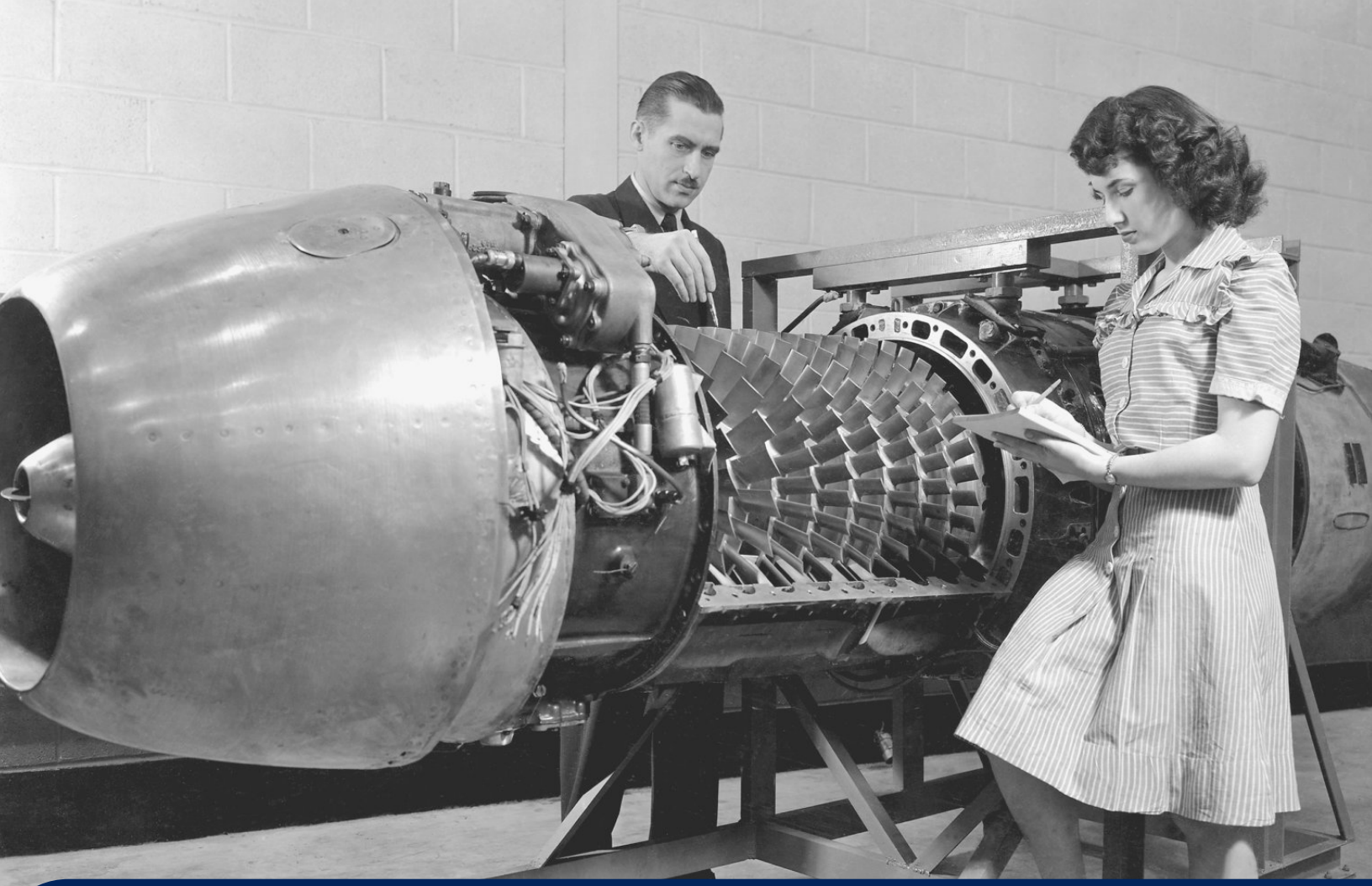

CURIOSITY AT THE MUSEUM OF FLIGHT

2020 WISE EVALUATION REPORT

Sara Bell
Sophia Eichholz
Bri Gabel
Jennifer Juan
KD Williams

wise
Washington Informal Science Education Consortium

THE MUSEUM OF FLIGHT

MUSEOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was designed to gain an understanding of the nature of visitor curiosity and its impact on the visiting experience. Designed as a partnership with the Washington Informal Science Educators (WISE) Consortium, UW Museology students collected and analyzed data to explore this concept.

69%

of participants identified as more curious than average

The study also showed that visitors tended to be curious by joyous exploration, meaning they view curiosity as open exploration.

60%

of respondents had their curiosity piqued by something different from what they came to see

For example, a visitor might have come to see the Aviation Park but, instead, had their curiosity piqued by the Courage Wing.

54

Total Curiosity Score at the MoF was 54 out of 75

Visitors at the Museum of Flight ranked the lowest of the sites on the TCS, but only by one point compared to the WISE average of 55. This is not enough margin to suggest that, overall, visitors at the Museum of Flight are less curious than visitors at the other WISE partner sites.

TOP CURIOSITY TRIGGERS

HISTORY | PLANES | SPACE

Visitors indicated that the most interesting topics at the Museum of Flight consisted of **History (World Wars specifically),** Planes (Blackbird), and Space (Apollo).

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS WISE?

The Washington Informal Science Education (WISE) Consortium consists of six Seattle based informal science education institutions that collaborate in the development of a single visitor evaluation study. For 2020, four of these sites, the Woodland Park Zoo, Pacific Science Center, Museum of Flight, and Burke Museum, hosted University of Washington Museology graduate students who carried out the evaluation in collecting data and analyzing the nature of curiosity in their visitors.

WHY STUDY CURIOSITY?

Learning about curiosity in visitors and museum experiences is inherently essential to the field of informal learning. Curiosity is considered a drive to learn new information, and if provided a specific environment and context, can generate varying levels of interest in a topic (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Further, Rounds (2004) considers two types of motivations in the curiosity-driven visitor. One with extrinsic motivations to acquire knowledge relevant and useful to their life, and intrinsic motivations based on interest and not necessarily the value of the information. Curiosity behavior may also be influenced by various curiosity dimensions in an individual's personality (Kashdan). These motivators and dimensions were used to inform this evaluation's plan and instrument.

Rounds describes museum visitors as "drifters" that tend to explore these institutions without a learning plan (Rounds 2004). Understanding how curiosity manifests in visitors and the factors that lead this curiosity to content interest can help museums make decisions for enhancing public engagement efficiency, satisfaction, and learning.

EVALUATION PLAN

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of our study is to explore the nature of curiosity at WISE sites and how curiosity impacts the visitor experience.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. How does people's predisposition to curiosity affect their visitor experience?
2. What types of experiences or engagement opportunities spark curiosity at WISE sites?
3. What types of behaviors do curiosity at WISE sites lead to?

AUDIENCE

This evaluation primarily focuses on adult visitors to the Museum of Flight, described as individuals age eighteen years and older. This evaluation does exclude visitors that were known to be part of any tour groups at the museum.