



community

*A New Audience for a New Century*



THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS

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The Pew Charitable Trusts, a national and international philanthropy with a special commitment to Philadelphia, support non-profit activities in the areas of culture, education, the environment, health and human services, public policy, and religion. Through their grantmaking, The Trusts seek to encourage individual development and personal achievement, cross-disciplinary problem-solving, and innovative, practical approaches to meeting the changing needs of a global community.

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diversity



service



THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS

commitment  
involvement  
integrity  
visitor-focused  
change  
enjoyment  
accessibility  
attract

*A New Audience for a New Century*

THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS

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Why did The Minneapolis Institute of Arts undertake this project?

With a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts has recently completed a major campaign to identify underserved audiences and make the museum part of their lives. (“Underserved” is defined broadly here to include considerations of race, gender, age, economic status, and geography.)

The project has involved museum staff, our trustees and volunteers, community and civic leaders, and professional consultants in a comprehensive effort to move steadily toward a common goal: to become the nation’s most visitor-effective museum. This publication documents that effort.

Through this process, museum staff have learned much — about our audiences and about ourselves as an institution. Because we know that The Minneapolis Institute of Arts does not stand alone in its mission to serve a broad and diverse public audience, we are publishing this report so that other museum professionals may review our experience. We hope that it will provide you with useful ideas about the possibilities and process of expanding your institution’s service to the community.

A New Audience for a New Century: a summary

In June 1995, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts was one of four art museums to receive a major grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, in the first year of The Trusts’ Program for Art Museums and Communities. (The other grant recipients included the Mexican Fine Arts

Center Museum of Chicago, the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art at La Jolla, and the Carnegie Museum of Art.) The purpose of the \$224,000 grant was to underwrite:

- ① A comprehensive assessment of our visitors and community in an effort to identify underserved audiences.
- ② An implementation plan, rooted in the assessment data, for attracting and serving specific target audiences through new marketing initiatives and programs.

A New Audience for a New Century does not represent a radical shift for The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. What was new about the project, however, was the level of professional expertise that informed the process and the degree to which staff in all functional areas have been involved. Has there been a deepened change in the museum’s organizational culture or is it that now we all share a common vocabulary? Probably both.

Project implementation

The New Audience project was implemented in six stages over a two-year period:

- ① In order to discover who was already coming to the museum, the Institute conducted a comprehensive Visitor Survey in November 1995. In addition, a Member Survey was conducted via telephone in April 1996 to establish baseline data on member demographics, preferences, and suggestions for improving museum services.

- ② By statistically comparing the Visitor Survey with 1990 Census data for the seven-county metropolitan area, the museum identified seven population segments that are underserved relative to their representation in the general population. From this analysis, museum staff selected two market segments for immediate attention: families with children ages 5 to 12 and African American adults.
- ③ For each of the two market segments chosen, the museum conducted a focus group study in which people who had not visited the museum in the last three years participated in pre-visit focus groups to discuss their general attitudes and behavior regarding leisure activities; visited the museum; and participated in post-visit focus groups to discuss their museum visit and make suggestions for change.
- ④ Museum staff, trustees, and volunteers participated in two off-site, half-day meetings to assess focus group data and develop ideas for attracting and serving the two selected audience segments.
- ⑤ The ideas generated in the off-sites provided the foundation for a comprehensive marketing plan, which was developed by a Marketing Task Force composed of staff and volunteer representatives of the museum’s functional areas. The museum currently seeks funding for various components of the plan.
- ⑥ A customer service training program for the entire staff was implemented during

the spring of 1997. Its purpose was to unite the staff in creating an effective environment for our visitors to see, enjoy, and learn from great works of art.

Why was the timing right for this project?

The past decade has been marked by significant changes at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. In 1988, a new director, Dr. Evan M. Maurer, joined the museum. His charge from the Board of Trustees was fully congruent with his own vision for The Minneapolis Institute of Arts as an institution supported by public funds: to reach out to — and effectively involve in the museum’s artistic programs — the broadest possible public constituency. The Board, the staff, and Dr. Maurer shared the opinion that broadening the attendance base was the “right thing” to do. The strategy was not only right in order to maintain the museum as a vibrant institution; it was also the right thing to do on ethical grounds. As Dr. Maurer said, “Why should the opportunity to have spirit-enhancing experiences be available to only a few?”

Subsequently, Dr. Maurer engaged the museum’s trustees, employees, and volunteers in an intensive campaign to identify and eliminate barriers to full accessibility and enjoyment of the Institute. This effort, which included elimination of the general admission charge and expansion of education and outreach initiatives, was dramatically successful in attracting new audiences. Since the free admission policy was implemented in 1989, Institute attendance has increased by 75 percent — to more than 3,000 visitors per week.

As museum administrators, we can choose to be proactive in creating customer-focused institutions. At The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, we believe that curators, education specialists, and marketers can collaborate to create customer-focused programs that attract new audiences without compromising the values museum people hold dear.

TONI d. GREEN  
CO-TEAM LEADER, A NEW AUDIENCE FOR A NEW CENTURY  
DIRECTOR, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

diversity



A NEW  
AUDIENCE  
FOR A  
NEW CENTURY

What had we already done?

In March of 1995, the trustees of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts approved a five-year strategic plan, the outcome of which is for the Institute to become—and to be perceived as—a dynamic museum that has fully embraced its public. Creating the broadest possible community engagement is a cornerstone goal of the plan.

When the opportunity arose to apply for a major grant from The Pew Trusts’ Program for Art Museums and Communities, the timing couldn’t have been better. The concerns outlined for The Pew Trusts’ programs were consonant with the issues defined in the strategic plan and with the changes Evan Maurer had been implementing since his arrival at the museum. The grant represented an opportunity to consolidate and build upon the museum’s considerable strengths and forward momentum.

At The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the process of reaching out began a decade ago, and the result has been impressive growth. We remain committed to make the museum a place that attracts and satisfies all visitors, a place where the world’s diverse artistic heritage can truly come to life for everyone. The **New Audience** project has provided a process and a plan that will move us closer toward the goal of becoming the nation’s most visitor-effective art museum.

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Ever since the museum opened its doors in 1915, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts has served the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan community—and visitors from the world

over—through its outstanding collection of world art and an historical commitment to education.

**Renowned collections** The museum’s internationally recognized permanent collection of more than 85,000 works of art spans 4,000 years of culture and history in seven curatorial areas: African, Oceanic, and New World Cultures; Asian Art; Decorative Arts, Sculpture, and Architecture; European and American Paintings; Photography; Prints and Drawings; and Textiles. An eighth curatorial area is dedicated to the exhibition of works by artists who live in Minnesota. The Institute also offers more than 20 changing exhibitions each year.

**African, Oceanic, and New World Cultures** The collection of African art at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, although relatively small, is rich in early material, including a fine 12th-14th-century Inner Niger Delta equestrian figure in wood and a recently acquired terra-cotta shrine head of the same period from Ife City, Nigeria. There are also masks and figural sculpture from west and central Africa, textiles and decorative arts, and an Ijaw memorial screen, the only example in the United States. The Pacific collection, focused on Melanesia, is strong in Sepik River and New Ireland material. Pre-Columbian holdings include a Veracruz stone yoke and a Maya stela, as well as Peruvian and west Mexican ceramics. The American Indian holdings are strongest in Plains and Woodlands art, but also encompass excellent Southwest baskets and one of the largest museum collections of Southwest silver. In all areas of the department, our holdings of work by contemporary artists are growing.

**Asian Art** In 1917, the Institute negotiated its first purchase of Asian art—a remarkable Northern Chou statue of Kuan-yin, inscribed and dated to the year 571. Thanks to the specialized interests of a few private collectors, the Asian collections are especially renowned for their Chinese archaic bronzes, jade, gold and silver, monochrome ceramics, and imperial textiles. Chinese furniture and literati *objets d’art*, Miao textiles, and Southeast Asian ceramics are important new collections formed in recent years. Japanese screens, *ukiyo-e* prints and paintings, and Islamic miniatures also are highly regarded. In recent years, the collections have become increasingly comprehensive, with newly developed holdings of high quality in Southeast Asian, Indian, Himalayan, and Korean art.

**Decorative Arts, Sculpture, and Architecture** The Decorative Arts collection is noted for its Italian Baroque and Rococo material, including a pier table designed by G.B. Piranesi, and French 18th-century furniture and related decorative arts. There are also fine examples of 18th-century American furniture from Boston, Newport, New York, and Philadelphia. English and American silver from the 17th to the 19th centuries is well represented, including Paul de Lamerie’s Sutherland wine cistern and Paul Revere’s Templeman tea set. Twentieth-century holdings are particularly strong in Prairie School and related traditions, complemented by a nearby house designed by William Purcell for himself and donated to the museum in 1985. Eight period rooms in the Institute display English, French, and American decorative arts in context; three new rooms are planned.

**European and American Paintings** This internationally acclaimed survey collection of Western paintings includes exceptional masterpieces of European painting from the 14th century to the present. Among the strengths of the collection are a fine representation of 17th-century Dutch and Flemish landscape and marine paintings; a full range of works from the 19th century French schools, including Barbizon, academic, and Impressionist works; and paintings by the major German Expressionists. Highlights include works by such artists as Titian, Guercino, Rembrandt, Honthorst, Goya, Poussin, Beckmann, and Monet. The American collection includes important paintings by Cropsey, West, Sargent, and O’Keeffe.

**Photography** Begun in 1964, the Institute’s collection of photographs spans the entire history of the medium as a fine art and presently holds approximately 7,500 items. The collection focuses on American 20th-century work, but also includes a smaller group of European and 19th-century photographs. Notable among the Americans are Ansel Adams, Berenice Abbott, Lewis Hine, Lee Friedlander, Robert Frank, and Walker Evans. Key European photographers, such as Eugene Atget, August Sander, and Henri Cartier-Bresson, are well-represented.

**Prints and Drawings** This department, established in 1916, maintains a collection of 50,000 works on paper that is encyclopedic in scope and comprehensive in medium—prints, monotypes, multiples, artists’ books, drawings, watercolors, and pastels. Among the highlights are Old Master prints by Dürer and Rembrandt; a

As early as 12 years ago, museum educators tried using the phrase “visitor-centered” to express a more market-driven approach to museum services. It was too radical then, but it has become essential today.

Kate Johnson

Co-team Leader, A New Audience for a New Century

Chair, Education Division

community



A NEW  
AUDIENCE  
FOR A  
NEW CENTURY

rare presentation copy of Goya's *Los Caprichos*; 19th-century French and British prints; German Expressionist prints; the Minnich Collection of botanical, zoological, fashion, and ornamental prints; contemporary American and European prints and drawings; the Vermillion Editions, Ltd. Archive; and an array of works by Minnesota and regional artists.

**Textiles** The Textile Department is primarily known for its distinctive holdings of European tapestries, including a complete set of the Artemesia series commissioned by Louis XIII. A wide diversity of cultures and time periods—from Coptic textiles to Bolivian Amarya cloth—is represented as well. Distinguished by a focus on innovation in technique, the collection contains superb examples of Bhutanese brocades, Central Asian ikats, Moroccan drawloom weaving, and early Italian lace. Another area of unusual strength is design and fiber art of the late 20th century, including works by Jack Lenor Larsen and Claire Zeisler.

**Commitment to education and outreach**

The founders of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts believed that the museum should be a place for lifelong learning and enjoyment, as well as the cultural enrichment derived from an excellent permanent collection and exhibition program. That philosophy has not changed. Today, the Institute is well-known for comprehensive education and outreach programs, including successful efforts to reach new audiences through initiatives such as the popular monthly “Family Days.” A world leader in applying new, interactive technologies for delivering educational and interpretive materials, the

Institute is one of just a few art museums with full-time staff committed to developing new educational technologies. During the past five years, our Interactive Media Group has received six international awards, and articles describing our leadership in gallery-based multimedia have appeared in *The New York Times* and *Business Week*.

**A visitor-centered museum**

Today, the Institute’s strategic plan is focused on the museum as a “visitor-centered” institution. Attendance has increased significantly as a result of our efforts to reach a broader audience through education and outreach. Total attendance has grown from 300,000 in 1986 to 569,000 in 1996. Participation in community outreach programs increased from 78,000 to 175,000 over the same ten-year period. Highlights of current educational and community efforts are listed below. A recently adopted strategic plan for the Education Division includes visitor-focused initiatives, expanded educational services, and community outreach programs. Highlights of each area are listed below.

**Visitor-focused initiatives**

- Free admission (since 1989).
- Interactive video learning centers in the galleries; six programs are currently in use, with more in process.
- Museum orientation center providing exhibition previews, gallery information, tour ideas, and general information about the Institute from interactive video kiosks and volunteers.

