how* they might go about doing that. Speakers will include Stacy Klinger, chair of the Small Museums affinity group and Conny Graft, co-chair of the Visitors' Voices affinity group. They will report on the special project the two groups have been working on to develop a survey instrument that can be used by small museums to evaluate their special events. Results from pilot sites that test the survey this summer will be discussed.

- Start your day with a joint breakfast meeting of the Visitors' Voices and Historic House Museums affinity groups on Friday, October 5. Join Max van Balgooy, president of Engaging Places, LLC and Conny Graft, co-chair of Visitors' Voices, as they explore what visitors are thinking and doing in your historic house museum (and it's not just looking in the closets!) in a lively presentation titled, "Are You in Jeopardy?"
- "Beyond Counting Visitors: Four Examples of Evaluation in History Museums" concurrent session on Friday morning, October 5. How do visitors use museums to make sense of history and connect it to their lives? Hear about four evaluation projects that contributed to organizations becoming more visitor-centered in their planning and development of programs and exhibits. Learn also how the Visitor Studies Association can be a valuable resource for history organizations.

We hope to see you in Salt Lake City! Note that the Early Bird registration rate ends on August 17. View the preliminary conference program at <http://www.aaslh.org/am2012.htm>

### Let Your Voice Be Heard!

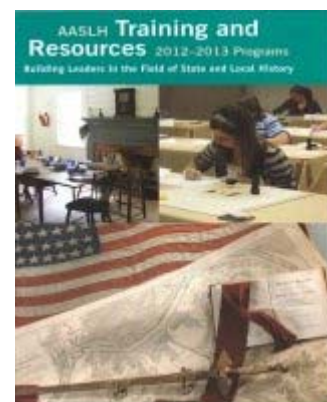
Tell us what you think about the Visitors' Voices newsletter and you might win an AASLH technical leaflet bundle valued at \$25! Yup, it's another survey (we are a group that's all about evaluation and audience research, right?). But, have no fear! It's short. We want to hear what you think of the Visitors' Voices newsletter. Please go to



[Read how this program can benefit your organization!](#)



**AASLH PATHWAYS** is the must have guide—written specifically for history professionals interested in creating successful public programs from the beginning to the end, including how to market your program, and get others involved.



The **NEW** AASLH Training and Resources 2012-2013 Programs

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/visitorsvoices2012> and answer a few brief questions. We'll report on the results in the next issue.

- Building Leaders in the Field of State and Local History. Everything from traditional workshops and online courses to vast networking opportunities. AASLH has the tools you need for an effective career and successful organization.



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