Content Scope Evaluation: Determining Audience Interest in Virtual Exhibits

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Purpose of Content Scope Evaluation

The purpose of a content scope evaluation is to assist project leaders determine the perceived value to the target audience of both intended and possible topics that are to be included in a virtual exhibit.

The evaluation is also intended to encourage respondents to propose or identify additional topics that would meet the interests and needs of the target audience, and to highlight any critical gaps in content (for example, in correlation with certain educational curricula) among the themes presented by the exhibit.

Following a review of the evaluation results, and depending upon their nature, certain decisions and/or actions can be taken by project leaders on behalf of the project. For example, if all responses are very positive, project leaders can feel confident that the initial content scope is adequate. Alternatively, they may choose to modify the scope of the virtual exhibit based on the evaluation results and related comments and recommendations.

Evaluation Methodology and Questionnaire

The approach proposed here consists of the distribution of an evaluative instrument in the form of a questionnaire.

The questionnaire is intended to gather input from respondents and representatives of the target audience. It should be developed and assessed with members of the virtual exhibit project team and several members of the target group prior to its distribution. Several iterations of the questionnaire will be developed and modified based on the input received. The questionnaire must also continually evolve in accordance with content revisions to be contained in the virtual exhibit.

The questionnaire will vary in length depending upon the exhibit's proposed content. It should include mention of its purpose, and where required, very brief descriptions should be provided for topics whose titles do not clearly convey their content or for those including more than one type of content.

Questionnaire respondents are to rank each topic from zero (not important) to five (extremely important) according to how important or valuable they find it. Respondents are also asked to provide comments on the specific topics proposed, as well as on the overall exhibit, and to share their ideas for other topics, based on their knowledge of and interest in the content. Respondents should also be given the option of providing their contact information.

See Appendix A for the questionnaire used in the development of the Virtual Museum of Canada's virtual exhibit, *Cosmic Quest: Discovering Astronomy through Science and Culture*. The target audience for this virtual exhibit is youth aged 10–14 years. Respondents to the evaluation consisted of youth aged 10-14 years, as well as teachers.

Recommended Analysis of the Results

Analysis of the results from the questionnaire can include the following:

- Distribution and response rate
- Mean scores (overall and by region, where appropriate)
- Ranking of content topics
- Possible additional content topics
- Comments on content topics
- Comments on the overall virtual exhibit
- Discussion of the above results
- Recommendations for changes to the content

Adding charts and graphics can help illustrate the outcomes of the evaluation.

The following recommendations are suggested in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of content scope evaluations:

- **Develop a schedule that includes all components of the virtual exhibit's development, paying special attention to the points at which steps in the evaluation are to begin, and ensuring that sufficient time is allowed for a thorough evaluation and analysis of the results.**

- **At the onset of the project, in order to maximize the project team's efforts, target a realistic number of topics and activities to be included.**

- **In order to accurately convey the notion behind the proposed themes and topics, use clear and definitive wording in the questionnaire to express the proposed topics without limiting the input and generation of new content ideas from respondents.**

- **The title of the overall project, and the titles of themes and topics should be crafted carefully in order to be meaningful to respondents. These titles should clearly and accurately reflect the intended content of the various units that the project team expects are likely to proceed. Subtitles may be added to clarify the intended topics.**

- **The questionnaire should be distributed to respondents representing the demographic groups, and various regions where applicable, comprising the target audience of the final product.**

- **If the target audience includes several distinct components (i.e., youth aged 10–14 years and general public), these audience components should be represented in the group of respondents participating in the evaluation.**

- **An incentive (i.e., mugs, pins, vouchers) for respondents should be considered to both encourage their participation and acknowledge the time commitment they have made.**

Appendix A.

Sample Questionnaire

The questionnaire below was distributed for the content scope evaluation of the VMC's virtual exhibit, *Cosmic Quest*. It should be modified to reflect:

- the organization(s) developing the virtual exhibit;
- the target audience of the virtual exhibit;
- the content of the virtual exhibit.

