



2010 Attendee Evaluation Executive Summary
InterActivity 2010: *Invest Early • Inspire Growth*
Saint Paul, MN- May 6-8, 2010

Executive Summary

This report outlines the results of the InterActivity 2010 attendee evaluation. The evaluation data collected are based on an electronic survey made available to attendees after the conference via email. Responses were collected for a two-week period between May and June 2010. Of the 691 attendees, 230 returned completed evaluations, generating a response rate of 33 percent. This was the fourth year ACM provided electronic surveys to attendees.

Evaluation

A complete summary of InterActivity 2010 follows. Results from the numerical data and attendee comments indicate that InterActivity 2010 provided a balance of content-rich, inspiring professional development programming as well as a substantial number of networking opportunities during the four days of the conference. While the majority of programming was highly rated, the InterActivity 2010 keynote presenters received outstanding numerical scores and comments. Several participants commended ACM for securing three exceptional keynote speakers this year.

Concurrent Sessions

Concurrent sessions were rated using a 5 point scale system (1=poor, 2= disappointing, 3= neutral, 4=good, 5=excellent). A majority of attendees gave concurrent sessions either a 4 or 5. Respondents commented on the high-quality content and the diversity of this year's concurrent programming. Respondents were pleased to see an increase in the number of sessions focusing on evaluation and project management. Scores and comments from these sessions are included below:

- The "Evaluation as Investment" interactive double-session, provided attendees with opportunities to identify and practice strategies for designing appropriate evaluation studies, practicing basic evaluation skills for conducting simple exhibit and environmental studies, and to help museums report mission and strategic goal accomplishments. Of evaluation respondents who attended this session, **85%** rated it as a 5 (excellent) or 4 (good). Comments included the following:
 - "This (and its second half held in the afternoon) was the BEST session I attended. Interesting, relevant, interactive and practical. Great presenters."
 - "I thought the Evaluation as Investment session was really useful. The whole idea of museums-even small ones-evaluating their programs and exhibitions rigorously and regularly is so important."
 - "Presentations on evaluation were instructive."
- The "Creative Program Development to Rigorous Project Management" session led participants on a step-by-step process of concept, program and proposal development for creating effective project management practices. Of evaluation respondents who attended this session, **60%** rated it as a 5 (excellent) or 4 (good). Comments included the following:
 - "In the project management session on Thursday we discussed looking at the evaluation of a project before starting the project. The presentation was helpful to me and I plan to be mindful of this information in the future."

- “There seemed to be more sessions this year on project management and evaluation. It would be great to have these topics represented in the program in the future as well.”
- “I liked the applicable steps presented by the speakers in the project management session.”

Sessions that focused specifically on sustaining and/or growing institutions also received high ratings from attendees. The following are highlights from some of these sessions:

- “Smart Growth,” which looked at the positives and negatives of growing an institution beyond its core exhibits and programs, received a rating of 4 (good) or 5 (excellent) from **92%** of evaluation respondents who attended this session.
- “Stop Marketing and Start Connecting,” which introduced sustainable and engaging communication strategies to yield a higher return on investment, received a rating of 4 (good) or 5 (excellent) from **91%** of evaluation respondents who attended this session.
- “Money & Power,” which explored how revenue sources shape museum operations and impact a museum’s financial sustainability, received a rating of 4 (good) or 5 (excellent) from **90%** of evaluation respondents who attended this session.
- “Revenue Generating Programs,” which shared strategies for facility rentals and other earned revenue opportunities for children’s museums, received a rating of 4 (good) or 5 (excellent) from **74 %** of evaluation respondents who attended this session.

Respondents indicated that they would like to see more of the following sessions added to future InterActivity conferences:

- Development (specifically focused on capital campaigns/ expansions and fundraising/grant writing in a challenging economy)
- Leadership (expand to include more board related topics – board management/training/recruitment)
- Finance (including – financial models that work, reporting, sustainability, earned income streams such as fee-based adult/child programs/classes, building sales in membership, gift shops, admissions and concessions)
- Technology (using social media to drive advertising and income and incorporating technology into exhibit development).

Respondents offered their suggestions for the development of future InterActivity sessions (please see page seven of this document for an extended list of suggestions for future InterActivity conferences):

- Fewer choices to boost attendance at sessions and provide more diversity in discussions
- Breakfast roundtables to share best practices for practical topics including –birthday parties, field trips, gift shops, fundraising events, etc
- Sessions that share cleaning procedures/practices in children’s museums
- More idea-swap sessions
- Sessions highlighting museum safety (evacuation, visitor policy, etc.)
- Incorporating current events into museum programming
- Move away from play and open the door to more discussions on creativity
- ACM board facilitated/moderated follow-up session to keynote speaker
- Film sessions and offer through a webcast for participants unable to attend

Several comments from the survey suggest that respondents plan to incorporate the new ideas and practices gained from conference programming, into their museum work:

- “Budgeting model for projects funded by both restricted and unrestricted income. Excellent new board development materials, especially new ways to present our budget.”
- “I think it reinforced and encouraged me to continue with processes that I have been working on and developing. It was affirming to know I am on the right path in developing best practices.”
- “Learned new ways of thinking about how we measure/define impact.
-I learned of some different market demographics that are potentials for us.”

