Auburn Studio Project

Expected Outcome:
Participants of Auburn Studio Project (ASP) were expected find connections between ASP and their class experiences and report better understanding and knowledge of collage, local artists, and depiction of freedom.

Auburn Studio Project is an annual event that brings 8th grade students from Auburn Junior High School to JCSM and the Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center (JDCAC), a part of the City of Auburn department of Parks and Recreation. Evaluating this program was critical in order to support much needed change to the event.

Method:
A survey instrument of 10 items was distributed to the 470 participating students, and a separate survey of ten items to the 20 participating teachers. 361 surveys were returned by students, and 16 by teachers. Items were focused on the various aspects of the program including: relationship to classroom learning, logistics of the event, pedagogical method, evaluation of each of the five stations, and included a space for written suggestions for improvement. The Likert-type items were scored numerically, giving means for each item, and written responses were categorized thematically. The scale was 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Means below 3 would then indicate skew towards the negative.

Findings:
Overall, the event was disappointing, and students responded negatively to all but one of the items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Auburn Studio Project made connections to things I have learned in class.</td>
<td>2.10</td>
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<td>2. Auburn Studio Project made sense; I knew where to go, and when to go there.</td>
<td>2.80</td>
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<td>3. My teachers knew what was going on, and told us before today.</td>
<td>3.24</td>
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<td>4. I was given a chance to talk about art during the Auburn Studio Project.</td>
<td>2.68</td>
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<td>5. The hands-on workshop at the Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center helped me understand collage.</td>
<td>2.76</td>
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<td>6. The gallery talk at the Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center changed how I imagine local artists.</td>
<td>2.23</td>
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<td>7. The storyteller told interesting tales.</td>
<td>2.73</td>
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<td>8. The tour at the museum helped me understand how artists depict freedom.</td>
<td>2.60</td>
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Qualitative data was analyzed from the 233 written comments. After being coded based on overall tone and specific comments, 46% described boredom, and an additional 20% described dislike of the program.

Teacher evaluations echoed the responses of the students, with concerns regarding the content and effectiveness of the packet distributed to educators prior to the event, and age appropriateness of the stations.

The items are listed below, with the number of teachers responding to each option:

1. **Auburn Studio Project was applicable to classroom instruction.**
   - Strongly Disagree: 3
   - Disagree: 6
   - Neutral: 6
   - Agree: 0
   - Strongly Agree: 1

2. **Auburn Studio Project was well-organized.**
   - Strongly Disagree: 0
   - Disagree: 1
   - Neutral: 3
   - Agree: 5
   - Strongly Agree: 6

3. **The packet distributed to teachers was helpful.**
   - Strongly Disagree: 1
   - Disagree: 3
   - Neutral: 6
   - Agree: 2
   - Strongly Agree: 2

4. **Students learned valuable lessons at Auburn Studio Project**
   - Strongly Disagree: 2
   - Disagree: 5
   - Neutral: 7
   - Agree: 1
   - Strongly Agree: 1
5. The hands-on workshop at JDCAC was appropriate and educational
   - Strongly Disagree: 0
   - Disagree: 4
   - Neutral: 1
   - Agree: 7
   - Strongly Agree: 4

6. The gallery talk at JDCAC was beneficial to student learning.
   - Strongly Disagree: 2
   - Disagree: 1
   - Neutral: 6
   - Agree: 6
   - Strongly Agree: 1

7. The storyteller was informative and educational.
   - Strongly Disagree: 2
   - Disagree: 2
   - Neutral: 7
   - Agree: 2
   - Strongly Agree: 3

8. The docent-led tour was informative and educational.
   - Strongly Disagree: 4
   - Disagree: 3
   - Neutral: 5
   - Agree: 3
   - Strongly Agree: 1

9. The film at JCSM was informative and educational.
   - Strongly Disagree: 3
   - Disagree: 2
   - Neutral: 3
   - Agree: 7
   - Strongly Agree: 0

10. The writing prompt was effective at eliciting responses from students.
    - Strongly Disagree: 4
    - Disagree: 7
    - Neutral: 3
    - Agree: 1
    - Strongly Agree: 0
From the above we can see that although well planned, the lessons were not applicable to classroom instruction, and the packet explaining the purpose of the event mediocre. Further, the activities that made up the day were evaluated by teachers as ranging from bad (writing prompt), to acceptable (hands-on workshop, gallery talk, and film), but the majority of the responses were neutral, indicating a level of ambivalence towards the program by the teachers. This is interpreted as a distinct result of the limited role teachers had in planning, preparing and implementing the program.

How did you use findings for improvement?
The evaluation was sent to the participating partners at the City of Auburn and Auburn City Schools. A decision was made to revamp the program with a different grade level (6th and 7th grade, instead of 8th grade), and with a select group of those students, rather than the entire grade. Teacher selection and involvement was also reconsidered in order to better meet the needs of classroom teachers, and increase buy-in, which was particularly problematic in 2012. Essentially, Auburn Studio Project was entirely reconsidered and rebuilt from scratch.
Adult program and visitor survey

**Expected Outcome:**
From our mission statement, our mandate within the larger mission of Auburn University is to preserve, enhance, research and interpret the collection entrusted to us by offering *excellent exhibitions and programs to our diverse audiences*, thus fostering the transformative power of art.

