



Do you know who visits history museums? Lots of people of every description come, of course, but the largest number of visitors is families with younger school aged children. Next comes grandparents, especially when they bring their grandchildren. The final large group of visitors is men. Many of you might say "I knew that," but our perceptions probably are mostly empirically based. Now we can draw upon a professional study published in the January 2008 newsletter of the American Association for State and Local History. Our Museum is a member of that group.

Next question: Do you know what appeals to all these visitors the most? It is not seeing old stuff! Visitors expect hands-on active experiences. They want live performances and demonstrations that bring history to life. When an exhibit is presented in a way that people can feel, touch, and actively experience it, they enjoy it the most.

Finally, can you explain to me why people in the three categories above comprise the largest number of visitors to a history museum? The study did not delve into what attracts each group of visitors, and I can speculate what the reasons might be, but I expect that you have great explanations that are probably better than mine. So send me an email with your thoughts to Jerrywarrenmsrv@sbcglobal.net. We will continue to try to reach a wide variety of visitors, but what a clear roadmap this analysis creates for us to share the history of the San Ramon Valley and what a marketing strategy it outlines!

Fortunately, we have a head start down this road. The *One Room School*, the passport that introduces children to area history, and the *Indian Life* programs all focus on younger school aged children. The new *Branch Line Railroad* certainly will attract younger children, as well. Some exhibits have offered visitors a chance to go on an "archeological dig" or to learn to quilt. Not every exhibit easily lends itself to interactive participation, though. I recently learned that the Blackhawk Museum resolved that dilemma by crafting a program designed to enlist participation by the main target audience for one of their exhibits even though the exhibit itself was not interactive. Programs can be interactive too.

To help us seriously pay attention to the key conclusions of this analysis I have revitalized our Mission Committee with the specific task of creating synergy between exhibits and programs that offers creative interactive experiences whenever possible. **Carmen Curtis** will chair this group. Our Curator **Beverly Lane** and for the first time a Board of Directors liaison, **Florence McAuley**, will also join the committee.

We will look for innovation from this group process. If you have a thought for them, please talk to us.

Jerry Warren
Steering Committee Chair