Keynotes

InterActivity 2010 keynote speakers received the highest ratings in conference history. **90%** of respondents gave keynote speakers either a 4 or 5 on a five-point scale (1=poor, 5=excellent). Several respondents indicated that the keynotes successfully balanced thought provoking content and inspiration. Comments for the InterActivity 2010 keynotes included:

- “Johnnetta Cole, Ph.D. was great putting diversity on the table. I was really inspired by her.”
- “Thank you so much for bringing in such excellent speakers! The keynote addresses remain some of my favorite parts of the conference!”

- “Dan Pallotta was the best keynote speaker since I have been attending ACM InterActivity. My first one was Boston.”
- “ACM did an excellent job on this. It is rare when all three speakers are outstanding. Congratulations!”
- “Peter Benson was exceptional!!!!!!”
- “I really enjoyed listening and learning from all of the keynote speakers. I think they were motivating and it was great to learn research that reaffirms what children's museums are doing is making a difference in the lives of children.”
- “All three speakers were excellent! This is not always the case at national conventions.”

Salons

More than half of attendees (**60%**) gave salon sessions either a 4 or 5 on a five-point scale (1=poor, 5=excellent). Respondents cited the diversity of salon topics and perspectives, the great range of speakers as well as the new points and insights in this year's salon programming.

Communication

88% of respondents indicated that ACM's Web site provided useful conference information. **82%** of respondents indicated that the InterActivity emails and online publications provide useful conference information.

When asked if respondents would miss the hard copy version of the Preliminary Program if ACM were to develop an online searchable PDF of this document for InterActivity 2011, **80%** indicated that they would not miss this item. Comments supporting this are reflected below:

- “Yes! Thank you for being aware of your environmental impact!”
- “The final program as a hard copy is important, but not the preliminary program”
- “I fully support a shift to more sustainable practices.”
- “Please do this! It will grant more access to the folks attending & it's a lot harder to lose.”

Conference Registration & ACM Customer Service

80% of respondents indicated that the conference registration process was easy, while **90%** of registrants felt that registration statements and invoices met customer needs.

In terms of service, **95%** agreed that ACM's service at the conference registration desk was excellent and **97%** agreed that service by ACM staff throughout the conference was excellent. Comments below reflect attendees' positive customer service experience at InterActivity 2010:

- “The ACM staff is always so tightly efficient while being friendly and open with so much happening around them - well done, team!”
- “ACM staff was wonderful, friendly, and efficient! Kudos to the staff!”
- “It was a very nice hotel and the perfect size for the conference. Staff provided excellent customer service throughout the conference.”

Motivation for Attending

More than half (**50%**) of respondents versus **27.4%** and **21.7%** of attendees respectively, indicated that they attend InterActivity for professional development over inspiration and networking. The current percentage for professional development, reflects a decrease from the percentage in the 2009 evaluation (**61%** in 2009) as well as slight percentage increases for both inspiration (**18.7%** in 2009) and networking (**20.3%** in 2009).

Respondent feedback indicated that their budgets and the economy were extremely important factors (**63%** of respondents) in dictating InterActivity attendance each year.

ACM MarketPlace

A large majority (**93%**) thought that the ACM MarketPlace was a valuable resource to meet vendors, and **93%** (**84%** in 2009) thought that they had just enough time to browse and meet vendors.

Respondents expressed their overall satisfaction with this year's ACM MarketPlace, citing the diversity of exhibitors, exceptional MarketPlace meal offerings and the substantial networking opportunities that it provided:

- "Great diversity of exhibitors."
- "This is my fourth conference and this was the first time there was enough breakfast and lunch. The selection was wonderful. Nice job! We work the ACM breakfasts and lunches into our conference budget which allows for us to have less expenses so we find it a great benefit!"
- "It was a wonderful way to meet other children's museum people and gather resources."
- "A highlight! Very useful to meet those in the business of building children's museums."

Overall InterActivity 2010 Conference Experience

Overall, respondent comments indicated that InterActivity 2010 was a huge success, providing content-rich information that attendees will incorporate into their museum work, inspiring speakers, several networking opportunities and outstanding customer service from ACM staff:

- "Interactivity is by far the most inspirational and fun conference I have ever attended. It is filled with energy, information, and great networking. Great job year after year."
- "Absolutely great conference. I left with so many new ideas for exhibits and programs. Thank you!"
- "ACM InterActivity was an incredible experience for me this year! Keep up the great work."
- "This was my first ACM conference and I had a great time and found it to be very beneficial-taking back a lot of great ideas to try and implement in our Museum."
- "Completely enjoyed it and needed it and the resources it provided to move ahead and develop our facility."

Recommendations for Future InterActivity Conferences

Conference Marketing & Communication

- Video clips of ACM from previous years posted on Web site to encourage attendance and introduce new attendees to the IA conference
- Gathering and highlighting letters/article written by participants about the impact of InterActivity on their Museum and ability to assimilate information learned
- Minimize number of emails sent before the conference (overwhelming)
- Clearer messaging about the level of refreshments offered at evening events

Hotel

- Make sure that recycling is available at the hotel.
- Available food options at hotel site (to quickly grab lunch if not registered for a brown bag option)

Programming

- Time in between opening plenary and first block of sessions to ensure that attendees have enough time to find session rooms
- Afternoon with no sessions and just buses to the museums
- Encourage presenters to provide research on how their topic affects museums other than theirs to diversify presentations
- More high level sessions for the experienced leader
- Informal gathering place to allow for networking before start of conference
- Orientation event /introduction for new museum professionals/conference attendees
- Coding sessions to indicate levels (intro-advanced)
- Diversify session format (more rounds and idea swaps)
- Diversify salon format (change with round-table type of brainstorming sessions for more panelist/audience communication)