We need your input….

Astronomy Virtual Exhibit

The Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC) program is developing a virtual exhibit for the Web on the topic of astronomy, including both its scientific and cultural aspects. The content includes text, images, sound and animation. Your input is very much valued as it will help us ensure that this virtual exhibit is as good as possible.

Please help us by ranking the importance or value of the possible topics to be included in this exhibit.

Use the following scale to rank the topics listed in the following table according to how important or valuable you feel they are to youth aged 10–14 years:

0 = not important
1 = slightly important
2 = somewhat important
3 = important
4 = very important
5 = extremely important

Feel free to add comments that might be useful in helping us determine the scope of the virtual exhibit's content. We thank you for your input.

Topic	Importance Ranking (circle)	Other Comments
Overview of Aboriginal peoples (Blackfoot, Anishinabe , Australian aborigines, Hawaiian)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
ASTRONOMY BASICS		
Introduction to astronomy (what is astronomy?)	0…1…2…3…4…5	

	Importance Ranking (circle)	Other Comments
You are here (solar system; Milky Way; Big Bang)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Glossary of astronomical terms	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Timeline of astronomy–related events	0…1…2…3…4…5	
ASTRONOMY AND YOU— Our Place in Space		
Influence of astronomy on our lives—Introduction	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Navigation (history, First Nations)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Timekeeping (clocks, seasons)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Environment	0…1…2…3…4…5	
You are stardust (composition of all matter)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Inspired by the stars (stories about creation; arts and space—poems, artwork)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
WAYS OF LOOKING— Astronomy Across Cultures	**Importance Ranking (circle)**	**Other Comments**
Observations with the human eye	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Ancient astronomy	0…1…2…3…4…5	
First People's observations	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Technologies of looking	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Capturing space	0…1…2…3…4…5	
INSIDE ASTRONOMY— Today and Tomorrow		
People and places	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Current research	0…1…2…3…4…5	
The answer is out there	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Careers	0…1…2…3…4…5	
ASTRO BYTES—Fun and Games		
Interactive objects room (objects become animated when scrolled over; lead to other activities)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Wormholes and Gravity Slingshots 3D game (similar to Snakes and Ladders, with Q & A's)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Journeys with Constellations game (find the way by using the stars – role playing)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Paper Doll Aliens game (select body parts to allow life of an alien on one of several planets; with printouts)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Teacher resources section (with printable construction templates for activities, e.g., Solar BBQ; Astrolabe)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Downloadable activities to be done at home (make a scale solar system)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Additional possible topics:		
Planets—number, names, characteristics	0…1…2…3…4…5	

	Importance Ranking (circle)	Other Comments
Aboriginal (Blackfoot, Cree) sky stories	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Cree and Ojibwa names for constellations	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Virtual tours inside an observatory	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Dodge the Meteor Shower game (drive a spaceship through asteroids and meteors)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Adaptive Optics game (adjust a mirror to make a clear telescope image – trial and error game)	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Make a Rocket instructions	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Skit/Rap activity guidelines	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Crossword/Word search puzzles	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Constellation Connect–the–Dots game	0…1…2…3…4…5	
Other Topics you feel should be included in the Astronomy exhibit:	**Importance Ranking (circle)**	**Other Comments**
	0…1…2…3…4…5	
	0…1…2…3…4…5	
	0…1…2…3…4…5	
	0…1…2…3…4…5	
	0…1…2…3…4…5	

Overall comments regarding the Astronomy virtual exhibit:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Optional:
Your name: _____
Grades taught (if applicable):
Tel:_____ FAX: _____
Email: _____
Mailing Address: _____
****
Please return this completed survey **by (DATE)** to:
(Name of Facilitator) FAX: _____
(Address)
(City)   (Province)   (Country)   (Postal Code)
(Email)   **Thank you!**