

Snapshot Interviews

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Overview

One 'tried and true' method of finding out about your visitors involves interviewing them. But this isn't always as easy or straightforward as it sounds. Interpreting responses can be difficult. And sometimes visitors simply do not want to take the time to participate. Snapshot interviews are a quick and simple technique for gathering information from your visitors, especially those who may be difficult to reach.

What are they?

- Very short, focused interviews
- Give a picture -- or 'snapshot' - of visitors' views or experiences
- 4 or 5 straightforward questions (no more!)
- Last under 2 minutes
- (Rarely audio-recorded)

How did I use them?

- To gain an overview of why teachers were visiting & how the visit connected to school/curriculum
- Two neighbouring institutions in London
Science Museum: 76 teachers (48 primary, 28 secondary);
interviews in spring and autumn
Natural History Museum: 31 teachers (20 primary, 11 secondary)
- Approached teachers when they checked in

Questions asked

- What did you do to prepare your students for the visit?
- How is this visit related to the work you are doing in school?
- Have you set your students any tasks to do while they are here?
- (Do you plan to do anything connected to the visit back in the classroom, after you return to school?)

Findings: Science Museum

- Majority of teachers did connect the visit to the curriculum
- Primary teachers (67%) were more likely to mention specific topics than secondary (43%)
- Secondary (36%) were more likely to mention general curriculum connections than primary (19%)
- Unique experience of the museum somewhat more important to primary teachers (52%) than to secondary (36%)
- Student enjoyment seemed similarly important to primary and secondary teachers
- Autumn visits seemed to be more academically focused than spring/summer visits
- In autumn, 40% of primary and 54% of secondary set students structured tasks during visit

Findings: Natural History Museum

- Nearly all teachers (90% primary, 100% secondary) connected the visit to the curriculum (mentioned specific topics)
- Few primary teachers (no secondary) mentioned exposure and enjoyment as goals
- Most teachers (89% primary, 82% secondary) had done content-related preparation for visit
- Nearly 75% of visiting classes were doing some sort of structured activity

Summary of findings

- Two large national museums with many school visits each year
- Teachers reported different reasons for visiting
- Science Museum -- emphasis on unique experience, enjoyment ('I want kids to remember that science can be fun')
- Natural History Museum -- visits more closely connected to school subjects or topics
- Connection of the galleries/collections to the curriculum -- much tighter for Natural History Museum

Advantages

- Very high agreement to participate
- Can be used with a variety of audiences (teachers, families)
- Can be used in different settings (museums, science centres, science festivals)
- Landscape or overview perspective
- Gathers lots of information quickly
- Spur-of-the-moment answers (more honest?)

Disadvantages

- Broad, but not deep
- Not necessarily generalisable across time
- Few details, limited insight into 'why'
- Spur-of-the-moment answers (less accurate/no reflection?)

One other question?

WHAT IF I HAVE MORE THAN FOUR QUESTIONS TO ASK??