

A Study of Visitors to the Smithsonian Institution Castle

April 2012

Abstract:

The Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) conducted a study to assist the planning for interim use of the Smithsonian Castle (Castle) and the Arts and Industries Building (AIB). The study goals were to understand what information visitors want when they arrive at the Castle and to discover their preferred ways of getting information (e.g. staff members to talk to, pamphlets, brochures, personalized computer itineraries, smart phone apps). OP&A conducted personal interviews with visitors before developing the survey to further explore the study issues; the survey was conducted at both Mall and Garden exits from the Castle. The survey results showed that the current Castle exhibits should be evaluated and modified if necessary, more electronic and print information needs to be provided since the Castle plays a key role when visitors plan their trip to the Smithsonian. According to the survey there are two approaches used by visitors: the 'informed' visitors look for information through interaction with staff; the 'independent' visitors look for an approach to information sources. This study also found that visitors prefer printed materials that can be carried with them throughout their trips, rather than electronic forms.