



Visitor Studies Group Autumn Event 2010

Visitor Studies: Asking, observing and the ethics of it all

*Friday 15th October 2010 10.30hrs – 16.30hrs
Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool*

This one-day event will focus on the ethical issues and considerations surrounding the research of human subjects. If your audience research includes covert recording, unobtrusive observations, interviews with vulnerable adults and children or any aspect of research involving human participants then this event is for you.

Registration Costs:

VSG Member £40

VSG Members Concession* £30

Non-Member £50

Non-Member Concession* £40

Including refreshments and lunch

** Concession = Full-time students, Unwaged or Retired*

Programme:

This event is designed to be a mixture of presentations and workshops. Please book early since numbers will be limited due to the inclusion of workshops in the programme.

The programme is as follows:

Registration & Coffee 10.15hrs – 10.45hrs

10.45 – 11.15 Sue Spiers

11.15 – 11.45 Andrew McIntyre

11.45 – 12 noon Questions to both speakers

12.00 – 12.45 workshop + plenary Sue Spiers

12.45 – 13.45 lunch and a quick look around the museum

13.45 – 14.15 Claire Benjamin

14.15 – 14.45 Dr Eric Jensen

14.45 – 15.00 Questions to both

15.00 – 15.15 Refreshments

15.15 – 16.15 Workshop x 2 (Sofie Davis and Eric Jensen)

16.15 16.30 Plenary

Close

Details overleaf

Presentation

Research Ethics from Two Perspectives – The Researcher and the Researched

Dr Sue Spiers Head of Research Programme Development at Liverpool John Moores University

This presentation will provide an introduction to the mechanisms for the establishment of an ethically-aware culture from the viewpoint of a higher education institution. It will highlight the requirements for researchers who wish to conduct research involving human participants - the principles and norms for ethical research - and the processes for ensuring that such research is conducted ethically including recruitment, informed consent, confidentiality/anonymity and data protection. The topics covered will demonstrate that the adoption of sound ethical principles and processes provides assurance that the rights and dignity of participants is maintained and also that good ethical conduct can support high quality research, improve participation rates and deliver meaningful findings thereby improving the outcome and experience for the both the “researcher” and the “researched”.

Workshop

Putting Ethical Principles into Action

This workshop will examine how the principles of research ethics translate to “real” research. Issues including observational research and involving children in research will be explored through group discussion facilitated by relevant case studies.

Speaker

Dr Sue Spiers is Head of Research Programme Development at Liverpool John Moores University with responsibility for postgraduate research and research ethics across the University. The University ensures ethical conduct within its research through a number of Research Ethics Committees (RECs) which recognise and acknowledge the growing impact and expectations for ethical principles to be embedded within research beyond the medical environment. Sue is experienced in applying ethical principles across a broad range of disciplines – health, including research based within the National Health Service (NHS), business, education, social sciences and the arts – and within both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

Presentation

Wrestling with ethics: what happens when policy meets practice?

Andrew McIntyre, Director, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre

We all aspire to the highest professional standards. But while some ethical standards, like those around interviewing children, are universally recognised, others are less clear cut. What happens when seeking informed consent alters the very behaviour you are researching? Every time we begin a study, we tiptoe through a minefield of legal duties, professional standards, visitor expectations and practical necessity. Andrew McIntyre will offer a pragmatic view of practice in the field.

Speaker

Andrew's work focuses on helping organisations to have a deeper understanding of visitors: their motives, needs, perceptions, attitudes, behaviour and responses. He believes that these are the building blocks of attracting, retaining and developing enduring audience relationships.

He has undertaken numerous evaluation studies, created visitor segmentation systems for the National Trust, Tate and the British Museum and developed new techniques and models for analysing visitors' interactions.

Andrew has served as Chair of the Visitor Studies Group and teaches and lectures widely. A guest lecturer at Goldsmiths College, London, his recent international work includes- New Zealand, Sweden, China and the United States.

Presentation

Emotional health: a case study of ethical considerations when evaluating a community project.

Claire Benjamin, Head of Community Partnerships, National Museums Liverpool.