As American cities become increasingly diversified, we must look to our schools and cultural institutions as places to gain the mutual respect necessary for a healthy, cohesive society. As a general art museum that displays and explains art from all periods and cultures, the Institute

- A new system of labels, maps, and gallery introductions and didactics.
- “A Closer Look”: exhibitions featuring in-depth examinations of selected works from the permanent collection.

**Educational services**

- Group, teacher-led, and custom-designed tours of the permanent collections and special exhibitions.
- Art Adventure Program, in which museum-trained volunteers (usually parents) use thematically grouped art reproductions in elementary classrooms to prepare nearly 100,000 students each year for an actual museum tour.
- Classroom materials, including slide sets, videocassettes, and hands-on kits.
- Curriculum materials available on-line, at the Institute’s Web site.
- ArtReach Centers providing free access to curriculum materials at several sites throughout the state.
- A Teacher Advisory Committee, composed of 15 elementary, secondary, and college-level teachers, to assist museum educators in developing useful and appropriate program content.

**Community outreach programs**

- Family Days: free monthly celebrations of diverse cultures, combining thematic entertainment and learning

related to special exhibitions or featured works from the permanent collection.

- Summer programs bringing art into urban parks.
- Community networking through social service and neighborhood agencies, churches, and newspapers.
- Community advisory committees to assist educators and curators in program and exhibition development.
- ArtTeam, which provides education and employment opportunities for at-risk neighborhood youth.
- ArtSmart, which trains high school students to present art reproductions to area elementary school students.

**Committed to bring art and people together**

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts is only as vibrant and strong as our commitment “to bring art and people together to discover, enjoy, and understand the world’s diverse artistic heritage.” Fulfilling this mission necessitates flexibility, receptivity, and the ability to respond to new ideas and new perspectives. The museum has anticipated the need for change through the strategic planning process. The institutional assessment made possible by The Pew Trusts—and the implementation plan which has emerged from that process—are critical both to fulfilling our mission and to consolidating the museum’s impact as a vital resource for our community, state, and region.

is uniquely positioned to maintain an important leadership role in building a more tolerant, understanding, and expressive community.

DR. EVAN M. MAURER  
DIRECTOR AND CEO  
THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS

**Mission Statement**

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts is dedicated to national leadership in bringing art and people together to discover, enjoy, and understand the world’s diverse artistic heritage.





THE RESEARCH  
PROCESS

What did we want to accomplish?

As outlined in the grant proposal to The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Institute's initial objectives for **A New Audience for a New Century** were to:

- ① Establish highly reliable quantitative and qualitative baseline demographic data for general museum visitorship.
- ② Use that data to identify underserved constituencies.
- ③ Evaluate current programs to determine their effectiveness and appeal to potential visitors.
- ④ Engage consultative and community expertise to help us better understand the needs of specific communities identified as "underserved."
- ⑤ Establish measurable growth goals for each underserved constituency on a specific timeline.
- ⑥ Develop a marketing plan aimed at attracting and satisfying new museum visitors.

Over the course of the project, staff input and feedback made it clear that customer service training would be necessary to ensure successful implementation of the plan; consequently, this component was added to the mix.

The project team

The **New Audience** project team was led by Education Division Chair Kate Johnson and Marketing Director Toni d. Green, with the assistance of Director of Major Gifts and Grants

Francie Nelson. This core project team was supplemented by appropriate staff and community advisors at various phases of the project. Their work was overseen by museum Director Evan M. Maurer and Trustee Bonnie Wallace.

Hiring a consulting firm

The team's first charge was to engage a consulting firm with experience in all aspects of market research and a demonstrated ability to work effectively with arts organizations. Project team leaders Kate Johnson and Toni Green, who has a strong corporate marketing background herself, developed a profile which included:

- ∞ Marketing track record
- ∞ Prior experience with arts organizations
- ∞ Qualifications of staff
- ∞ Project completion record
- ∞ Quality of recommendations/results
- ∞ Grasp of the task at hand
- ∞ Chemistry
- ∞ Cost

By July 1995, Green developed a short list of three firms and solicited proposals, which were independently graded (A-C) on each criterion by both project leaders. The Cincinnatus Group received twice as many A grades as either of the other firms and was subsequently engaged.

Cincinnatus is a Minneapolis-based consulting firm that provides research and planning support for business and non-for-profit organizations. A key facet of the Cincinnatus style is to

help organizations plan for their future through well-informed and participatory decision-making processes.

In September and October 1995, the **New Audience** project leaders worked with Cincinnatus principals Diane Herman and Kevin Ryan to design and schedule the information-gathering components of the project. On November 7, 1995, Diane Herman presented an overview of the **New Audience** project at an all-staff meeting and explained that every museum employee would be involved at certain points in the process.

Project documentation

While The Minneapolis Institute of Arts was one of only four art museums to receive The Pew Trusts grants to study underserved audiences and design strategic marketing programs accordingly, we know that all museums are being challenged to do something similar. That is why the team decided to document the project by creating this publication for our museum colleagues. To that end, we hired a business writer with a great deal of non-profit experience, Caroline Hall Otis, to co-author the text with Diane Herman and to coordinate production of this report with Laukkonen Design.

Information gathering

In order to determine who *wasn't* visiting the museum, we first had to pinpoint just who *was* visiting—and when and why and with whom. The first stage of the **New Audience** project, then, was to gather information on the people who come through the museum's

doors: Who are they? What drew them here? What will bring them back? We also sought information about and from those who support the Institute with their membership dollars.

The Visitor Survey, conducted in November 1995, was designed to provide baseline data on the demographic characteristics of visitors to The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. We wanted to discover whether or not the demographics of current museum visitors differed significantly from the Census data of the seven-county metropolitan area, and if there were meaningful correlations among the various demographic variables. We wanted to measure behavior, including frequency of visits and preferred activities while at the Institute. Additional survey questions explored issues such as visitor motivation, attitudes, and barriers to satisfaction. And finally, the survey was designed to identify any significant relationships between the demographic variables and visitor attitudes and behaviors.

The Member Survey, conducted by telephone interview in April 1996, was designed to solicit information from our members about what they enjoy and value about the museum, how often they visit, how those visits are structured, and ways in which we might improve our services. This survey provided benchmark customer-satisfaction data which will set a standard of comparison for future studies of member satisfaction and attitudes.



THE PROJECT TEAM.

TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: DIRECTOR OF MAJOR GIFTS AND GRANTS FRANCIE NELSON, MARKETING DIRECTOR TONI d. GREEN, EDUCATION DIVISION CHAIR KATE JOHNSON.

BOTTOM ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: MUSEUM DIRECTOR EVAN M. MAURER AND TRUSTEE BONNIE WALLACE.

Initial objectives for A New Audience for a New Century:

- ① Establishing baseline demographic data for our current visitors.
- ② Comparing that information to Census data to identify underserved audiences.
- ③ Evaluating current museum programs for effectiveness and appeal.
- ④ Engaging consultants and community expertise to learn more about specific underserved audience segments.
- ⑤ Establishing growth goals for these new audiences.
- ⑥ Developing a marketing plan aimed at attracting and satisfying new museum visitors.

QUANTITATIVE  
STUDIES:  
SURVEY  
STATISTICS

What did our visitors think about us?

The 1995 Visitor Survey was designed to measure basic demographic characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of visitors who walk through the doors of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Visitors were intercepted at random during a two-week period from November 3-19, 1995. Half of the final sample of 522 visitors was intercepted upon entering the museum and half upon leaving. Visitors under age 18 and those who were part of a structured group or club were excluded from the survey.

Mid-November was chosen for the survey period because it is considered to be “typical.” The study was scheduled to avoid the first two weeks after the opening of a well-publicized exhibition. The sampling plan was based on historical visiting patterns for all times of day and days of the week, including Thursday evening, when access to special exhibitions is free of charge.

Respondents completed a written questionnaire and returned it to the researchers, who gave them a small gift for their participation. Throughout the study, researchers observed a very high level of cooperation among museum visitors.

In addition to the random sample of 522 visitors, the study utilized the technique of “oversampling” to generate an additional sample of people of color. Previous museum research had revealed that visitors of racial minority groups are relatively rare. Thus, we oversampled by 30 in order to produce a subsample sufficient to identify differences through statistical testing.

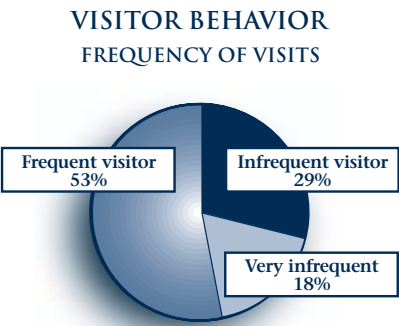
Key findings

Demographics

- 78 percent of visitors live in the seven-county metropolitan area of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and surrounding suburbs, the museum’s major market.
- 29 percent of visitors are Institute members; 71 percent are not members.

Visitor behavior

- Most visitors are repeat visitors; only 14 percent are visiting for the first time.
- More than half of visitors come to the museum at least every six months.
- Most come with friends or family; only 21 percent come alone.
- Visitors engage in more than one activity per visit; the average is 2.2 activities. (Activities on the questionnaire included the galleries, special exhibitions, museum shop, restaurant, and touch-screen videos.)
- Visitors are most likely to find out about museum activities via newspaper articles or reviews. Other sources of information



include visits to the museum, word of mouth from family and friends, the museum’s membership magazine, and print ads.

Visitor attitudes

- Most visitors say they are “extremely satisfied” or “very satisfied.”
- The most frequent motivation for visiting the museum is entertainment/enjoyment or to see an exhibit.
- Most visitors say they are most interested in European painting and sculpture.
- The most frequent barriers to visiting are lack of time, distance from home, and desire for different exhibits (“something that is interesting to me, personally”).

Segmentation

- Age is an important variable. Older visitors visit more frequently, are more satisfied, and are more likely to be members.
- Race is another important variable. In selecting among multiple-choice answers on the survey, people of color said they are more likely to visit the museum to find out “what kind of art is there?” or to complete a class assignment. People of color who visit also tend to be younger (55 percent under age 35), less interested in European paint-

ing and sculpture, and slightly less satisfied by their visit.

- Membership in the museum is an important factor, too. Unsurprisingly, Institute members visit more frequently than do non-members. In addition, members are more likely to be older, affluent, better-educated, and married.
- Several demographic variables are related to the frequency of visits. The best predictors of visitor frequency are museum membership, age (older), income (higher), education (more), and location of residence (urban versus suburban).

What did our members think about us?

In April 1996, Cincinnatus conducted a telephone survey of a random sample of 375 members drawn from the museum’s 17,000-member base (as of March 1996). The sample was stratified to reflect the proportion of members in various membership categories, including individual, household, and other memberships beyond the basic level. At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer asked to speak to the person in the household “most involved with the museum.” Overall, interviewers

observed a very high level of cooperation among respondents, including their willingness to complete a lengthy interview and offer candid suggestions for improvement.

HOW DO YOU DETERMINE  
STATISTICAL VALIDITY?

The sample size was statistically determined based on an estimate of the total number of adult museum visitors during the year, an assumed error rate, and a desire to draw comparisons between White and minority visitors via oversampling. The researchers wanted to be 95 percent sure that the results do not exceed the error rate. Because previous research had shown that minority visitors constituted less than 6 percent of total adult visitors, the researchers used an oversampling technique to supplement the core sample with enough minority respondents to enable a comparison between White and minority respondents. Quotas for the core sample and for the oversampling were calculated for each day of the week based on the historical distribution of visitors.



What and why:

The 1995 Visitor Survey

Purpose:

To determine the demographic characteristics of people who now visit the museum. This provided baseline data from which to gauge the success of future efforts to attract new audiences.

Major research questions:

- What are the demographic characteristics of the people who now visit the museum? Are the demographic characteristics of current

museum visitors significantly different from the Census data of the metropolitan area?

- Are there significant relationships between the various demographic variables?

Minor research questions:

- What are the expectations and/or motivations of people visiting the museum?
- Are there significant relationships between selected demographic vari-

ables and the expectations and motivations of people visiting the museum?

- What were the experiences and levels of satisfaction of people leaving the museum?

- Are there significant relationships between selected demographic variables and the experiences and levels of satisfaction of people leaving the museum?



**QUANTITATIVE STUDIES:**  
**SURVEY**  
**STATISTICS**

**Key findings: member satisfaction**

The Member Survey was conducted in order to provide the museum with benchmark satisfaction data, which will later be used to measure changes in member attitudes. Overall, members of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts are highly satisfied with their memberships, with three out of four respondents reporting that they are “extremely” or “very” satisfied. The highest satisfaction levels were reported among longer-term members and people holding memberships above the basic individual or household categories.