**Method:**
Surveys on paper were handed out at programs attended by guests. The instrument had attitude and opinion items, as well as demographic information. The evaluation instrument was removed from use, in order to re-evaluate the effectiveness and pertinence of the items, as well as the ease of use by visitors, and ease of analysis by staff.

Visitors in the previous years (September 2009 through March 2011) responded to survey instruments at programs offered at JCSM. Our evaluation of that data (n=566) was moderately useful, but led staff to consider creating a new instrument that would better serve our visitors.

Below is the survey instrument, which was front and back on a half sheet of paper.
Findings:
Based on the responses, the following results were found:

- The vast majority of visitors are local residents (based on ZIP codes, n=173), but 64% are not members (n=505)
- 51% of visitors are female, 37% are male, the remaining 12% declined to answer (n=522)
- 63% identify as Caucasian, 5% as African American, 30% declined to answer (n=409)
- Age of visitors: 2% under 18, 32% between 19 and 35, 11% between 36 and 55, 33% over 56 (n=443)
- 43% attended graduate school at some level (n=527)
- 30% are students, 26% are retired (n=530)
- Programs were rated “excellent” 74% of the time (Item 4, n=507), and led to visitors feeling more informed 76% of the time (Item 5, n=500)

A number of issues were seen in the evaluation instrument.

First, visitors had taken the survey multiple times, as they were returning visitors to multiple programs. Not only were some visitors tired of filling out the same survey, but a statistical distortion was created, emphasizing the opinions of a select few regular museum attendees.

Second, the items were difficult to enter into statistical software. Each survey was entered manually, which could lead to incorrect entry, particularly when four of the items had the option to select “all that might apply,” which in turn created a multitude of possible answer combinations.

Third, while the stem of the survey items were acceptable, the bank of response options were limited and confusing, or too lengthy while remaining incomplete (for example, for describe one’s occupation, the options were: student, health services, professional, homemaker, scholar, teacher, artist, manager, sales, retired, office work, and other (without space for clarification)). The age categories were equally problematic, as they were unevenly distributed between groups (56 and older being a much larger category than 36-55). The options for scaled responses were equally insufficient, with only three options, rather than more robust five or seven responses.

Additionally, the participants were limited to a select number of visitors, and failed to be distributed to the wide range of guests of JCSM.

How did you use findings for improvement?
The survey instrument was rewritten, and is currently under revision before an expected launch date of September 1, 2013. The new survey will be implemented at the front desk as an online survey which can be previewed at
https://auburn.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_81FGnF8fE7XgIsF&Preview=Survey&BrandID=auburn

By using branched paths, the survey asks about aspects of the museum that are identified as the main reason for attending, allowing for the removal of non-relevant questions, and depth regarding the aspects of the museum identified by participants (those that visit to see the galleries answer questions
about the exhibitions, while those that attended a program are presented questions about the programmatic offerings. The new survey offers a more nuanced set of categories in several items, including items related to ethnicity and SES.

By using software, there will be little or no data entry, allowing staff to focus on the distribution and analysis.
Tours and school relationships

Expected Outcomes:
JCSM strives to be a part of a growing range of schools in the region (East-central Alabama, West-central Georgia). It is expected that school tours will continue annually for teachers that have utilized JCSM in the past. We look to expand to new teachers in different schools, and even other school districts.

Method:
When teachers arrange for tours of JCSM, information about the school is obtained, recorded, and then presented in formats that include spreadsheets of attending groups and number of visitors, and visually on a map (see link in “Findings”).

Looking at the 2011-12 academic year, we were able to see the number of visits to JCSM by schools, where each school is located, how many students they brought, and who the contact teacher was for each tour.

Findings:
The number of K-12 school visits was a lower percentage than expected. School tours account for 24% of K-12 program attendance, the remaining 76% are made up by adult and college groups (11%), summer camps and non-school affiliated K-12 students like homeschoolers (23%), and numerous weekend public programs like drop-in studios and annual family days (35%). The remaining 7% of K-12 program attendance consists of teacher groups for training sessions, and teachers and chaperones accompanying students on tours.

There were only 10 schools and a head-start program that participated in academic-year tours, and were heavily dependent on key teachers and programs. Of the 1301 students that attended academic year tours, 36% were involved in an annual program (Auburn Studio Project), 17% were counted as participants that connected the museum via Skype for an online tour arranged by a single teacher, and another 8% were student in a gifted and talented program from Russell County, Alabama. See this link for a visual representation of the attendance of schools: http://jcsm.auburn.edu/programs/2011-12SchoolVisitationMap.html

All in all, two teachers accounted for a full quarter of tours of JCSM. There are 82 public schools in Lee, Macon, Chambers, Russell and Tallapoosa Counties.

