

# Turntable: Comparing Visitors' Observations

## Formative Report

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December 2010

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

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## Background

Two versions of the *Turntable* exhibit were placed next to each other on the floor, giving Exploratorium evaluators a unique opportunity to ask visitors to compare the appearances of an original and refurbished version of the exhibit side by side. The exhibits work the same but look slightly different since they were made at different times. Pictures of the two versions of *Turntable* are below, in figures 1-3. This study used a short interview to find out the differences visitors noticed between the exhibits and if visitors had a preference for the original or refurbished version. Understanding how visitors view our exhibits is of particular interest right now, as we are poised to refurbish a large number of our exhibits in preparation for our move to the piers.

## Goals

The main goals of this study were to find out:

- If visitors notice a difference between original and refurbished versions of the *Turntable* exhibit
- Visitor's descriptions of the original and refurbished versions
- If visitors had a preference between the two versions of the *Turntable*

**Fig 1. Two Versions of Turntable**



*Original Version of Turntable*



*Refurbished Version of Turntable*

**Fig 2. Two Versions of Turntable: Leg Detail**



*Original Version*



*Refurbished Version*



**Fig 3. Two Versions of Turntable: Table Detail**



*Original Version*



*Refurbished Version*

## Methods

### Data collection instrument

Data was gathered by conducting 20 short interviews near the two versions of *Turntable* on Thursday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> and Friday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010.

- Interviews lasted 1-5 minutes
- Visitors were asked to describe the appearance of the two versions of *Turntable*, if they would have noticed a difference between the two tables if the interviewer had not mentioned it, and which version of *Turntable* they liked best

### Participant selection

- Visitors were semi-randomly chosen—the first person to walk past *Pinscreen* was asked to participate in a short interview
- Visitors were mainly interviewed before they played with the exhibits
- We aimed for seven interviews with children (about the age of seven) and 13 interviews with adults but were only able to complete four interviews with children

**Table 1**

#### *Interviewee Demographics*

Gender	Number	Percentage (n=20)
Adult Males	10	50%
Adult Females	6	30%
Boys (ages 7-17)	3	15%
Girls (ages 7-17)	1	5%

## Findings

*Note: Visitors commonly mentioned the items on the tables—the spheres, rings and other items meant to rotate on the turntable for the exhibit. These items are interchangeable with both versions of the exhibit and were not meant to be included as part of the study. After the 12<sup>th</sup> interview, the interviewer told visitors that they did not need to compare or describe these items, nonetheless, visitors continued to compare the number and type of items on the table. To focus the findings on the project goals, these comments are not reported in this document.*

### Turntable Descriptions

Visitors were asked, “Could you describe the appearance of the two turntables for me? First tell me what you notice about this one, and then tell me what you notice about this one.” Visitors described the exhibits with objective words about what they could see and subjective words that described their feelings and attitudes towards the exhibits. Visitors also described at least one of the two versions of the *Turntable* as “Old” or “New”

without interviewer prompting (13 of 20 visitors, 65%), and used various other terms to describe the materials and appearances of the two versions of the exhibit.

### **Descriptions of Original Version**

#### **Objective Descriptions:**

Wood (7)  
Shallow Table/Short Walls (3)  
Black  
Steel  
Big Chamber Underneath

#### **Subjective Descriptions:**

Old/Around a long time (6)  
Substantial/Solid/Heavy Duty (3)  
Pool Table/Coin Operated (2)  
Belongs here (2)  
Handmade/Rustic (2)  
Scratched  
Gentleman's Club  
Basement

### **Descriptions of Refurbished Version**

#### **Objective Descriptions:**

Deeper table (4)  
Speckled/Spotted inside (2)  
Formica (2)  
Yellow  
Light Color  
Recessed legs  
Thick legs  
Cork  
Fiberglass  
Artificial Wood

#### **Subjective Descriptions:**

New (9)  
Pool Table/Air Hockey (5)  
1960's/1970's (2)  
Modern  
Buy it at Ikea  
Refined  
Finished  
Bright  
Clean  
Fake  
Kid-Like



Approachable  
Diner

### Differences between the Exhibits

Visitors were asked, “If I hadn't said they were different, would they seem different to you?” A majority of visitors reported that they would not have noticed the difference between the exhibits.

**Table 2**

#### *Visitors Noticing Differences*

Response	Number	Percentage (n=19)
<b>Noticed differences</b>	5	26%
<b>Did not notice difference</b>	13	68%
<b>Unsure</b>	1	5%

#### **Visitors who did notice differences**

- “Visually, they look different.”
- “Differences in look and depth right away.”
- “I notice the different structures...The walls seem to be taller.”

#### **Visitors who did not notice differences**

- “No. We pay attention to the things on it.”
- “I wouldn't have looked for differences. I would have treated them the same.”
- “The only difference is that one doesn't have a ball.”
- “All I paid attention to was the top, at first. When I look at them closer I see the differences.”
- “I wouldn't have noticed.”

#### **Visitors who are unsure**

- “I don't know. Depends on my attention.”

### Version Preferences

Visitors’ were asked, “Which version of the exhibit do you like best? Why?” Responses were split between the original version and refurbished version of *Turntable*. Visitors’ reasons for their preferences often focused on the color, materials, and aesthetics of the exhibits. These findings seem to generally reflect a difference in visitor tastes rather than a clear reason as to why one version is preferred over the other.

Table 3

*Visitor Version Preferences*

Response	Number	Percentage (n=20)
Original	8	40%
Refurbished	9	45%
Same	3	15%

**Why Visitors Prefer the Original Version**

“More aesthetically pleasing”  
 “More antique-ish”  
 “I like the older-looking”/“Looks older”  
 “More interesting”  
 “Made of wood”  
 “The color”  
 “I like old wood things”

**Why Visitors Prefer the Refurbished Version**

“I like the color”/“Like the color”  
 “It looks nicer”  
 “The modern design”  
 “It’s made a bit better “  
 “No pointed edges”  
 “Looks 70’s”  
 “Looks funner”  
 “The formica sides”

**Why Visitors Don’t Have a Preference**

“They both do the same thing. I wouldn’t pick on over the other.”  
 “They seem the same”

**Conclusions**

Overall, visitors notice and describe the two versions of *Turntable* as **old** and **new**. They also commonly compare and contrast the **materials** and **construction** of the two tables. A majority of visitors report that they would **not notice a difference** between the two tables unless it was pointed out to them, and visitors are **split on their preferences** for the original and refurbished versions of the exhibit.

## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Interview Guide Instrument

*Hi, I'm Liz and I work here. I'm talking to visitors today about some of our exhibits, and was wondering if you might have minute or two to talk with me.*

*We have two of the same exhibits over here. They look slightly different because they were made at different times. I know you probably haven't used them yet and that's ok.*

1. Could you describe the appearance of them both for me? First tell me what you notice about this one, and then tell me what you notice about this one.

[Probe, if too general: Could you say a little more about that?]

[First: Old  New

2. If I hadn't said they were different, would they seem different to you?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes	No

[If no, probe only if they offer something. If yes, probe: For the reasons you described before, or something else?]

3. If you were to pick the one you liked best, which would you pick? Why?