**Member benefits**

- Free admission to special exhibitions and films is the cornerstone of member benefits, ranking highest in both importance (55 percent said it is “extremely important”) and satisfaction (73 percent are “extremely satisfied.”) Members take advantage of the free admission privilege three times a year, on average.
- The museum’s membership magazine, *Arts*, is the benefit used most often (an average of nine times per year) and by the largest percentage of members (97 percent). There is room for improvement, though, since only 38 percent of respondents said that they are “extremely satisfied” with the magazine.
- Members-only events drew more than half of our members at least once in the past year.
- Discounts on products and classes rank last in terms of usage and importance. Among those who use the discounts, however, satisfaction ranks relatively high.

**Motivation to join and renew**

According to this survey, most members are motivated to join the museum and renew their memberships due to their personal interest in art (44 percent) or their desire to support a community institution (37 percent). Only a small minority joined the museum to take advantage of member discounts and members-only events.

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts is fortunate to have an excellent balance of new and longer-term members. Twenty percent of respondents have been members for less than a year, 25 percent for more than ten years, and the rest somewhere in-between. Newer members reported higher satisfaction levels than those in the middle, suggesting that the museum is doing a good job of attracting new members and that additional focus on member retention strategies may be helpful.

**Visiting behavior**

- Members report visiting the Institute frequently. Sixty-eight percent said they had visited within the past three months. Newer members and longer-term members visit most often.
- Visiting behavior is clearly driven by special exhibitions.
- Reported barriers to visiting more often included lack of time (68 percent), distance from home (30 percent), museum hours (18 percent), exhibit content (18 percent), and parking (18 percent).
- Museum members tend to visit other museums as well, which suggests that well-developed marketing tie-ins with

other institutions may be attractive to members.

**Member demographics**

- Gender: 83 percent of those who identified themselves as “most involved with the museum” were women. This figure may be skewed by the simple fact that women tend to handle more family social decisions; nonetheless, women probably play a major role in matters related to museum membership.
- Geography: 89 percent of museum members reside in the seven-county Twin Cities metro area, with half residing in the core cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul and the other half residing in the suburbs.

**Who wasn’t visiting the museum?**

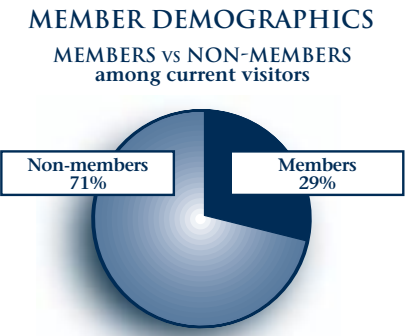
When the Visitor Survey process was complete, the information about those who visit the museum was compared with 1990 U.S. Census data for residents of the seven-county metro area. Our aim was to identify underserved audience segments in the museum’s service area.

**Census data comparison**

As we compared the data, a number of trends emerged. Few were surprising. For example, it came as no surprise that the Institute welcomes more city-dwellers than suburbanites, more women than men, more college graduates than not.

Whether or not the study uncovered “new” information, however, it clarified the fact that there are a number of market segments within our prime geography that currently are not served by the museum as well as they could be. This translates into very real opportunity for this institution.

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding, and minor differences (less than 1 percent) exist in how Hispanic respondents reported their racial backgrounds in the visitor survey and the Census.



- Household type: Museum members are relatively diverse in their living arrangements, with 36 percent living as married couples without children, 30 percent living alone, and 27 percent living in households with children under 18.
- Education: The museum’s membership is very well-educated, with 78 percent holding a bachelor’s degree or higher. More than a third have advanced degrees.

**Suggestion Box**

The 1996 Member Survey data represents a gold mine of suggestions for managing the membership program and improving member satisfaction. Examples include:

- Improve *Arts Magazine*, the museum’s most frequently used benefit and a key membership-building tool.
- Address the “no time” barrier to visiting by marketing mini-tours and/or tours at more convenient hours.
- Address the “distance” barrier by exploring tie-ins with suburban community art centers, libraries, shopping malls, or fitness clubs.
- Create and implement new member retention strategies in order to maintain member involvement during those key in-between years.

**Members told us:**

“I’m an elderly person and it’s hard for me to get around. Maybe [the museum could] have some kind of transport service for the elderly.”

“I would like to see more in-depth information about coming events.”

“I would like more exhibits for children. The last exhibit I saw had a lot of nudity...”

“I would like to see more benches and chairs as we age.”

“[The museum] is kind of far away from our home. So whatever is there has to really catch our attention for us to drive there.”

“The events that happen during the week should also be offered during weekend or evening hours to provide opportunities for people who work.”

“THE GIFT SHOP DOESN’T HAVE ENOUGH DIVERSE MERCHANDISE.”

“It would be nice if they stayed open later and offered a larger variety of classes.”



QUANTITATIVE

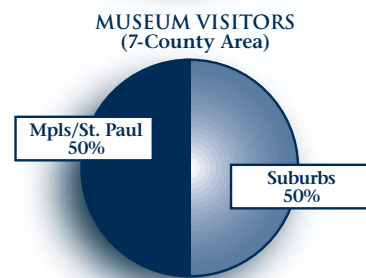
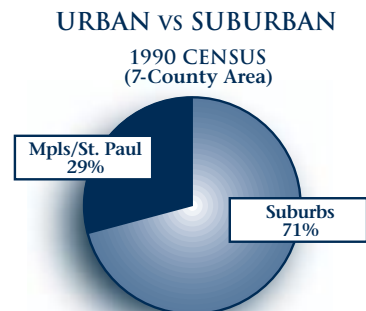
STUDIES:

SURVEY

STATISTICS

Urban versus suburban

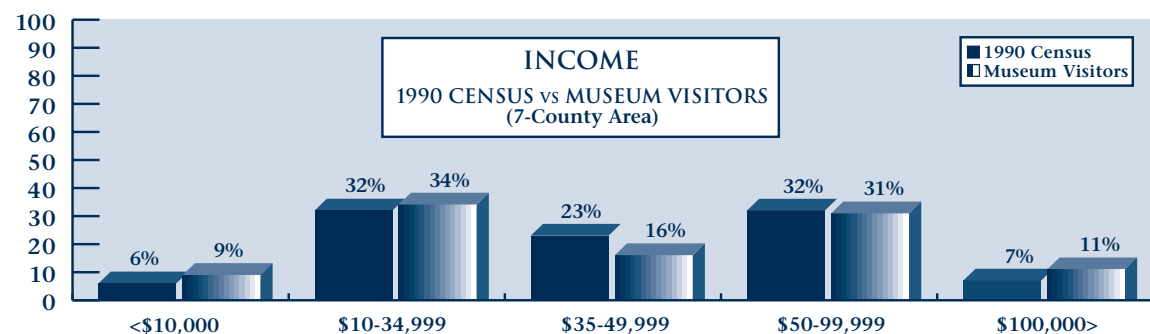
Museum visitors are predominantly city-dwellers. While the Census shows that 71 percent of metro area residents live in the suburbs and only 29 percent reside within the city limits of Minneapolis and St. Paul, fully half the visitors to the Institute are city-dwellers.



residents are males, yet males represent just 30 percent of museum visitors.

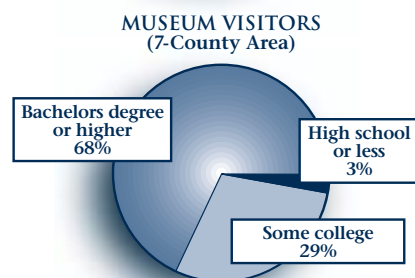
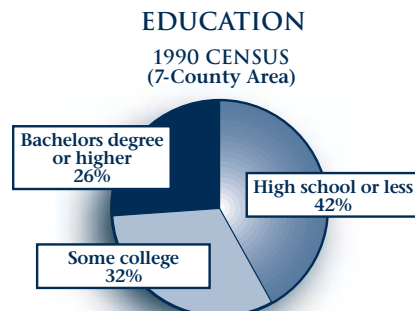
Income

Museum visitors are more likely to have household incomes above \$100,000 and below \$10,000 (students)—and less likely to have incomes in the upper middle range (\$35,000-\$49,999). The variances were not huge, however, leading to the conclusion that education is a stronger determinant of visiting behavior than is money.



Education

According to the Census, 19 percent of area adults are college graduates and 7 percent of them have post-graduate degrees. In contrast, those museum visitors who were surveyed included 40 percent college graduates and 28 percent with advanced degrees.

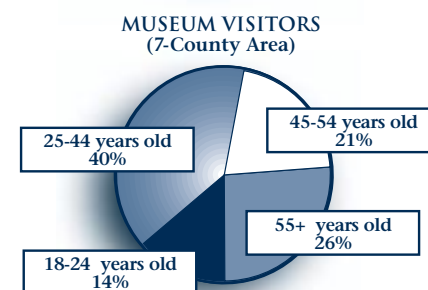
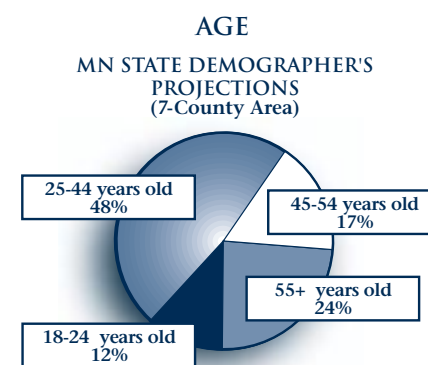


Occupation

Museum visitors are more likely to work in professional specialties and management, and less likely to work in blue-collar and service jobs as compared to the public at large. While only 25 percent of area residents are not in the work force, 36 percent of museum visitors are not employed, identifying themselves as retired, students, and homemakers.

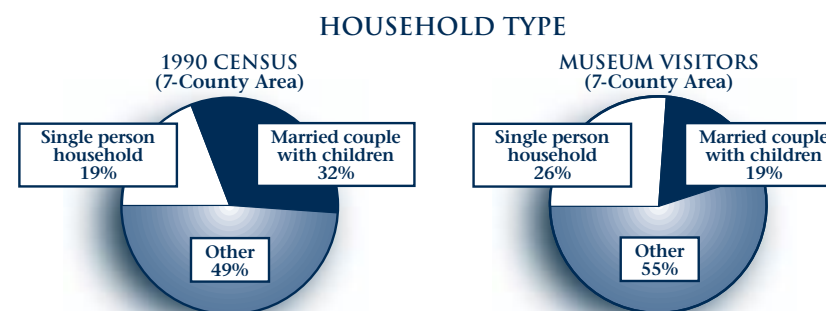
Age

When survey data was compared to the Minnesota State demographer's current population projections for the seven-county metro area, we found that museum visitors are more likely to be ages 45 to 54 and less likely to be ages 25 to 44, in contrast to the general population.



Household type

Survey and Census comparisons revealed that museum visitors are less likely to live as married couples with children under 18 and more likely to live in single person households than is the general public. Married couples with children represented just 19 percent of museum visitors, as compared to 32 percent of the general population.



Race

Like the population of Minnesota, visitors to The Minneapolis Institute of Arts are overwhelmingly White, and African Americans visit less than expected based on Census comparisons; whereas 3.1 percent of metro-area residents are African American, only 1.0 percent of museum visitors are African American. In contrast, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans all visit in proportions closer to their representation in the metro population.

RACE	
1990 CENSUS (7-County Area)	MUSEUM VISITORS (7-County Area)
White	93.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.1%
American Indian	0.9%
Black/African American	3.1%
Any Hispanic*	1.1%
Other	0.5%
White	94.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.2%
American Indian	0.7%
Black/African American	1.0%
Any Hispanic*	0.7%
Other	1.5%

\*Term/phrase used by the Census Bureau to encompass a wide-range of peoples including those from South American countries, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba.

Summary: potential new audiences

The comparison of Visitor Survey data with 1990 Census results and State demographic projections revealed that the following Twin Cities population segments are underserved relative to population distribution patterns:

- ☞ Males.
- ☞ Adults ages 25-44 (later Baby Boomers).
- ☞ Married couples with children under age 18.
- ☞ Blue-collar, service, technical, and sales workers.
- ☞ People with lower education levels.
- ☞ African Americans.
- ☞ Residents of the suburbs.

QUANTITATIVE  
STUDIES:  
SURVEY  
STATISTICS

**The challenge: defining the target markets**

Clearly, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts lacks the marketing resources to “swing at every pitch.” In order to enhance our chances of attracting and retaining new audience segments, we decided to narrow the seven potential markets down to two. The project team developed the following criteria for deciding which segments would be most promising for cultivation. Selected markets, the team decided, needed to be:

- Large enough to justify the expenditure of marketing resources.
- Specific enough to define and describe easily.
- Reachable through existing or easy-to-create marketing channels.
- Underserved as compared to general population data and defined by our statistical analysis.
- Potential long-term visitors — people who will visit the museum again and again.

Other considerations that figured into the choice of audience segments included:

- The potential for attracting program sponsorship support.
- The potential for growth in the museum’s membership and donor base.
- The potential to create solutions to benefit the art museum industry as a whole.