This presentation will look at a particular case study from the Communities Team at National Museums Liverpool. The project explored how museum's can achieve and improve emotional health and well being using culture as a tool, and used art, craft, reminiscence, and cultural references to enable participants to express themselves and explore their well being and place in society. The project offered a range of activities which allowed flexibility and choice for participants, supporting the theory of social prescribing culture as an enhancement to medical care. The presentation will look at the approach and methodology of the evaluation for this project and the resulting recommendations.

Speaker

Claire Benjamin gained a BA (Hons) degree in International Tourism Management at the University of Central Lancashire in 1998. She joined National Museums Liverpool (then National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside) in 1998 within the Learning Division. In 2006 she was appointed Head of Community Partnerships, and now has responsibility for the strategic development of sustainable community engagement, and inclusive approaches to learning in museums. She is currently managing the community engagement programme for the Museum of Liverpool and International Slavery Museum.

Presentation

The Limits of 'Informed Consent': On the ethical duties of visitor research

Dr Eric Jensen, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick

Informed consent procedures should not be used as a means of avoiding the professional responsibility to act in a manner that is in the best interest of participants. This presentation will explore the primary responsibility of the researcher to assess whether there is any possible harm (physical, psychological, reputational, etc.) that could come as a result of proposed visitor research. If there is, can this harm be satisfactorily mitigated? If not, then should the research go ahead? The researcher is often in a position to identify additional possibilities for harm that are not immediately visible to research participants.

A further ethical responsibility for visitor researchers is to analyse and present the data you collect to the best of your ability. If you do not have the skills to effectively analyse and present the data you collect, then it is unethical to use the visitors' time under the false pretence that their ideas will be used effectively and applied to enhance the visitor experience. Likewise, you must design the research in a way that allows for possible negative findings and then be willing to communicate the full range of results in a full and honest manner to practitioners (e.g. not omitting uncomfortable findings).

Workshop

Deception

In undertaking data collection with visitors, you incur an ethical duty to honestly communicate your intentions to your participants. However the precise nature of this responsibility and the level of appropriate disclosure may vary depending on factors such as the potential for harm, invasiveness of the research and relative value of the time required for full disclosure as compared to the value of such disclosure from participants' perspectives. This workshop will explore the acceptability of deception in visitor research. Is it ever acceptable and to what degree? Should the intended purpose and use of the data being collected always be disclosed to potential respondents? What are the differences, if any, between 'deception' and 'non-disclosure' or 'incomplete disclosure' in visitor research?

Speaker

From 1 September 2010, Dr Eric Jensen will be Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick, where he will teach undergraduate and postgraduate research methods and lead a new MSc in Science, Media and Public Policy. His research interests centre on public engagement with science, with several peer-reviewed publications in journals including *Public Understanding of Science*, *New Genetics & Society*, *Culture & Psychology* and *Clinical Ethics*. Holding a PhD in sociology from Cambridge University, Dr Jensen is also an experienced research consultant, specialising in high quality evaluation of educational and other impacts, including current projects with the Zoological Society of London, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and the Cambridge Science Festival. He is co-editing and contributing to the forthcoming book *Culture & Social Change: Transforming Society through the Power of Ideas* (Information Age). He can be reached at: jensen@gates scholar.org.

Workshop

Developing an Ethics Policy for visitor studies in practice.

Sofie Davis, Senior Audience Researcher, the Science Museum

What should an ethics policy for visitor studies in a museum or gallery look like? What issues should it cover and how do you ensure these are met when in contact with visitors? This workshop will be an opportunity for all participants to discuss their institutions' ethical needs and examples of practical experience, hear about the approach of the Science Museum's Audience Research and Advocacy unit, and leave with an outline of your own ethical policy formed. Please come willing to share common sense examples of how you protect the needs of the visitors you recruit.

Speaker

The Audience Research and Advocacy Unit at the Science Museum has been practising visitors studies for the last decade, ensuring that audiences, learning and engagement are at the heart of gallery and project development. Sofie Davis is a senior audience researcher, having worked on the development and evaluation of major galleries including Launchpad and Who Am I?. She has also been involved in researching and advocating for visitors' needs on web projects, object rich galleries, teachers' courses and Outreach programmes.

Travel

Merseyside Maritime Museum is within easy walking distance of Liverpool James Street Station and about a 20 minute walk from Liverpool Lime Street Station. There is a public parking lot at Albert Docks. This is commercially run.