
WHAT CLICKS? EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts' (MIA) *What Clicks?* project was funded by a \$440,000 matching National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for the purpose of evaluating and enhancing the audience effectiveness of the MIA's digital media resources. The full report is available at www.artsmia.org/what-clicks.

Using multiple research tools and measurements, the *What Clicks?* project team evaluated the key concepts of visitor *awareness, use, and satisfaction* as they apply to the Museum Directory, 17 Interactive Learning Stations (ILSs) that are immediately adjacent to the galleries, and the MIA's Web site, artsmia.org. The project included four phases: baseline studies in 2002 to determine the initial findings, a period of analysis and interpretation, an enrichment and redesign phase, and follow-up studies in 2003 to determine the impact of the changes. Throughout the project, various marketing initiatives were undertaken to increase awareness of all the technology-based resources offered by the Institute. The overall project goal was to benefit not only the MIA and its audience, but also other museums through the online publication of the *What Clicks?* process and findings, as well as our participation in conferences and the cultivation of peer-to-peer relationships.

Logic Model and Evaluation Plan

As specified in the grant, the design of the *What Clicks?* project used an outcomes based model for program evaluation: the logic model. This model clarified the team's thinking at the outset of the project. The following key questions helped identify those factors we wanted and were able to measure (awareness, use, and satisfaction) with the three specific applications of technology: the Museum Directory, Interactive Learning Stations, and the museum's Web site.

- What are the desired outcomes for each?
- Who will benefit from each?
- What key activities will bring about the intended changes?
- What are the inherent values of the proposed actions?
- What are the assumptions about the actions?
- What kind of lasting impact is expected?

Key *What Clicks?* Elements

The *What Clicks?* project included numerous quantitative and qualitative studies both before and after the enrichment and redesign phase: museum visitor surveys, surveys of in-museum



technology users, a focus group study of small video monitors in the galleries, a usability lab for the Museum Directory, Web site visitor surveys, Web site usability labs, a Web site terminology survey, and a thorough analysis of user statistics for both the Web site and in-museum technologies. Following the initial baseline research, the project team concentrated on the following enrichment and redesign activities:

- Redesign of the Museum Directory
- Physical modifications to all 17 Interactive Learning Stations to enhance visibility and usability
- Testing of small video monitors with integrated, focused content in close proximity to specific works of art
- Numerous changes to the *artsmia.org* Web site to improve visitor usability
- Development and implementation of a comprehensive advertising and promotion plan for the Web site and in-museum technologies

What We Learned

Following is a very brief summary of some of the *What Clicks?* highlights.

Technology is a powerful way to fulfill the museum's mission. Each form of technology helps fulfill the MIA's mission of bringing art to life for everyone and benefits the museum's audience in its own way.

The Museum Directory serves as a powerful gateway to the museum's vast resources and helps visitors both plan their visit

and locate works of art. Changes to the Museum Directory led to significant improvements in awareness, duration of use, and satisfaction. In the follow-up surveys, significantly more Museum Directory users said they found what they were looking for on the Museum Directory and that the information was clear.

The Interactive Learning Stations research clearly demonstrated that museum visitors feel the ILSs “enhance their understanding and appreciation of the art.” Visitors also overwhelmingly said they prefer the ILSs to be located in the galleries, close to the works of art, and that the information be tied closely to specific works of art on view. Based on these early indications of visitor preferences, the *What Clicks?* team also conducted a focus group study of small video monitors with integrated, focused content in close proximity to specific works of art. Participants in the focus groups, including mainstream visitors and those who might be considered more “art savvy,” said the various programming displayed on these monitors enhanced their understanding and appreciation of the works of art in a variety of ways, and, importantly, that the monitors themselves did not *detract* from the visitor's experience.