Based on the above criteria, two market segments emerged as the most logical to pursue. The first, families with children ages 5 through 12, actually encompasses aspects of most of the

underserved audience segments as defined by the Visitors Survey. For example, parents of young children tend to be ages 25-44, reside in the suburbs, and represent a broad range of income and education levels. In addition, half of those parents are males! The other market identified for study and development was African Americans, the largest minority group in the Twin Cities metropolitan region, and one that is growing by 12 percent every two years.

Now, let’s take a look at how these two market segments met the team’s selection criteria.

**Why families with children?**

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts has always been interested in attracting families. In recent years, we have developed a highly successful Family Days program and have formulated a number of ways to reach and serve families more effectively. This experience, along with the focus group study, provides an excellent foundation for continuing this important work.

The families segment is large and definable. As of the 1990 Census, there were 657,000 adults living in families with children under 18 in the Twin Cities area, or 39 percent of all metro-area adults. Families are heavily concentrated in the suburbs, where 77 percent of them live, thus addressing another underserved audience segment. And numerous marketing channels are already in place for families, including (among others) specialized media, schools, and a broad range of not-for-profit organizations.

The families market is clearly underserved: While adults living with children account for 39 percent of the general population, they only accounted for 23 percent of museum visitors

during the study period. Additionally, only 10 percent of visitors said they were visiting the museum with their children.

Among many reasons for selecting families as a target audience is the potential to build the Institute’s visitor and member base for the long term. Industry studies have documented that children who engage in activities with their families are much more likely to do so again as adults — and to bring their own children with them. Further, a strategy aimed at families has the potential to reach more middle-income households and adults from a broader education spectrum.

Families with young children fulfilled other selection criteria as follows:

- Opportunity for leveraged marketing: A family visit results in multiple buys — in the museum shop, in the restaurant, and in special exhibitions.
- Interest to the field: Numerous industry studies report low participation in museum visits by families nationwide. If the Institute succeeds, it will be creating a model that other museums may follow.
- Potential for corporate sponsorships: Families with young children are a highly desirable consumer market and corporations may choose to reach this market via sponsorships.

It should be noted that The Minneapolis Institute of Arts does not stand alone in the lack of success in reaching more families. Numerous studies have documented the fact that families are less likely to participate in art museums than in other cultural organizations such as zoos and science museums. Consequently, the goal of

serving more families may seem difficult to attain. Nevertheless, we believe that developing effective strategies to serve more families should reap significant rewards in the long term.

**Why African Americans?**

This market is large and readily defined. The population of the Twin Cities seven-county area is becoming more racially diverse. Between 1980 and 1990, the area’s population of color grew by 81 percent and now numbers more than 75,000 adults. This population is heavily concentrated, with 77 percent living in the core cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

African Americans were the only racial or ethnic segment identified as significantly underserved, accounting for 1.0 percent of the museum’s visitors in contrast to 3.1 percent of the adults in the general population. There are well-developed marketing channels for the African American population, including Black-oriented newspapers, radio stations, churches, schools, and a broad range of community, social, and professional organizations.

It is important to note that several industry studies related to race and the arts have documented relatively low art museum participation rates for Blacks in general. Therefore, if The Minneapolis Institute of Arts can develop effective programs and services for this audience segment, we will be creating a valuable template for other institutions to mold to their own unique needs. In addition, our effort to attract and satisfy African American visitors sends a visible and important message that this museum is committed to inclusiveness.

*The project team and consultants developed the following criteria for deciding which of the underserved audiences held the most promise. Selected markets, the team decided, needed to be:*

**SELECTING TARGET MARKETS:  
the criteria**

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| ■ Large enough to justify the expenditure of marketing resources.  | ■ Potential long-term visitors—people who will visit the museum again and again. | ■ The potential for long-term growth in the museum’s membership and donor base.    |
| ■ Specific enough to define and describe easily.                   |  | ■ The potential to create solutions to benefit the art museum industry as a whole. |
| ■ Reachable through existing or easy-to-create marketing channels. | Other considerations that figured into the choice of markets included:           |  |
| ■ Underserved as compared to general population data.              | ■ The potential for attracting corporate sponsorship support.                    |  |

long-term



QUALITATIVE  
STUDIES:  
FOCUS  
GROUPS

The museum's objective for the qualitative research phase of the **New Audience** project was to obtain sufficient information via focus groups to create strategic marketing plans for the two audience segments chosen. Focus groups are a widely used qualitative research tool in the business world. They are particularly helpful for understanding the complex and subtle relationships between consumers and products. Unlike quantitative research — such as the Visitor Survey — the results of focus groups may not be projected statistically to represent the views of a larger population. Rather, these focus groups were intended to provide a rich source of in-depth information on perceptions of the museum and suggestions that may help the Institute become a more desirable destination.

***What did young families think about visiting the museum?***

The Institute's study of families was conducted in April and May of 1996 in the focus group facilities of our consulting firm, the Cincinnatus Group. The study had three stages:

- ① Respondents attended a focus group in which they discussed their general attitudes and behaviors regarding family activities. (The identity of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts as study sponsor was not revealed until late in the meeting.)
- ③ Next, respondents visited the Institute with at least one child between the ages of 5 and 12 (although children of other ages may have accompanied them) and filled out a brief survey upon exiting the museum.

- ③ Finally, respondents re-convened to discuss their reactions and suggestions.

Via telephone, Cincinnatus recruited focus group participants at random from throughout the suburban metro area, offering a \$100 respondent fee as an incentive to participate. (In addition, participants received a small gift from the museum shop.) In all, there were 24 participants in the pre-visit focus groups. A total of 22 mothers and one lone father completed all study elements. Each respondent fit the following criteria:

- ☞ He/she is most responsible for planning family social activities.
- ☞ A least one child in the household is between the ages of 5 and 12.
- ☞ The family has visited at least one cultural organization in the past three years.
- ☞ The family has not visited The Minneapolis Institute of Arts in the past three years.
- ☞ No family member is employed by a market research or advertising firm.
- ☞ No family member is employed by or volunteers regularly for a local cultural organization.



***General findings***

The results of the study suggest that The Minneapolis



Institute of Arts will need to make significant changes if we hope to attract and satisfy larger numbers of families — changes in how the museum is positioned and communicates, and changes in how programs and services are delivered.

Focus group respondents described several steps that enter into a family's decision to visit the museum, each step having its own barriers to overcome:

- ☞ In the pre-visit focus groups, many respondents were surprisingly negative about art museums as a family choice given how little actual experience they had. Thus, there appear to be perceptual barriers that prevent many families from even considering the museum for a family outing. Concerns included:
  - b* Will my child enjoy the experience?
  - b* Will I know enough to help my child understand and enjoy it?
  - b* Are there opportunities for active, hands-on activities?
  - b* Is it easy to get there and find a place to park?
  - b* Will I be able to find my way around in the museum?
- ☞ In the post-visit groups, many participants said their experience was more positive than they expected. However, some said they wouldn't visit again, nor would they recommend the museum to friends without significant changes. The lesson learned was that an aggressive

marketing effort may bring more families to the museum, but it won't necessarily bring them back for repeat visits. Respondent' suggestions for changes included:

- b* More interpretation and useful information about the art, including information that is appropriate for children of varying ages.
- b* More active, hands-on activities.
- b* More helpful, welcoming museum staff.
- b* Better information about museum highlights for families.
- b* Clearer maps and gallery labels.
- b* A more "child-friendly" environment overall.

Participants in this study were not aware of how the museum has improved its services in recent years. Nor did they notice many of the existing services that might have made their experience more enjoyable. The goal of this focus group research, however, was to understand their perceptions — not to correct their misperceptions. As far as they are concerned, perceptions are reality — and their version of reality is the starting point for change.

***Specific findings: pre-visit focus groups***

The Twin Cities' reputation as a cultural mecca is deserved. Consequently, there is considerable competition when it comes to family activities. When asked what cultural organizations they had visited or considered visiting as a family during the past year, each of the two

# family fun

QUALITATIVE STUDIES: FOCUS GROUPS

focus groups readily identified nearly 40 options. The most popular ones were those designed for children and families, such as The Minnesota Children’s Museum, The Children’s Theatre Company, Science Museum of Minnesota, and the two major zoos. Families tend to favor active, hands-on experiences where children don’t have to be quiet. Other important factors are cost, time, and various logistical considerations (including the need to satisfy the schedules and interests of children of various ages).

Perception versus reality

When respondents were asked how they viewed the two major art museums—Walker Art Center and The Minneapolis Institute of Arts—as family destinations, comments became quite negative. Respondents had strong reservations about whether art museums were or could be enjoyable for their children. As one mother said, “My kids would be bored with art. It’s just stuff that sits there.”

When asked about their perceptions of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts specifically, some were concerned that the location was unsafe. Some were afraid that their children might break something or that other visitors or staff might object to the possible noise. On the other hand, one participant said her older children might enjoy the experience and another said that art is a topic “I can easily relate to with my children.”

Intense feelings based on little knowledge

What seemed unusual about the groups was the relative intensity of their feelings about the Institute given their minimal, or non-existent, exposure to the museum. When asked

what words they would use to describe the museum, there was little hesitation in generating the following list: boring, stuffy, impressive, large, cold, quiet, fancy, famous paintings, “If you break it, we’ll mark it sold,” not child-friendly, unsafe neighborhood, and high class.

Whatever their reservations, focus group participants had already committed (and been paid a small stipend) to visit the museum as part of the study process. The next part of the discussion had to do with the upcoming excursion.

Most parents expected their children to benefit

Many respondents said they thought the visit would be educational for their children. Some of their children had expressed an interest in art at school or were thought to be creative, so exposure to art might be a good experience, respondents said. Parents were not adverse to learning something themselves, either. “I think it’s really fun to go someplace with my kids and learn with them,” one said.

Parents anticipated problems

Some participants expressed reservations about their lack of knowledge about art. They were concerned about not having answers for their children’s questions. Another major concern was their children’s behavior. Will they want to touch things? Will they be too loud? Will they run around too much? Will staff and other visitors disapprove? Others worried that their children might lose interest quickly.

Getting prepared

When asked where they generally look for

information about things to do with the family, pre-visit focus group respondents said that word of mouth from other parents is their preferred source: “Someone who’s seen it, done it.” In addition, they count on newspapers, TV, and radio. Direct mail and flyers that come home from school are well-received. In addition, some respondents use coupon books or get useful information from day care groups. During the discussion, parents were eager to share information with each other, demonstrating the high trust they place in the opinions of their peers.

When asked where they would seek information about The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, participants said they would be inclined to telephone the museum. Others said they would ask friends who had visited. Some said they would also look for information in the newspaper and *Minnesota Parent* magazine.

Before deciding to visit the museum, parents would want many questions answered: How do we get there? Where do we park and is there a cost? What are the most appealing activities/exhibitions for different ages? Are some hours better for families? Are tours appropriate for children? What hands-on activities are available? What food is available? How much time is required? Is there written information to help us prepare for our visit? Is the museum stroller-accessible? How must my kids behave? Is there somebody to answer our questions about the art?

Specific findings: post-visit focus groups

When respondents re-convened after their trip to The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, most reported that their concerns

had been unfounded. Directions and parking posed no problems, and many children were more positive about going to the museum than their parents expected: “I brought my five-year-old. She was very happy to be there and we spent the whole afternoon.” “My first grader said ‘Cool!’ when I said we were going to the Institute. I was surprised.”

Respondents enjoyed themselves!

In general, most participants and their families had a good time at the museum. One said his family was there for three hours and would have liked more time. Another proud parent was surprised at her child’s knowledge of art. Many children loved the touchscreen videos. Other were impressed with the building itself.

But they didn’t like everything

It was stressful for parents to keep their children from touching things. Some parents complained that many pieces are placed too high for children to see. Some said that their children’s short attention span made it hard to experience more than a small portion of the museum. A few said their children were very negative. One child asked, “We don’t ever have to go back, right?” Another had a bad experience

with guards and the family left feeling very upset. (In fact, several participants had negative perceptions of the guards, saying they seemed to be following the family around.)



**Suggestion Box**

The family focus group participants provided a wealth of opinions and suggestions following their visit to the Institute. Here is a sampling of their ideas.

- Provide more information/interpretation:**
- Labels explaining what the art work is and how it relates to everyday life. (One in four works has an extended label, but these visitors did not find the labels helpful.)
  - Art classes where you can drop off children.
  - Colorful gallery guides.
  - Push-buttons by each piece to provide information.
  - Short introductory video when you enter the museum.

- Be more welcoming to families:**
- Change the museum entrance to make it more welcoming and to provide better orientation/information. “One desk should face you as you come in.”
  - Have someone at the door to suggest things for families.
  - Establish quiet days and non-quiet days.
  - Need more approachable, kid-friendly staff.
  - Too many desks!
  - Brochures should be on a table when you come in.

