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## WHAT CLICKS? OVERVIEW AND GOALS

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### Introduction

In 2000, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) received a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS – <http://www.imls.gov>). The grant's purpose was to fund a media and technology-oriented audience research and development project, which became known as *What Clicks?*

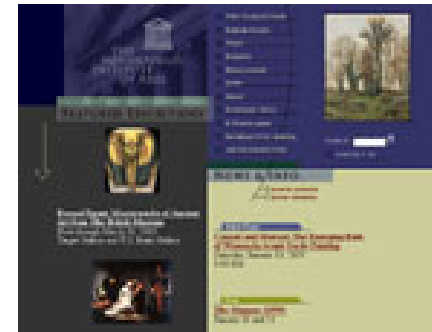


The Minneapolis Institute of Arts' Museum Directory and the *African Art and Culture* Interactive Learning Station.

### *What Clicks?* Project Profile

The specific purpose of the *What Clicks?* research and development project was to study audience effectiveness of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts' digital media resources. This included measurement of audience awareness, use, and satisfaction as it applies to the museum's Interactive Directory, Interactive Learning Stations, and Web site. Further, the

project was designed to interpret and react to the initial baseline findings by setting aside significant time to make improvements to the above resources, then re-measure in an effort to gauge the impact those improvements had made.



The Minneapolis Institute of Arts' general Web site home page ([www.artsmia.org](http://www.artsmia.org)).

An ultimate goal of the *What Clicks?* project was to benefit not only The Minneapolis Institute of Arts and its audience through the identification of audience needs, but also to benefit other museums and their audiences through the publication of both the project's process and its findings.

### Museum Profile

Established in 1883 and now considered one of the top ten comprehensive art museums in the United States, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts has built an encyclopedic collection of approximately 100,000 objects—dating from classical to contemporary times. The Institute offers regular



programs that include a permanent collection display, special exhibitions, lectures, classes, and tours. It also has a longstanding record of using media and technology to help connect its audiences with art—particularly under current Museum Director, Dr. Evan M. Maurer.

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts employs a staff of seven full-time professionals in its Interactive Media Group—or IMG. The IMG works with other museum staff to design, implement, and support the Institute’s media and technology resources. The *What Clicks?* project brought together staff from the IMG, Visitor Services, Curatorial, Education, External Affairs and Development departments.



Entrance to the special exhibition *Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from The British Museum*, and a detail of one of the museum’s main entrances.

Currently, the Institute provides an interactive Museum Directory as an information aid for visitors, and 17 Interactive Learning Stations situated throughout the building. The museum also offers both special exhibition and permanent collection audio tours.

For the off-site audience, the Institute provides two Web sites—the general museum site (<http://www.artsmia.org>) and *ArtsConnectEd*, a resource designed for K-12 teachers and students (<http://www.artconnected.org>). *ArtsConnectEd* is a joint project of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts and Walker Art Center (<http://www.walkerart.org>).

The museum recorded approximately 600,000 onsite museum visits in fiscal year ‘02/’03, while the Institute’s general Web site and *ArtsConnectEd* logged a total of approximately 3,850,000 visits. (About one quarter of the Web site visits are to *ArtsconnectEd*.) For several years, online visitation has grown consistently at a rate of around 50% per year.

**Museum Directory**—The Museum Directory consists of three touchscreens that are used from a standing position or from a wheelchair. Museum Directories are located in the inner lobby at the museum’s most frequently used entrance and on the second and third floor. Contents include information about special exhibitions, permanent collection galleries, lectures, films, Family Days, tours, membership, and amenities (restrooms, coat check, cafes, etc.).

**Interactive Learning Stations**—Each of the museum’s 17 Interactive Learning Stations concentrates on a specific area of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts’ permanent collection (e.g., photography, Prairie School architecture, African art, etc.). They provide further content and context for works of art on display. Early thinking was to situate them adjacent to the galleries rather than creating a centralized media ghetto. Most are installed in discrete spaces in or immediately adjacent to



the galleries whose objects they address. Some are installed in plain view in permanent collection galleries. They range from video “jukeboxes” with a small set of linear segments to highly interactive Web programs with database components.

**Web Site**—The Web site acts as both an aid for museum visitation and an online art resource. Its major sections are: The Collection, Special Exhibitions, Events, Visit, General Info, Education, Interactive Media, Join, Shop, and Electronic Postcards. There are also prominent links on the home page to *ArtsConnectEd*, press releases, and highlighted exhibitions and events. The site has been noted for its in-depth permanent collection programs (e.g. *Modernism*, *Arts of Asia*) and online curriculum units (also available through *ArtsConnectEd*). Awards and high use have testified to the quality and popularity of these programs.