How did you use these findings for improvement?
The dedication of the participating teachers so far has been wonderful, but far too few teachers see JCSM as a resource. The expansion of tours includes connecting with new teachers, as well as maintaining continuing relationships with the key teachers that have utilized the museum efficiently.

K-12 education staff is developing an ongoing plan to interact with more teachers, visiting schools and teachers to develop a plan with school faculty to utilize museum resources effectively. By comparing the list of schools that have visited to the list of the 82 schools from 10 districts in the region, JCSM staff are
planning targeted visits to districts that have not used the museum to date, while continuing to support the districts, schools, and teachers that have previously visited JCSM.

Based on the findings there are also questions about the emphasis JCSM places on school tours compared with drop-in and public programs. Balancing the programmatic offerings between in- and out-of-school experiences would allow for a more dynamic museum role in the community.
Public program attendance

Expected Outcomes:
From our mission statement, our mandate within the larger mission of Auburn University is to preserve, enhance, research and interpret the collection entrusted to us by offering excellent exhibitions and programs to our diverse audiences, thus fostering the transformative power of art.

Methods:
By examining the number of programs offered, and the number of attending visitors, we can determine popularity by average attendance and type of program. Visitors were counted upon arrival, and recorded with the name and type of event, if they were attending a particular program.

Visitation numbers were organized in a spreadsheet, with categories for:

- Public attendance
- Café diners
- OLLI (Osher Life-Long Learning Institute) students
- Program attendees (exhibition openings, lectures, films, drop-in studios)
- Docent-led tours
- Private rentals (i.e. weddings)

In addition to counting attendance, discussions with staff members about the programs helped determine effectiveness, and areas for improvement.

Findings:
First, it must be stated that the recording of attendance figures has been done by hand, and there are omissions and errors in the counting of visitors attending museum events. Additionally, there are issues regarding multiple entries by the same visitor. The first finding is that the process is tedious and at times, can be inaccurate. For instance, in comparing a calendar of planning programs, and the daily log of visitors, some programs are not listed separately, indicating that attendees of programs may have been counted as general museum visitors.

Secondly, exhibition openings are a strongly attended, albeit infrequent programmatic offering to members and the public. The four openings in 2011-12 brought 655 visitors to JCSM, averaging 163 visitors per event. The range of 87 to 267 visitors is related to the nature of the exhibition and the level of interest in the topic by the community.

Lectures are more consistent in their attendance. The seven lectures held during the academic year brought 358 visitors to JCSM. After removing the least attended lecture (a gallery talk by a local collector for 7 visitors), our average attendance was 59 people, with reasonable consistency (range of 71; high of 95, low of 24; standard deviation of 25). Again, the topic was particularly important in relation to attendance.
Films were our most frequent programmatic offering, with 11 screenings during the academic year. The total attendance was 373 visitors, averaging 34 visitors per film, with a rather wide range (high of 67, low of 9). An interesting note can be made about a subset of films, a four-day series of Asian films. While 58 attended the first screening, only 13 attended the second day, 11 the third, and 9 the fourth. The precipitous fall of attendance needs to be further investigated to determine causes.

Collaborations with other departments, while limited in number, are consistently well attended, averaging 93 visitors per event, with the least attended program still bringing 78 visitors to the museum. While there are issues with ownership and collaborations that do not meet the objectives of JCSM, the findings indicate a strong support from the community, and the benefit of tapping into preexisting audiences.

These findings suggest that openings remain a consistently important aspect of our programmatic offerings. It also leads us to consider the expansion of collaborative programs, and careful consideration of which movies are shown at JCSM. A further exploration via the survey in the second section of this document of the film screening attendees would further demonstrate the needs and desires of this segment of our visiting population.

**How will you use these findings for improvement?**

The findings have been used to further improve our tracking and visitation count procedures, ensuring that attendance is accurately measured and categorized based on target population and type of attended program. The process is two-fold. First, the staff at the front desk of the museum are now tracking additional information about visitors, groups, and the wide range of activities that are held at the museum. A spreadsheet has been made with categories that include “General Admission,” “Programs,” Docent-led Tours,” and “Private events/Rentals.” Sub-groups within each category includes the number of K-12, College student, and adult visitors, as well as room for specific programs to be listed. In previous years overlapping events or programs would be counted in the aggregate, limiting our ability to discern specific details about program attendance, as they were simply “visitors.”

This increased focus on visitation number will be verified through the survey mentioned in the second section of this report, comparing the sample to the population of museum visitors as counted by staff at the front desk.

Another immediate improvement is the increased focus on planning and implementing collaborative programs with university faculty. Developing relationships with faculty leads to more student interest in the museum as a support for learning and exploration of ideas and topics. As indicated in previous survey instruments attendance as required for a class is cited as a reason for visiting JCSM. However, consideration about the difference between intrinsically motivated students, and those just following the directions of professors should be part of our future conversations.