- Provide more hands-on activities:**
- More things to touch—perhaps next to the art so children know how it feels.
  - Artist demonstrations, live or video.
  - Scavenger hunts.
  - Advertise Family Days and/or schedule more of them.
  - A children’s gallery where kids can explore art techniques and materials.
  - Provide frequent family tours that are available without advance reservations.

- Provide printed in-museum information for families:**
- Throughout the discussions, participants expressed a strong desire for more information. In particular, they felt that printed information for families would enhance their museum experience. Some preferred the idea of shorter brochures about a particular gallery or theme. Others suggested a small book that would cover the museum more comprehensively. “I’d be willing to pay a couple of bucks for a brochure that guides kids through the good parts of the museum. And the kids would take it home for the scrapbook.”



QUALITATIVE STUDIES: FOCUS GROUPS

**Varied experiences, varied perceptions**

The visiting experience varied widely from family to family. Some stayed for an hour and others for more than three hours. Participants were surprised to learn that they had missed things that other parents described. For example, some used the audio headsets in the period rooms, while others never saw them. Many said they loved the “wooden boat,” while others “missed it entirely.” None of the families took advantage of the guided tours, visited the special (paid) exhibition, or used the restaurant. A few visited the museum shop and the coffee shop. As respondents realized from talking to each other what they had missed, many expressed a desire to have better information on how to plan a visit to maximize their enjoyment.

Elements of the experience

**Information** Many study participants were frustrated in their efforts to obtain information in the museum. They didn’t know where to go for help upon entering. Some loved the touch-screen videos and headsets, but others didn’t find them. Respondents expressed a strong interest in greater use of technology to convey information to visitors.

**Navigation** Many respondents said they felt the museum was “like a maze.” “Couldn’t get a sense of direction.” “I didn’t always see the entire room.” “I kept getting turned around and disoriented.”

**Museum staff** Perceptions of the staff varied. Several participants said that staff had been very helpful in providing good directions, suggesting activities the children would enjoy, and telling

the children about the art. Other respondents, however, found the staff to be unhelpful. “I felt I was interrupting the person at the information desk.” “Nobody greeted us or offered anything.” “Nobody said ‘have a good time.’” One respondent said, “It was like a prison, in a way,” and several others chuckled in agreement. Several respondents had negative experiences with the security guards. Some were puzzled that guards were not “informational and helpful.”

Would they come back?

At the close of the post-visit groups, respondents were asked if they would return to the museum. In one group, six of seven participants said they would return and one said “maybe.” The other group was less certain. Several said they would not recommend the museum to friends with children. Two said they would return with their children. One said she might go back, but not “right away.”

Attract and satisfy

From this research, it became clear that the museum’s strategy for families will need to address these questions:

- ☞ Attract: What can be done to alter the negative perceptions that some families currently have? For example, how can the museum get the word out about Family Days and other programs specifically designed for families?
- ☞ Satisfy: What changes can be made in terms of museum service delivery that will make the museum experience more positive for families?

A final note here: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts is a “museum” in the traditional sense of the word. Many parents, however, have come to define “museum” in terms of the highly interactive, family-friendly experiences provided by the Minnesota Children’s Museum and the Science Museum of Minnesota — institutions whose exhibits do not consist of unique, irreplaceable artifacts. This limited understanding of what a museum can be is a major barrier that must be surmounted if the Institute hopes to draw more of this important audience through its doors.

What did African Americans think about visiting the museum?

The Institute’s focus group study of African Americans (the second underserved audience segment identified through the Visitor Survey process) was conducted in July 1996, also in the focus group facilities of Cincinnatus. Like the family focus groups, this study was designed to provide information for developing a strategic marketing plan. The structure of the African American focus groups paralleled that of the family focus groups:

- ☞ First, respondents met to discuss their general attitudes and behaviors regarding cultural activities and entertainment (again, the identity of The Minneapolis Art Institute as the study sponsor was not discussed until late in the meeting; however, some respondents may have learned our identity through the recruiting process described below).
- ☞ Second, respondents visited the Institute and completed exit questionnaires.

☞ Finally, respondents re-convened to discuss their impressions of the museum and to suggest ways in which the museum might improve its image and services in order to attract and satisfy more African American visitors.

Recruiting respondents

The museum developed a list of some 200 potential subjects by sending letters to a core group of African Americans, asking them to forward names of individuals who might participate in the study. Cincinnatus recruited participants at random from this list. A total of 23 African American adults completed all three parts of the study. Screening criteria included the following:

- ☞ Ages 25 to 55.
- ☞ Residences geographically dispersed throughout the metro area.
- ☞ Person in the household who is most responsible for planning social events.
- ☞ Has not visited The Minneapolis Institute of Arts in the past three years.
- ☞ Has visited at least one cultural organization in the past two years.
- ☞ Not employed by a market research or advertising firm.
- ☞ Not employed by nor a regular volunteer for a local cultural organization.

Most parents reacted negatively to the idea of a drop-in child-care room since the museum visit represents an outing for the whole family. But they wanted a place where kids could be active without incurring the disapproval of guards or staff.

Parents liked the idea of a museum shop area devoted to children’s items, a child-proof place where “kids’ things are all together, out front, and easy for kids to pick out...we could buy quickly.”

Advertising and publicity:

Family focus groups saw a lot of value in publicizing the museum through the schools. “The communication should show kids having fun.”

“Tell families about Family Days.”

“SHOW SOME HANDS-ON PROJECTS.”

“Send brochures home from school.”

“Explain that you don’t have to be absolutely quiet.”

Respondents agreed that advertising to families is not a good idea without first making significant changes in museum services.

perceptions

QUALITATIVE  
STUDIES:  
FOCUS  
GROUPS

General findings

The African American adults who participated in these groups are generally well-educated and active “doers.” They are strongly attracted to activities that involve African American culture and/or highlight the similarities and differences among multiple cultures. In addition, they are very much drawn to the performing arts, including theater, music, and dance.

Before their visit to the museum, study participants had generally positive expectations, although some expressed concerns about finding their way to the museum and, once there, whether they would be met by racial sensitivity. After their visit, respondents praised museum staff for being helpful and courteous, but bemoaned the lack of racial diversity among the staff. Their strongest criticism of the museum was an apparent lack of diversity in the collection; many participants said they did not see enough “people like me” represented on the museum’s gallery walls.

Overall, nearly all focus group participants were very enthusiastic about their experience at the Institute. Most said they would return to the museum and would recommend the experience to others. Their primary recommendations for enhancing the museum experience for African Americans include increasing the diversity of the collection and special exhibitions as well as the diversity of museum staff and volunteers.

Specific findings: pre-visit focus groups

In the pre-visit focus groups, participants were asked how they like to spend their leisure time and why. Two themes were echoed again and again: a preference for the performing arts

and an interest in activities related to African American culture.

Preference for performance versus visual arts

Many respondents regularly attend theater, concerts, and dance performances. Several said they love performances that are Black-oriented and offer uplifting messages. When asked about art museums in general, several participants said they had attended special exhibitions featuring Black artists. There were a number of comments about the lack of Black-oriented art and African American tour guides in local art museums. “Blacks don’t want to go to a museum where there is nothing in there that looks like you and there is no one who looks like you to explain what is there.” One commented, “Blacks appreciate Black tour guides. I am more likely to take the tour and ask questions.” Another respondent, who had very much enjoyed her visit to the museum, said that the big challenge is “to get people in there...then word-of-mouth will stimulate demand.”

Sense of community: preference for African American events

Throughout the pre-visit groups, respondents expressed a strong desire to attend events around the theme of African American culture. The experience is especially rewarding when it fosters a sense of community among participants. “Black cultural performances are uplifting, inspiring, and not often offered.” “At an African American play there is a feeling of oneness—a feeling that all African Americans are there for the same reasons and enjoy the event on the same level.”

Lack of advertising

Many focus group participants commented on a lack of information and advertising regarding the museum. As a result, the Institute didn’t come to mind very often, they said. “Don’t hear about it because there is no advertising in Black newspapers.” (In fact, the Institute advertises regularly in the two newspapers reporting directly about and to the African American community, but again, this study is measuring perceptions, not reality.)

Concern about lack of racial sensitivity

In their pre-visit discussions, several people said they were concerned that the museum might lack racial sensitivity. Some pointed out that the brochure seemed to represent just one culture because it contained no images of African Americans. One respondent had attended an open house for an exhibit of African masks. “There was an African American intern standing there while a White man did the tour. Why...?”

Logistical concerns

Parking, bus transportation, the safety of the museum’s location, and wheelchair/ stroller accessibility were among the logistical concerns expressed by group members. Figuring out how to navigate inside the museum was an issue, as well.

Specific findings: post-visit focus groups

In the post-visit focus groups, nearly all participants were very enthusiastic about the museum. They reported that directions and

Commitment for the long term

The African American focus groups indicated some skepticism regarding the depth of the museum’s commitment to new audiences, and challenged us to “put our money where our mouth is.” Respondents stressed that the museum must keep trying new ways to reach the Black community—and persist in improving services to meet new needs.

accessibility

Suggestion Box

Respondents stressed that the museum needs to let African Americans know that they are welcome. They encouraged the museum to pursue a range of specific marketing efforts.

Advertising/promotion vehicles:

Word of mouth was cited as a particularly powerful medium. “After going, the museum sells itself...I am likely to invite others and refer others to the museum.” Other suggestions included advertising through the schools, Black newspapers, billboards, the African American community radio station (KMOJ), and television. Some suggested using a “carrot”—such as a performance event—to entice African Americans to visit The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. “Maybe play jazz in the atrium.” However, “Do it tastefully...don’t hit people over the head with their ignorance”—or with blatant efforts to be politically correct.

Partnerships/tie-ins:

Several respondents suggested developing promotions with African American community organizations, such as churches, schools, fraternities, and educational and professional organizations. The museum could host special events for these organizations, encouraging attendees to spread the word. Some respondents suggested creating special programs around African American community celebrations such as Rondo Days, the Juneteenth Festival, and Black History Month. To demonstrate caring for the community, the Institute could support other non-profits by hosting receptions and similar events for them.



QUALITATIVE  
STUDIES:  
FOCUS  
GROUPS

parking were no problem. They liked many aspects of the museum experience, would probably visit again, and would gladly recommend the experience to others. Many of their pre-visit concerns proved to be unfounded, and they were generally surprised that they hadn't known such a valuable and enjoyable community resource was available to them. "I liked it very much...It was interesting and relaxing." "I wanted more time and I was there for three hours." "I would go back...I could really have a great visit the second time because I just skimmed the surface the first time through."

*Types of art*

Many respondents specifically said they liked the exhibit entitled "Ancient Nubia: Egypt's Rival in Africa," and other African art. Special favorites also included the period rooms and the beaded kitchen (Liza Lou's "The Kitchen"). Beyond these common interests, their preferences varied widely—from Van Gogh paintings to pottery by a Minnesota potter to Asian art, sculpture, and rare books. Some of the participants said their children were drawn to the carvings and mummies, while others liked the maps.

The African art notwithstanding, respondents' primary criticism of the museum was a lack of diversity in the collection. "Seeing White people everywhere (in the art) got old." "Paintings of Caucasians got boring after a while until I got behind a tour guide and heard stories about the artists..." Several participants said they wanted to see more African American art in the collection—and a broader cultural experience in general. "There are 31 different native tribes in

Minnesota alone. I didn't see anything representing Minnesota's diversity." "The period rooms are all European." (In fact, the Institute's collection represents hundreds—perhaps thousands—of different cultures. Therefore, we interpret respondents' comments about lack of diversity to mean that primarily they wanted to see more African American faces represented in the collection.)

*Other museum elements*

Several respondents commented that they liked the building itself, along with a number of other design elements. "It's a beautiful building...the intricate detail...the openness." "Loved the old-fashioned elevator." "The frames were beautiful and interesting." "I was surprised to see Black dolls and a lot of nice African American-centered cards in the gift shop."

*Getting around in the museum*

Nearly all focus group participants said they "got lost in the museum." Several said the map was useful, but they got lost anyway. "It was hard to find the exhibits, even with a map. The numbered rooms were hard to find and confusing." Many asked guards for assistance. There was also some confusion about the paid exhibition. Some did not go through it because of the cost. Others said they accidentally saw it without paying (they didn't know there was an admission charge and just wandered in).

Several said their museum experience would be enhanced if they had more information about the art and the artists. The touch-screen videos were perceived as a particularly helpful source of information. "Loved the inter-

active systems...fun and new." "You could select what you wanted to see."

*Visiting with children*

Several study participants visited the museum with children of varying ages. As was true with those in the family focus groups, many parents found the experience stressful because they were worried about their children's behavior. Some felt the guards were very concerned about their children. However, one respondent said his children loved the museum and didn't want to leave: "My seven- and eight-year-old kids stayed two hours and wanted to stay longer. I had to drag them out!"