### What Specifically Did *What Clicks?* Measure?

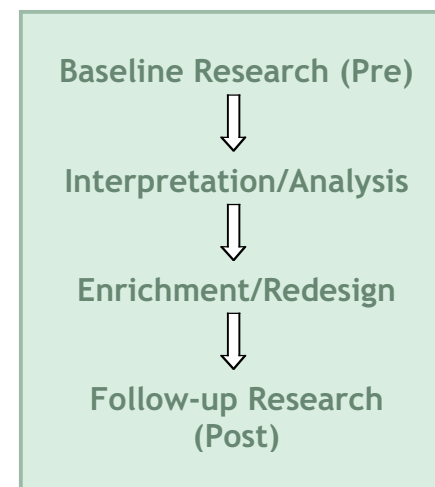


Audience awareness, use, and satisfaction—with each condition leading to the next—constituted the *What Clicks?* guiding principle. Because of the breadth of the Institute’s electronic media resources and the impossibility of studying audience relationships within that entire range, there was a desire to limit the scope of the *What Clicks?* project. It was

decided that the main focus of *What Clicks?*—in terms of media resources—would be the Museum Directory, two of the 17 Interactive Learning Stations (*Arts of Asia* and *African Art and Culture*), and the museum’s general Web site—*artsmia.org*. General public awareness of all of these resources was also measured, and basic demographics were captured to see if awareness levels were consistent across groups.

### Process Outline

The project process can be explained as a general progression, starting with baseline audience measurement for benchmarking (pre testing); then analysis and interpretation of findings; a six month period of enrichment and redesign; then a second round of audience measurement, performed exactly a year after the baseline measurement and conducted with identical instruments (post testing). Interim and summary reporting, both internally (to MIA staff) and to the field, were woven into the process.



## Getting Started

The first step was to form a project team that included the museum's Assistant Director and members of the Interactive Media Group, the Education Division, the External Affairs Division (which includes Marketing and Communications), and the Visitor and Member Services department. These people worked directly with the research data and were primary decision-makers in matters regarding the Institute's media programs.

## Logic Model and Evaluation Plan

To focus its thinking and meet the outcomes based process requested by the funder, the project team developed an evaluation plan including a logic model. Before any audience research was done, the project team attempted to envision a process whereby the initial goals of the project might be met (the goals being to increase audience awareness, use, and satisfaction regarding the Institute's electronic media resources, and to share the process that led to that outcome with peer institutions). The resulting logic model is expressed in a spreadsheet that includes columns headed by these questions:

- *What are the desired outcomes?*
- *Who will benefit?*
- *What key activities will bring about the intended changes?*
- *What are the inherent values of the proposed actions?*

- *What are the—perhaps hidden—assumptions about the actions?*
- *What kind of lasting impact is expected?*

The project team met several times in this phase, each time getting closer to consensus—an important condition if the project was to get off to a good start. This process revealed the kinds of questions that the team was most interested in answering and eventually informed the survey instruments themselves.

## From Analysis to Action

The next step was to approach the enrichment and redesign phase with four separate but related projects in mind. Three would be based on the medium-specific resources (Museum Directory, Learning Stations, and Web site) and the fourth would be a general marketing campaign that would raise awareness of all of the above.

Having worked through an analysis of the data with input from the IMG, the project team decided to form four working groups—with each group addressing one of the major projects to be completed during enrichment and redesign. Each working group was chaired by a member of the project team and included resource members from the IMG, Curatorial, Visitor and Member Services, and the External Affairs division. The working groups met to develop recommendations and reported back to the project team.



This process got underway and led to a clearer picture of what actual action steps were to be taken. In the course of planning these actions, the project team drew up a list of criteria that specific ideas would have to meet.

These criteria included:

- Supported by visitor research
- Doable within *What Clicks?* enrichment/redesign timeframe (January through July, 2003)
- Doable with *What Clicks?* budget/MIA staff resources
- Supports MIA Strategic Plan
- Consistent with Grant/Logic Model
- Benchmarks exist
- Minimal long-term cost implications
- Director's Approval
- A further consideration was that costly, irrevocable changes would be avoided during the testing phase

The process yielded a realistic set of proposed actions that were then taken to the Museum Director, who—having been primed with regular project updates—provided a thoughtful and thorough review. Discussions between the Director and the project team took place and, ultimately, the Director's approval paved the way for enrichment and redesign.

## What Clicked?

Following six months of enrichment and redesign efforts, MIA staff eagerly launched the 2003 follow-up research, nearly an exact replication of the 2002 baseline research studies, in the fall of 2003. This report presents a detailed description of all the enrichment and redesign efforts and their results.

