

# Point It Out Iteration 1

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THIS IS NOT A DEFINITIVE FINAL REPORT

FORMATIVE evaluation studies like this one often:

- **are conducted quickly**, which may mean
  - small sample sizes
  - expedited analyses
  - brief reports
  
- **look at an earlier version** of the exhibit/program, which may mean
  - a focus on problems and solutions, rather than successes
  - a change in form or title of the final exhibit/program

# Outdoor Exploratorium – Formative Evaluation

## Point It Out Iteration 1

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### PURPOSE

This study looked at the first prototype of the 'Point It Out' exhibit, which asks visitors to use arrows to point to the most interesting thing they notice while at the exhibit. The prototype consists of a 8 inch Styrofoam ball mounted on a metal pipe, arrows made out of pipe cleaners held in a cup, and a label. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Prototype of 'Point It Out'



This evaluation determines

- if people stopped at the exhibit,
- what people did at when they stopped, and

- what people noticed at the exhibit. More specifically, did they notice something new or did they point out something they noticed before they stopped.

## METHOD

- We observed every 3<sup>rd</sup> person who crossed an imaginary line near the exhibit and who is at least 8 years old, noting whether that visitor stopped and what s/he did at the exhibit.
- We then approached the person we just observed for an interview. The interview questions are in Appendix A.
- We decided that we should place the exhibit in a prominent location close to foot traffic by the front entrance of the museum. But, to make sure that we had selected a good location, we decided to try another spot if *none* of the visitors we interviewed reported seeing the exhibit. However, the first spot we chose (Figure 2) received enough attention; so, we did not move the exhibit afterwards.

Figure 2. Location of the exhibit



**DATA COLLECTED**

- N= 19 groups
- Group composition

Groups	Count
Adult Group	6
Adult Individual	3
Adult with Children (Family Group)	10

**RESULTS**Did visitors see and stop?

- 16/19 visitors saw the exhibit.
- 11/16 stopped at the exhibit

What did visitors do when they stopped?

- 7/ 11 placed an arrow into the ball
- 3/ 11 looked to see what it was but did not use an arrow
- 1 visitor was just waiting for his/her family and did not pay attention to the exhibit.

What did visitors notice at the exhibit?

- The exhibit asked visitors to place an arrow into the ball to point to the most interesting thing they noticed. The 7 visitors who did so pointed to the following things. We sorted these into two categories, those things visitors said they noticed before they stopped at the exhibit, and those that they noticed, for the first time, while at the exhibit. This gives us some indication of whether or not the exhibit itself can encourage noticing something new.

- before they stopped at the exhibit.

Visitor2: that thing over there [holes in a wall]

Visitor7: [he pointed at the tree and she pointed at the bicycles]

Visitor16: that thing over there [holes in a wall]

Visitor16: the ice cream cart

Visitor15: the columns [of the pfa]

- while they were at the exhibit.

Visitor3: the metal thing on the outside of the building [aeolian harp]

Visitor10: the spider web in the tree

Visitor11: the shadow on the ground. the leaves on the tree were casting this intricate shadow on the ground

Visitor15: patterns on the wall outside [pointed to the rough texture on the outside wall

- We also asked visitors if they noticed anything else while at the exhibit. This gives another indication of whether or not the exhibit encouraged visitors who stopped to notice. A few visitors said they looked at other things:

Visitor7: i looked at the architecture, the pfa

Visitor10: the tree, the bicycles, and the cars. but the spider web was the most interesting

Visitor11: we looked at the building over there [pfa] but someone already pointed there

## NEXT STEPS

- These results suggest that the exhibit prototype can encourage some visitors to stop and notice what they did not see before. Some of what they notice are subtle, including the intricate shadows cast by a tree or a spider's web.
- Although we did not look for this in the evaluation, there are indications that a few visitors are looking at the arrows other visitors placed and trying to figure out what they are pointing to. This exhibit, therefore, has the potential of not just asking visitors to stop and notice but in helping visitors share and pass on what they find interesting to others. We may also want to experiment with ways for visitors to write and clearly indicate what they notice beyond using an arrow, which can be ambiguous and crude. Our next evaluation study will take a closer look to see if visitors are even paying attention to other visitors' arrows and what, if anything, they do with or think about these arrows.
- Finally, as we begin to think about a distributed collection of exhibits for the Outdoor Exploratorium project, we may also want to investigate distributed exhibits. The simplicity of Point It Out lends itself to experimentation. Specifically, what might happen if we had a dispersed field of balls? Will visitors move from one to the next, noticing new things at each? Is there any coherence in this kind of experience for visitors?

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**APPENDIX A: Interview Questions**

1. We're trying to figure out if people even noticed the exhibit. Did you see something like a white ball on top of a stick? There are little arrows sticking out of the white ball.

**YES**                      **NO** (if no then end interview)

2. [If YES to Q1] Did you stop there and look at the ball?

**YES**                      **NO** (if no then end interview)

3. [If YES to Q2] What else did you do there?

4. [If YES to Q2] Did you stick an arrow into the ball?

**YES**                      **NO** (go to Q5)

- a. [If YES to Q4] Is your arrow pointing to anything in particular? What?

**YES**                      **NO** (go to Q5)

- b. [If YES to Q4a] Did you notice that (their answer to Q4a) before you saw the ball?

**YES**                      **NO**

- c. Did you notice or look at anything else while you were at the ball? What?

\_\_\_\_\_end interview if they answered Q4c \_\_\_\_\_

5. [If NO to Q4 or Q4a] Did you notice or look at anything while you were standing at the ball? What (besides the ball itself)?

**YES**                      **NO**

6. [If YES to Q5] Did you notice that before you saw the ball?

**YES**                      **NO**