*Museum staff*

The overwhelming response to museum staff was they that were "courteous and helpful." Other favorable comments included: professional and knowledgeable, patient, "information desk people were very cordial and helpful," and "the security guard asked if I was having a good time." Tour guides received praise, too. "I liked the way you could meet up with the tour and feel included, and then I was able to move on and not stay with the tour the whole time."

Comments regarding security were mixed. Some felt the guards were too prevalent and "distracting." "There was more security in the museum than visitors." Several respondents recalled the noisy walkie-talkies. Another respondent recalled that the guards seemed afraid that her children would touch the art—"Like I didn't raise my child to know that you don't touch in an exhibit." One respondent said he felt security guards followed him because

"they're worried about Blacks touching art." Several participants said they felt watched through their whole visit, but others said they didn't feel watched. These comments echoed those of participants in the family focus groups. Clearly, all infrequent and first-time visitors are unclear about the guards' function in the museum, and some of our policies and practices are unnecessarily off-putting.

Another major issue for respondents was the lack of racial diversity among museum staff. They implied that more African Americans among the staff would make them feel more welcome and enrich their museum experience. "There were no African American staff in the shop, restaurant, or information desk." When visitors did find African American employees, they were drawn to them for information and assistance. "I saw only one Black guard. I asked questions and he was able to answer them." I saw two African American security guards...it was good to see them."

*Would they come back?*

Participants in the African American focus groups answered this question with a resounding "YES!" "I wanted to call everyone I know and tell them to go!"



# cultures

**Suggestion Box**

*Key messages:*

An important finding of the focus groups was that African Americans are interested in many different cultures. Therefore, an emphasis on cultures is a key message for this community. If the museum offers African American art, then the message should be "Come celebrate your culture." If not, say something more general, such as: "Come and learn...open your mind." "Connect with different cultures." "Show correlation between European and African American artists." The fact that admission is free should be stressed, too, respondents thought.

*Suggestions for satisfying African American visitors:*

Respondents agreed that once African Americans visit the museum, many will enjoy their experience and want to return. Still, focus group participants pointed out room for improvement in the museum's services:

- More racially diverse collections was a frequently voiced theme.
- "Use music to enhance the art—earphones with music, jazz in a period room..."
- "Have quarterly special exhibits for African Americans."

IDEA

GENERATION:

OFF-SITE

MEETINGS

Using the focus group findings to inform the discussion process, nearly the entire museum staff—plus representative trustees and other volunteers—participated in two off-site, half-day meetings. The purpose of the meetings was to strengthen the case for the need to attract new audiences to The Minneapolis Institute of Arts; to familiarize Institute employees and volunteers with the target market selection rationale and process; to review and discuss focus group findings; and to solicit ideas for attracting and satisfying the two new audience segments: families with children ages 5 to 12 and African Americans. By gathering everyone in one room to share feedback and suggestions through the full spectrum of departmental lenses, the **New Audience** team also sought to build united support for a major strategic effort that will require money, commitment, and a significant change in the museum's culture in the years to come.

The off-site meetings were the first time the Institute had convened a significant portion of its employees and volunteers for an organization-wide work session. We selected an off-site location for many reasons. Existing museum spaces do not lend themselves to the kind of meeting we envisioned, i.e. a large group space plus smaller break-out rooms. In addition, we wanted to reinforce the idea that the subject matter is important for the future of the museum, and a remote location in pleasant surroundings with excellent food would help support that idea.

Off-site for families

The off-site idea generation session dedicated to families took place on September 9, 1996, at the Earle Brown Heritage Center, a farm

converted into a conference center in a western suburb of Minneapolis. Invitations came directly from Evan Maurer, the Director of the museum, underscoring the importance of the event. As a result, attendance was very high. Staff and volunteers received briefing materials in advance, so the exchange of ideas began as soon as participants began boarding school buses for their 15-minute ride from the Institute to the conference center.

Coffee and muffins were available upon arrival. Following introductory remarks by Evan Maurer and team co-leader Toni Green, Diane Herman of Cincinnati presented a video of highlights from the ten hours of family focus group discussions. Thus briefed, we broke into small groups, each with a staff facilitator and a scribe to record the hour-long proceedings. The small groups were charged with brainstorming ways for both their department and the museum as a whole to attract families to the Institute and to make their participation as satisfying as possible. Departments represented were Curatorial, Education, Marketing and Communications, Print and Electronic Media, and Security; the Development Department met in tandem with trustees; and Docents and Friends of the Institute—a cadre of volunteers who support the museum through fundraising activities and volunteer recruitment and training—met as separate small groups.

The **New Audience** project team had anticipated the possibility of some resistance to the need for a major culture change. Would staff perceive they were being asked to cater to family expectations for the kid-friendly, hands-on template typical of children's "museums"? Would

curators perceive that they were being asked to waste their expertise on creating "McExhibits" in a "McMuseum"? The team's concern about buy-in proved unfounded, however, as participants embraced the charge to attract and satisfy families with considerable enthusiasm. As one curator remarked in the small group session: "The people in the world who actually make art are a few adult artists and almost every child alive. The opportunity to grow that creative impulse in young people and to awaken it in their parents is an exciting challenge. Let's do everything we can to get them here and make that happen."

When the large group reconvened, each small group facilitator took five minutes to present his/her group's ideas, with another few minutes reserved for questions and comments. In this way, staff and volunteers not only benefited from multiple perspectives; they also got to know each other a little bit better, making the event a useful team-building tool as well as a rich source of ideas. The general mood throughout the morning was upbeat, the attitude "can do."

Following the reports, lunch was served—another way of telling everyone that this was a very special event and that their participation was appreciated.

Common themes

Many common ideas emerged from the small group sessions:

- ☞ Increase the Institute's advertising and other communications aimed at families, such as Family Fun telephone hotlines, the museum's Web page, and tie-in promotions with other children-oriented organizations.

works of art that illustrate age-appropriate objects, subjects, or ideas; and self-guided Art Adventure Tours for families in 11 thematic groupings that children study in their schools. Families can also join public tours or schedule tours for special occasions if the group includes at least ten people.

- ☞ Create a mascot to build awareness of the museum as a fun place for families.
- ☞ Create exhibition opportunities for children and families, such as hands-on activities, art displayed at child height, and artist demonstrations.
- ☞ Leverage existing programs (many of which are already successful), including Family Days, Art in Bloom, educational programs in schools, and *Arts Magazine*.
- ☞ Emphasize that most programs at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts are free.
- ☞ Create more offerings specifically for families, including family-oriented tours, parent classes, and exhibitions of art by children.
- ☞ Provide better support for families within the museum, such as friendly greeters, family orientation programs, floating docents or other guides, child docents, printed materials, better signage, better maps, "Ask Art" telephones, videos, and customer service training for staff and volunteers.
- ☞ Adapt museum elements to be more family-friendly, such as adding less expensive, more child-oriented food to the menu in the restaurant and creating a Family Activity Room.

What the museum does for families NOW

- Public programs at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts include: monthly Family Days, which provide thematic family workshops, performances, and other hands-on activities, usually related to special exhibitions; family films shown one Saturday morning each month; Art in the Park—a series of classes offered in 15 different Minneapolis city parks during the summer months; and workshops and classes for children and adults.
- Articles, our recently expanded store, features a children's section with art-related books, toys, and games.

What the museum does for families NOW

Tailoring programs and services to the needs of children and their parents is far from a novel concept for The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Part of the challenge, then, is to do a better job of publicizing and leveraging the many successful family

programs we already offer, such as those listed below:

- The Visitor Information Center is a "concierge service" that provides information on all museum programs, complimentary strollers and wheelchairs, and self-guided family tour materials, among other services.

- The Touchscreen Museum Directory has a "For Children and Families" category that provides information on family activities, baby-changing stations, Family Days programs and films, the museum shop, strollers, and young people's classes.

- A menu of specialized tour options with sup-

porting brochures includes: Discovery Tours—self-directed tours of five or six objects focused on a single theme; "If You Have 30 or 60 minutes" tours geared toward visitors with limited time to spend at the museum; Treasure Hunts, in which children and parents search for

works of art that illustrate age-appropriate objects, subjects, or ideas; and self-guided Art Adventure Tours for families in 11 thematic groupings that children study in their schools. Families can also join public tours or schedule tours for special occasions if the group includes at least ten people.

Pre-tour videos are available upon request to help children feel more comfortable within the museum environment.





IDEA  
GENERATION:  
OFF-SITE  
MEETINGS

For each of these ideas, the small groups supplied a wealth of detail that would help enormously with the subsequent development of the Marketing Plan in the next phase of the **New Audience** project.

*Small group highlights*

Many groups came up with similar ideas so, to save space, repetition has been pruned from the highlights that follow. It was interesting to note that even museum staff don't have universal knowledge of all the Institute's programs and services. Some of the ideas they suggested were things we are already doing!

**Print and Electronic Media To attract families, this division could:** use the Worldwide Web as a vehicle for art-related puzzles and games for home and school use; develop a children's section in *Arts Magazine*; and publish art books for children. **As a whole, the museum could:** join with corporate partners to develop special promotions, always stressing free parking and admission.

**To satisfy families, Print and Electronic Media staff could:** produce an orientation video; distribute colorful gallery maps; and post a "Today's Activities" bulletin board at the museum entrance. **As a whole, the museum could:** promote "bite-sized visits" for families with limited visiting time; provide less intimidating uniforms for guards; install labeling for children under art works; distribute information about the museum through the schools; sponsor artists' demonstrations in the museum; and develop a kid docent program.

**Education To attract families, this division could:** build on existing work with school groups; create souvenirs to promote return visits; distribute a family-oriented quarterly newspaper; and expand Family Days programming and frequency. **As a whole, the museum could:** increase directional signage on streets; establish a stronger presence at community festivals and fairs; provide materials at places of worship; and promote the museum to suburban newspapers, libraries, and schools.

**To satisfy families, the Education Division could:** add "touch stuff" and demonstrations; expand the Family Tour program; and offer workshops for adults on how to visit the museum with kids. **As a whole, the museum could:** provide better signage; make sure front-line people have accurate information; make telephone numbers more visible in metro directories; provide training for phone answerers; establish a "Cookie Nook" to provide snacks and espresso; and create an Information Room.

**Development and Trustees To attract families, this group could:** secure funding for new programs. **As a whole, the museum could:** consider changing the Institute's name to something less austere. **To satisfy families, this group suggested:** building on the strength of current programs; establishing cross-promotions with the adjacent Children's Theater; creating an "?Ask Art!" museum-wide phone system; and providing "kid gloves" so children can handle some works of art.

**Marketing and Communications To attract families, this division could:** create fun new advertising and work with the Education Division on such programs as Art Adventure.

**As a whole, the museum could:** take families into account in planning the exhibition schedule; sponsor tours themed around holidays; and offer "how to visit the museum" classes through corporations and community organizations.

**To satisfy families, the Marketing and Communications Division suggested:** "warming up" the lobby; sponsoring kids' art contests with child artists, judges, and monthly winners; developing "guard cards" — collector cards with guards' faces; having kids' placemats with crayons in the restaurant; and providing "May I help?" buttons to all staff.

**Security** "We don't want people to be afraid of us!" With this theme in mind, Security staff suggested: greeting visitors to establish rapport; explaining what Security does and doesn't do in *Arts Magazine*; giving "security tours" to explain what guards do; and giving kids buttons as they leave. The Security group consensus was: "We want to help make people comfortable so they'll come back."

**Curatorial To attract families, this department suggested:** working with citizens' groups to develop printed materials for distribution through the community and distributing kid-oriented literature at places where kids go — zoos, Children's Museum, Science Museum, etc. **To satisfy families, the Curatorial Department could:** use the permanent collection to create mini-exhibitions themed around families, different cultures, and holidays; provide touchable components in exhibitions; have curators spend time in their own galleries to answer questions; create some exhibitions especially for children; feature objects that appeal to children, such as a dolls' house; and create storybooks related to art objects.

**Friends of the Institute To attract families, the Friends could:** host kids' parties and mini-festivals tied to seasons and holidays and capitalize on the popularity of the Art in Bloom festival. **As a whole, the museum could:** encourage repeat visits; promote Art Adventure through the schools; and publicize current popular programs.

**To satisfy families, the museum could:** provide customer service training to help museum staff project a friendlier image and simplify orientation via a "yellow brick road" or "paw prints."

**Docents To attract families, the museum could:** send notes or coupons home with kids on school visits; sponsor buses from suburban shopping malls and community centers; sponsor children's performances at the museum; and display children's art work.

**To satisfy families, this group could:** train docents to encourage people to come back; incorporate props into shorter, family-oriented tours; and create a Family Day activity where paintings "come alive."



attract

IDEA

GENERATION:

OFF-SITE

MEETINGS

Off-site for African Americans

The off-site, half-day idea generation session for the African American market segment was held October 21, 1996, again at the Earle Brown Heritage Center. Structured to promote awareness and sensitivity along with generating ideas for attracting and satisfying African American visitors to the museum, the session kicked off with a provocative mini-play by African American playwright Syl Jones. Entitled “Vanishing Point,” the play highlighted the isolation many African American visitors experience when they are under-represented on the walls and in the halls of an art museum.