The museum's Web site allows the MIA to extend the reach of its resources and rich collections into the homes of many more people. For example, one ILS program reaches 4,000 museum visitors each year, while the same program on the Web might potentially reach 295,000 visitors. The Web site also allows the MIA to reach a slightly different audience. In contrast to museum visitors, the Web survey revealed that Web site visitors are younger, live further away, and are more likely to



be employed. *What Clicks?* research documented an increasingly important relationship between the Web site and museum visitation; in 2003, more Web site visitors had visited the museum and more had used the site to search for information to plan a museum visit. Many Web site visitors ranked, in order of priority, numerous ways that they would like to interact with the site in the future, such as purchasing tickets to exhibitions and events and receiving e-mail news and reminders. Online shopping and membership purchases and renewals are available on the site already and have been quite successful.

When user satisfaction is high, the primary challenge is to increase awareness and usage. Because many baseline measures showed that visitor satisfaction was high, the *What Clicks?* team focused on strategies to increase awareness and use. In the museum, we learned that for the Museum Directory and ILSs, our greatest challenge is to improve visibility because many visitors simply walked by without noticing them. The team installed an attract video (a separate video screen to attract users) and keyboards for each of the three Museum Directory screens and were able to dramatically increase Museum Directory awareness from 35% in 2002 to 44% in 2003. We evaluated all 17 of the ILSs and took steps to enhance visibility and usability for each of them, resulting in a dramatic increase in ILS awareness from 43% to 53% in 2003.

For the Web site, the team launched a major marketing and promotion plan to drive visitors to the site. Some online tactics worked well; others were less successful. We learned that targeted messages to targeted audiences, such as ads on local newspaper Web sites, delivered the greatest results. As of this

writing, the team was not able to detect a measurable increase in Web site awareness among museum visitors. The number of Web site visits continued to increase at the historical rate of 50% per year; however, it is not known what the increase would have been without the *What Clicks?* project.

A spirit of continuous improvement, guided by testing and retesting, is a sure way to grow visitor satisfaction.

Information gained in the *What Clicks?* baseline research guided countless changes, which in turn were measured in follow-up research to determine their effectiveness. For example, although baseline satisfaction levels were high, the *What Clicks?* project allowed the MIA to make improvements to its technologies, in some cases leading to even higher levels of satisfaction.

- The redesign of the Museum Directory resulted in a dramatic increase in overall satisfaction from 59% in 2002 to 77% in 2003 saying they were “extremely” or “very” satisfied. Other Museum Directory satisfaction measures, such as clarity of information, also improved, and duration of use increased.
- The ILS enrichment and redesign efforts led to an increase in awareness from 43% in 2002 to 55% in 2003. User satisfaction remained high, 71% reported being “extremely” or “very” satisfied.
- Three focus groups concentrated on the small video monitors placed in close proximity to specific works of art and displaying integrated, object-specific content. The feedback was extremely positive; this new facet will continue to develop under the guidance of the project team.



- Web site redesign resulted in continued high satisfaction levels: in 2003, 65% of users were “extremely” or “very” satisfied, up slightly from 62% in 2002. The project team will continue to focus on marketing efforts to raise awareness of the Web site, as well as refining the usability of the site.

Throughout the study, the *What Clicks?* team honed its ability to use a variety of research tools including small focus groups, Web site and Museum Directory usability labs, as well as pre- and post- visitor surveys both on the Web and in the museum. We were able to refine our approaches to collecting and analyzing user statistics as a low-cost, ongoing source of information about user wants and needs.

Future Directions

As the MIA moves forward on a major museum expansion slated for completion in 2005, the *What Clicks?* project has set

the stage for ongoing technology improvement. The museum has installed newly redesigned Museum Directories in two additional locations to aid visitors throughout their museum visit. The small video monitors with integrated, object-driven content in close proximity to specific works of art (a big hit in the focus groups and supported by the museum’s curators) will be incorporated into an interpretation plan for the reinstalled galleries. Similarly, MIA staff will continue to draw attention to the highly successful Interactive Learning Stations and more will be installed in the expanded museum. Due to its enormous potential to broaden and deepen the museum’s relationship with visitors, the museum will continue to promote and refine its Web site. Museum staff will build on the learning that has occurred as a result of the *What Clicks?* project by creating an Internet Vision Project team to further define the Web site’s role and realize its potential. MIA staff and the Internet Vision Project team will also continue to eagerly share its large collection of *What Clicks?* processes and findings with other art museums throughout the world.