In planning the off-site meeting related to African Americans, we did not want to duplicate the meeting held only a month previously, so we decided to tap into the many Twin Cities artistic resources working in the area of diversity to create a different feel for the meeting and to stimulate participants’ thinking. Mixed Blood Theater was selected because they are experienced in developing customized theatrical performances dealing with sensitive issues in a broad range of organizations.

Following the play, we again broke into discussion groups. Each group talked about reactions to the play and reviewed videotaped comments from African American participants in the focus group meetings at Cincinnatus. Representative comments recorded by discussion group scribes included:

“A museum can’t be all things to all people; how do we keep it what it is and make it feel open to all?”

“Let’s figure out how to think differently without losing the museum’s integrity.”

“Let’s not forget to emphasize the commonality of the human experience as well as what sets us apart.”

“We need more African American staff and volunteers!”

“The museum has good intentions but limited resources. How can we accomplish what we need to do with what we have?”

“We need to educate people so that guards don’t have to be the bad guys.”

Informed and energized by their discussion, the groups moved on to develop ideas and implementation strategies for attracting more African Americans to the museum and making their visits as enjoyable as possible.

Key themes

These ideas, among others, emerged from the small groups:

- Alleviate the sense of isolation among African American visitors by having a more visible African American presence among staff and volunteers.
- Highlight the artistic contributions of African and African Americans artists in the permanent collection, but take care not to “ghetto-ize” these works.
- Hire African American curatorial staff to add multi-cultural awareness to the exhibition planning process.
- Create more cross-cultural events, not just African American-oriented events.

- Capitalize on African Americans’ strong interest in the performing arts by programming performances at the museum.
- Make the museum more welcoming by improving greeting and orientation functions and helping the guards to project a friendlier image.
- Work to make the museum more reflective of and responsive to different cultural traditions across the board, not just African Americans. Sensitivity to diversity promotes inclusion of all people.

Again, the small groups developed these themes in considerable detail, providing the Marketing Task Force with much to choose from in the planning phase ahead. Highlights from each small group discussion follow. Once again, ideas that arose in more than one group are represented only once for brevity.

**Print and Electronic Media** Group members suggested that decisions about major institutional initiatives are too often segregated by department — and that cross-functional decision-making might be a fruitful approach to defining common ground and unifying staff efforts. The department also suggested that the museum go beyond African art to “unghettoize” the permanent collection and include more work by African American and other cross-cultural artists, based on input from guest curators and community representatives. “Who decides what is great art?” was a rallying cry here.

To *attract* more African Americans to the museum, **Print and Electronic Media staff suggested:** creating ad campaigns for that audience; publicizing that admission is free; expanding hours; and seeding the community with complimentary memberships to encourage favorable word of mouth.

**Education** To *attract* African Americans, **this division could:** involve African Americans in developing an “Open House” program designed to attract new audiences; bring performing groups into the museum and museum activities into neighborhoods, especially during the summer; highlight the 3M billboard project designed to involve more African American neighborhoods and schools; and create written materials that address concerns identified by focus group respondents.

To *satisfy* African American visitors, the **Education Division suggested:** having more African Americans docents in the galleries and hiring an African American curator. Most important, the small group stressed creating a strong citizen advisory network to provide input and

feedback on the museum’s multi-cultural initiatives.



How we work with communities of color NOW

A number of advisory groups from the Native American, Hispanic/Latino/Chicano, Caribbean, African, and African-American communities have worked with museum staff to develop essential concepts and to offer practical advice on both special exhibitions

and reinstallations of permanent collections. They also work with Public Programs staff on Family Days and other public events.

Throughout the year, our Family Days feature different cultures and involve different ethnic communities. They may spotlight a cultural festival, like ¡Muertos de Gusto!, pre-

sent living artists, such as Mr. Imagination and David Philpot, and showcase related musical talent, storytellers, and community artisans.

We annually collaborate with other area arts organizations on the local celebration of Juneteenth (a national holiday that commemorates the *actual* end of slavery in Texas).

Juneteenth programs include a Sunday afternoon family celebration and a program of films by young African American filmmakers. We also sponsor an annual film program with Native Arts Circle.

The Institute’s ArtTeam is an award-winning program that employs racially and ethnically diverse

students from the museum’s immediate neighborhood to learn job skills and essential museum practices, and assist with the activities offered on Family Days.

Our Marketing and Communications Department regularly meets with staff at minority newspapers to determine what is of interest

to their readers and to get their insights about the kind of information that the Institute makes available to them. We have an on-going commitment to place our business with their papers.

Finally, we actively offer our meeting spaces at no cost to community organizations for their gatherings and events.



IDEA

GENERATION:

OFF-SITE

MEETINGS

**Development and Trustees** To *attract* African Americans, this group emphasized the need to build on the museum’s strong base of current programs. Group members suggested: more radio exposure on KMOJ, the voice of the Twin Cities Black community; contacting performing arts groups for tips on marketing to this segment; and developing brochures akin to the Smithsonian’s African American Art Register.

To *satisfy* African American visitors, the Development Division and trustees recommended “a major change in our thinking about recruiting professional staff and volunteers. We need to hire African Americans on the curatorial, visitor services, and docent teams, and we need to involve African Americans in planning programs and activities.” This group also felt that people who come to the museum should be greeted personally. “Welcome to the museum. Is there anything you are particularly interested in? Would you like some assistance?”

**Marketing and Communications Division** To *attract* more African American visitors, this group suggested: including more images of people of color in museum publications and advertising; creating an advisory group to help develop icons, images, and music for marketing materials; directing marketing efforts to Black social and professional organizations and providing meeting space to those groups; and reviewing participation in the Internet Arts Registry for inclusiveness.

To *satisfy* African American visitors, this group suggested: creating a new period room focused on the Black American experience; providing in-depth information about specific works of art; and hosting more traveling exhibits of interest to African American audiences.

**Security** Security staff suggested: establishing information kiosks; involving more African Americans in Family Days; and making the docent program more accessible to African Americans by providing training at convenient hours.

**Curatorial** To *attract* more African American visitors, Curatorial staff suggested: distributing a poster themed around “the African American experience at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts”; developing a symbol system to identify objects of special importance to African Americans; and recruiting a staff liaison to the African American community. Group participants voiced a few other strategies, as well: “We need to send the message that everyone is invited to the museum.” “Give kids a piece of ownership, make them comfortable, and they’ll come back with their families.” The group also suggested making the planning process transparent—getting the message to the community that the museum is committed to diversity for the long haul and welcomes suggestions; this strategy might bring the museum better press coverage, too.

To *satisfy* African American visitors, Curatorial staff suggested that the visible inclusiveness of all cultures in the museum’s staff and collections is the key. “In an ideal world, we would have Black docents for Asian art and Hmong docents for European art,” one participant said. Others suggested capitalizing on African Americans’ stated interest in the performing arts by restructuring performances associated with Family Days and adding performing arts for adults a la “Planet Ordway,” a series of multi-cultural events presented by a major St. Paul theater.

**Friends of the Institute** To *attract* more African American visitors, the Friends group suggested: recruiting African American speakers to present art-related lectures to churches and neighborhood organizations; establishing a monthly lecture series that brings African Americans into the museum; recruiting an African American advisory panel to assist in integrating more relevant activities into the current schedule, advise on marketing strategies, and help plan getting-to-know-you events; and encouraging referrals by inviting groups in for personalized tours.

To ensure a *satisfying* visit for African Americans, the Friends group suggested: developing a five-minute orientation film on continuous loop and providing written and audio materials reflecting the Black experience in art as demonstrated in the museum’s collections and exhibitions.

**Docents** To *attract* more African Americans, the Docents group suggested: extending museum hours to 8:00 PM on Friday or Saturday night and sponsoring weekly performances or other events of special interest to multi-cultural audiences.

To *satisfy* African Americans visitors, the Docents group suggested: providing sensitivity training for all museum staff; providing more relevant signage for works of art; encouraging docents to recognize the unique contributions of many cultures during tours; and making sure that any museum mascot is multi-cultural.

This unwieldy body of material coalesced into a Marketing Plan in the next phase of A New Audience for A New Century.

satisfy

THE  
MARKETING  
PLAN

The Marketing Plan is the result of all the efforts of hundreds of people—including staff, trustees, volunteers, and current and potential visitors to The Minneapolis Institute of Arts—that you have just read about. The plan itself is the product of a coordinated effort by a 14-member ad hoc task force made up of museum staff from all divisions and volunteers. By recruiting this interdisciplinary team, the Intitute benefited from a variety of perspectives and priorities and gained broad-based “buy-in” for the plan. Staff commitment is, of course, what will drive implementation of the plan.

Developing the plan

After an independent review of results from the focus group meetings and the off-site idea generation sessions, the Marketing Task Force convened for four, two-hour meetings between November 1996 and January 1997 to get ideas on paper, prioritize them, and review and revise various drafts of the plan.

The Marketing Plan outlines steps to expand and diversify museum services for a broader public audience. Many of the initiatives in this plan were already in the works prior to the planning process. Some initiatives merely require a new order of awareness and sensitivity on the part of museum staff. Other initiatives have found homes and places in the budget of relevant museum departments. Some of the bolder programs will require extra funding to implement, while others may be accomplished with no additional resources. With the above factors in mind, all initiatives have been prioritized over a three-year period.



As the distillation of a body of research results, the **New Audience** Marketing Plan is remarkably concise. Most important, it is “action-able.” If the plan is read, applauded, and filed neatly in department heads’ bookshelves, it cannot be counted a success. The plan is intended to be a living, working document. As a blueprint for building the museum’s capacity to attract new audiences and new sources of support, it merits reading, revisiting, and revising. Most of all, it merits forward motion.

One caveat: The project leaders realized that the consequences of inertia would be considerable. By involving staff and volunteers throughout this process, we have raised expectations that the museum is accountable for meeting. On the one hand, this responsibility helps builds momentum and commitment to implementation of the Marketing Plan. On the other, a lack of forward motion could have a real impact on morale. Therefore, please be forewarned that no institution should enter into this process merely to “go through the motions,” because the “motions” themselves have consequences.

Objectives

The Marketing Plan outlines two key objectives: (1) to create opportunities for our target audiences to have satisfying museum experiences and (2) to advertise and promote these opportunities to our target audiences.

To create opportunities for our target audiences to have satisfying experiences, we will:

- Provide more support (both informational and physical) for families and African Americans within the museum.



- Create more permanent and special exhibition experiences that will appeal to families and African Americans.
- Adapt museum amenities to address the unique needs and preferences of families and African Americans.
- Introduce more diversity into museum staff and volunteer groups.
- Build the museum’s membership base to include more families and African Americans.

To advertise and promote these opportunities to our target audiences, we will:

- Reach a significant percentage of Twin Cities families and African Americans through targeted advertising and public relation campaigns.
- Create more special events and programs targeted to families and African Americans for the purpose of audience development.
- Develop and test a series of targeted promotional vehicles.
- Seek the advice of African Americans in designing promotions, materials, and programs.
- Bring the community and the museum together in innovative ways (via electronic and other means).

The Marketing Plan supports each objective with strategies and tactical examples prioritized by the Marketing Task Force.

Growth goals

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts wants to build its audience and significantly increase the percentage of visitors from diverse populations. The museum defines “diversity” very broadly to include a full of range of population variables such as race, ethnicity, income, level of education, gender, age, occupation, and location of residence. With respect to the two specific populations currently under-represented in the visitor population, families with children ages 5 through 12 and African Americans, this plan will accomplish the following growth objectives by Year III:

- Increase the percentage of African American adult visitors from the current 1 percent to a percentage at least as high as the population of the seven-county metropolitan area (3 percent in 1990).\*
- Increase the percentage of adults who visit with their children from the current 10 percent to 15 percent.

\* Current figures from 1990 Census and 1995 Visitor Survey

Until this point, the research process has focused on families and African Americans as separate markets with discrete needs and objectives. It is unrealistic and, in fact, absurd to create two separate marketing tracks to attract and satisfy distinct audience segments. Consequently, the Marketing Plan is where ideas converge, combining initiatives designed to expand and serve the two specific audience segments, as well as museum visitors in general.

marketing



THE  
MARKETING  
PLAN

THE MARKETING PLAN

Objectives and strategies to create opportunities for our target audiences to have satisfying museum experiences

This section of the plan is focused on ways in which the experience of new visitors can be enhanced to build a higher rate of repeat visitation.

Provide more support for families and African Americans within the museum.

Strategy A: Establish a stronger orientation function at the museum entrance.

- Develop an effective way to guide visitors to the “greeter” desk.
- Hire and train “greeters” who are racially diverse.
- Let visitors know how to obtain assistance/information.
- Redesign the museum entrance to be less confusing for first-time visitors.

Strategy B: Redesign the museum’s maps and tie more closely to interior signage, and provide opportunities throughout the museum for new and infrequent visitors to obtain information about where to go and what to see.

- Place easy-to-read museum maps at a prominent location near the entrance.
- Install more “You Are Here” maps.
- Install “Ask Art” telephones and/or kiosks.

Strategy C: Train staff and volunteers to assist in the galleries.

- Train floating volunteers who move about the museum and proactively answer questions.
- Clarify role of the guards and provide them with new uniforms and radios.
- Provide “Ask Me” buttons for museum staff.

Strategy D: Design and implement a customer service training program for museum staff and volunteers that includes:

- Initial customer service training.
- Program of follow-up and reinforcement.

Strategy E: Create more support to help parents and children enjoy art.

- Station “floating docents” in the galleries to talk with families about art.
- Install labels on some objects at lower (children’s) eye level with information geared to children.
- Produce a brochure with tips on visiting the museum with children.
- Provide self-guided family tours with art information and discussion questions (e.g. Treasure Hunts, Art Adventure Tours).
- Hold “clinics” for parents on how to visit the museum with a child.

Strategy F: Provide more support for African Americans to learn about art of special interest to them, including:

- A printed guide to works by African American artists in the Institute’s collection.
- Information about national African American arts and events.
- Packets of materials highlighting multi-cultural themes and pieces in the collection.
- “Floating docents” who can talk with African Americans about art works of interest to them.
- Materials written by an African American historian/writer.

Create more permanent and special exhibition experiences that will appeal to families and African Americans.

Strategy A: Create a family component for at least three exhibitions a year that is interactive and participatory.

Strategy B: Establish African American art as an active area of curatorial interest.

- Develop a more complete American collection with more works by African American artists.
- Highlight connections between African art and African American art as appropriate.

Strategy C: Develop or schedule exhibitions specifically designed to appeal to target audiences.

Strategy D: “Repackage” the collections for target audiences through:

- Thematic print and audio tours.
- Computer-designed personal tours.

Adapt museum amenities to address the unique needs and preferences of families and African Americans.

Strategy A: Create a Family Activity room with amenities that meet families’ needs, including child-size seating and family restroom.

Strategy B: Provide foods that have greater appeal for targeted audiences and are more economical, including:

- A children’s menu and ethnic-specific foods in the restaurant.
- Drinks and snacks in the coffee shop.

Strategy C: Provide more diverse items in the museum store.

- Create a special children’s section of the shop with low-cost, souvenir, and educational items.
- Offer more items of interest to African Americans within each section.

Strategy D: Improve and promote easy access to the museum through:

- More parking to handle peak visiting periods.
- Promotion of bus transportation.



Key strategies

In broad brush strokes, in order to attract members of the target audiences, the Institute will:

- Reach a significant percentage of Twin Cities families and African Americans through advertising and public relations campaigns.
- Create more events and programs of special appeal to families and African Americans.
- Develop and test a series of new promotional vehicles.
- Seek the advice of African Americans in designing promotions, materials, and programs.
- Bring the museum to the community (via electronic and other means).

**Introduce more diversity into museum staff and volunteer groups.**

**Strategy A:** Hire more African American staff in all facets of the museum.

- ☞ Use an employment recruiter to recruit job applicants.

**Strategy B:** Create outreach programs to attract more African Americans to museum volunteer groups.

**Strategy C:** Create opportunities for African Americans to be involved with the museum, including:

- ☞ An ad hoc advisory committee, a council, a roster of advisors, interest groups, etc.

**Build the museum's membership base to include more families and African Americans.**

**Strategy A:** Promote museum membership through advisory groups, councils, etc.

**Strategy B:** Redesign family membership package.

**Strategy C:** "Seed" the African American community with introductory memberships.

**Objectives and strategies to advertise and promote these opportunities to our target audiences**

**Reach a significant percentage of Twin Cities families and African Americans through targeted advertising and public relations campaigns.**

**Strategy A:** Based on focus group research, develop positionings and advertising messages that will appeal to families and African Americans. The messages are:

- ☞ The Institute is an art museum with child-centered activities; we stress learning together and shared activities.
- ☞ Everyone is welcome.
- ☞ Admission and parking are free.

**Strategy B:** Plan and execute advertising campaigns, including advertorials, in targeted media, such as:

- ☞ *Family Times*, *Minnesota Parent*, etc.
- ☞ Suburban area newspapers.
- ☞ *Insight News*, *Spokesman*, KMOJ, and other Black-oriented media.

**Strategy C:** Plan and execute public relations campaigns to reach target audiences.

- ☞ Build relationships with key media contacts; create target-specific press releases and other public relations materials.
- ☞ Place stories in targeted publications.
- ☞ Utilize company newsletters.
- ☞ Work with neighborhood groups in surrounding neighborhoods.

**Create more special events and programs targeted to families and African Americans for the purpose of audience development.**

**Strategy A:** Build on the success of the current Family Day events.

- ☞ Test smaller, more frequent family events.

**Strategy B:** Develop and promote tours for families and African Americans.

**Strategy C:** Create partnerships with African American organizations such as schools, clubs, fraternal organizations, and churches.

**Strategy D:** Create more special events that appeal to African Americans, including:

- ☞ Extended evening hours with jazz performances.
- ☞ Cross-cultural learning experiences and programs.

**Develop and test a series of targeted promotional vehicles.**

**Strategy A:** Reach more families through existing school programs.

- ☞ Send promotional materials home with children after school tours of the museum.
- ☞ Send materials home with children participating in Art Adventure programs in their schools.

**Strategy B:** Create marketing tie-ins with organizations whose programs are for families and African Americans, such as:

- ☞ Children's arts groups (The Children's Theatre, Child's Play Theater, etc.).

- ☞ Family service organizations (Home School Association, for example).

- ☞ African American community, social, and professional organizations.

**Strategy C:** Create new communications vehicles for new or prospective museum visitors, with special emphasis on families and African Americans, including:

- ☞ A publication with broader appeal than the Institute membership magazine.
- ☞ Direct mail pieces representing the breadth of the collection and multi-cultural themes, and depicting a more diverse audience.
- ☞ Coupons and free exhibition tickets.

**Strategy D:** Create a mascot to build awareness of the museum as a fun place for families.

- ☞ Work with an advertising/promotion agency skilled in the development and use of characters.

**Seek the advice of African Americans in designing promotions, materials, and programs.**

**Strategy A:** Utilize our Roster of Advisors.

**Bring the community and the museum together in innovative ways.**

**Strategy A:** Create partnerships with other organizations to introduce more diversity among museum spokespersons, e.g. Friends' Speakers Bureau.

**Strategy B:** Add audience-specific programming to our Web site and promote vigorously.

**Strategy C:** Expand Art Adventure tour program to adult audiences.

welcome





A NEW  
ATTITUDE:  
CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
TRAINING

The need for comprehensive customer service training was identified early in the **New Audience** project, based on feedback at the first all-staff project update meeting following the 1995 Visitor Survey. Staff and volunteers had great ideas; now we had to prepare them to carry out those ideas. This would be the first formal customer service training ever offered museum-wide. A training provider, ProGroup, was selected in early 1997 and the training process was implemented that spring, prior to the official launch of the Marketing Plan on July 1, 1997.

As ProGroup described the challenge: “The future of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts lies in making the museum an inviting place that is visitor-focused and that reflects the tastes of a diverse and changing community. Diversity, and the excitement and creativity it brings, needs to be a part of every aspect of the Institute, from the exhibit floor, to acquisitions, to publications and staff.”

*Assessment and course development*

The ProGroup training team mined the **New Audience** quantitative and qualitative study results for background on visitor and non-visitor attitudes and experiences. In order to pinpoint specific training needs and gather information for case studies, ProGroup also interviewed four key managers and hosted three focus groups of museum employees and volunteers at various levels and functions. After reviewing data on past diversity training and all other activities relating to visitors in the museum, ProGroup developed the following program plan.

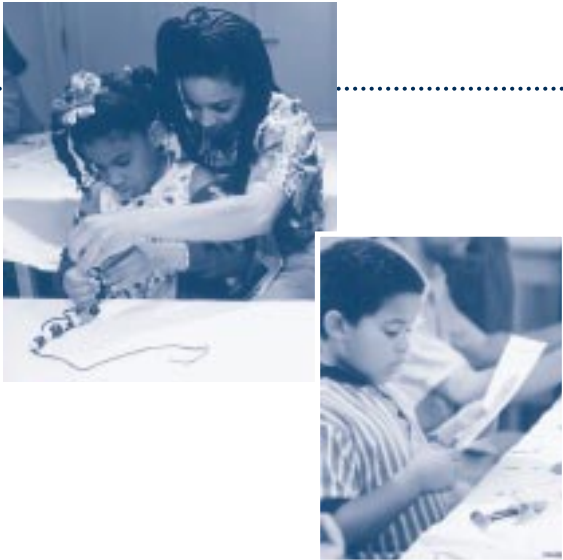
*The course—expanding customer focus*

Museum administrators determined that the staff and volunteers of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts needed training in both customer service and diversity. The latter training would provide specific information about the culture and needs of African Americans and families with children. To that end, a full-day course was presented to seven separate groups; 130 people, including staff and volunteers from all functional areas, participated.

*“Glad you are here”*

The training was designed to give staff and volunteers a clear understanding of the relationship between great customer service and the success of the Institute—and to teach the skills needed to provide excellent customer service to everyone. Specific program elements included:

- ☞ A review of the forces in the community and at the Institute that are driving change and presentation of a model of change to help participants understand their responses to it.
- ☞ The concept of Service Energy™ and the Service Energy Model and identification of specific behaviors necessary to provide excellent customer service. The Service Energy Model is a feedback loop that measures service energy (hot? cool?) and service attitude (positive? negative?) from the perspectives of both the service recipient and the service provider.



- ☞ A video presentation followed by discussion about how biases affect behavior and how behaviors might cause guests to feel unwelcome at the Institute.
- ☞ Real-life case studies where participants applied their knowledge of excellent customer service techniques to address concerns and meet the needs of visitors through role play.

The course concluded with an exercise in which participants developed Individual Action Plans around how they might contribute to the Service Energy of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Participants were also invited to join a Customer Service Team that will oversee ongoing training and help implement key initiatives of the Marketing Plan.

A multicultural team of ProGroup specialists facilitated the training sessions. In recognition of varying adult learning styles, the course incorporated an array of learning strategies, including video, small group discussions, role play, large group presentations, workbook exercises, and more.

*Sustainable change*

Perhaps the most important activity in institutionalizing the new customer service mentality is for managers and supervisors to make a habit of using the customer service approach and language from the course. In addition, the process of developing and delivering training frequently identifies policies and procedures that stand as barriers to superb customer service. Addressing these barriers is critical to building and sustaining positive change. New standards will be developed for hiring, for on-the-job performance, and for accountability and consequences. If we accomplish all of these, customer service training will no longer be episodic.

service

MOVING  
FORWARD

A New Audience for a New Century was never envisioned as a program, one program among many others, an occasional activity sandwiched into employees' busy schedules. Rather, the comprehensive research and planning process we have just completed has helped to solidify the foundation for the way The Minneapolis Institute of Arts serves the community. Instead of asking our visitors, current and potential, to adapt to the museum's rules and customs, we are working hard to discover what our visitors expect, need, and prefer—and we are redesigning aspects of our activities accordingly. We're not paying lip service to the need to broaden and diversify our audience. It has been our mandate for ten years and will continue to drive the marketing function at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

Significant progress in this regard requires inspired leadership from the top down—and we have had it for a decade now, thanks to the commitment of our trustees and Institute Director

and CEO, Evan M. Maurer. Progress also requires the commitment and involvement of every employee and volunteer, at every level. We have set the pattern by informing and involving them all throughout the research and planning project via all-staff presentations, the two off-site ideation sessions, the marketing Task Force meetings, and customer service training.

At each stage of the project, detailed reports were made to the staff, trustees, and volunteers, thereby completing the communication loop. This slowed the project to some extent, but the concomitant payoff was substantially heightened involvement and buy-in.

These efforts will continue as we apply for implementation funding, integrate components of the Marketing Plan into the annual budgeting process, and carry out the strategies and tactics outlined in this document. We are very clear that without buy-in from all constituencies, the Marketing Plan will become nothing more than a dust magnet.

Again, we would like to cite the valuable contribution of our consulting partner throughout this project, the Cincinnatus Group. They helped us find the way to adapt a corporate model to an art museum and to appreciate its value.

We hope that this report is useful to other museum professionals who are facing the same challenges that confront The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. If, in your own planning process, you feel that input from us would be useful, please do not hesitate to contact us.

KATE JOHNSON  
EDUCATION CHAIR

TONI d.GREEN  
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS





THE RESEARCH  
PROCESS

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