1989 VISITS TO SMITHSONIAN MUSEUMS

based on

Office of Protection Services
Multi-Year Visit Count Statistics
1/1/80-12/31/89

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Introduction

This report summarizes and discusses the 1989 Smithsonian Institution (SI) visit counts collected by the Office of Protection Services, within the context of similar counts from last year and the 1985-1988 period. In several instances, data back to 1980 is also used.

As we said in our report last year, we assume that the procedures used by Protection Services personnel (guards) to count individuals are the same at various SI museums and have remained the same during the 1980-1989 period. This assumption implies that errors in the count data, as well as in recording and data entry, are equally distributed across time and museums. To simplify comparisons, the structure of this report is the same as the report issued on 1988 visits.¹

Overall Counts for 1989

The total number of visits recorded for 1989 was 24,240,000 or 24.2 million visits.² As compared to 1988, this represents a 13.7 percent decrease. When compared to the 1985-1988 average, this represents a 4.5 percent decrease; compared to the 1980-88 average, this is a 2.3 percent decrease.³ In other words, while visits in 1989 certainly showed a substantial decrease compared to the previous year, 1989 was in keeping with visitation during the last decade.⁴

The total visits for the past 10 years are shown in Table 1 in two ways, chronologically and in rank order. Looking at the 10 years in ascending order, note that 1989 was essentially at the midpoint; five of the ten years showed lower counts and four showed higher counts. As will be shown below, the general patterns of visitation across Smithsonian museums and in the course of the year is clearly one of decrease. However, the Smithsonian 1989 experience should be viewed in the context of Washington, D.C., as a whole.

¹Doering, Zahava D. and St. Thomas, Linda. <u>1988 Report on Museum Attendance,</u> February 1, 1989 (Internal SI Report).

² In this report, numbers and percentages are rounded. The summary report, known as the Multi-Year Study, provided by the Office of Protection Services, is in Appendix A.

³The 13.7 percent decrease is calculated as (CY89-CY88/CY88). Similarly, the 4.5 percent decrease is [CY89-(AVG CY85-CY88)/(AVG CY85-CY88)]. In other words, following standard conventions, change is always calculated with the previous period as reference.

⁴Numerically, the 1989 count represented a decrease of about 3.8 million visits compared to 1988, a decrease of 0.9 million compared to the 1985-1988 average of 25.4 million visits, and a decrease of 0.6 million compared to the 1980-1989 average of 24.8 million visits. The 1989 count is unquestionably lower than the last two years (1988 and 1987) but higher than either 1985 or 1986.

Table 1

1980-1989 Total Visits: Chronological and Rank Order
(In Millions)

Chrono	logical	Rank Order (A	Ascending)
Year	Visits	Year `	<u>Visits</u>
1980	21.1	1980	21.1
1981	22.1	1981	22.1
1982	22.6	1982	22.6
1983	25.8	1986	22.7
1984	30.1	1985	23.7
1985	23.7	1989	24.2
1986	22.7	1983	25.8
1987	27.1	1987	27.1
1988	28.1	1988	28.1
1989	24.2	1984	30.1
Average	24.8	Average .	24.8

An informal survey of other tourist attractions shows us that a decline in visitors was a city-wide phenomenon. While *Park Service* statistics are unavailable at the time of this report, *Tourmobile* reports a 13 percent decrease in business from 1988 to 1989. *The National Gallery of Art* reported a decrease from 7.1 million in 1988 to 5.6 in 1989, a decrease of about 25 percent.

Using data from the U.S. Travel Center, the Washington Convention and Visitors Association reported an estimated total of 19.6 million in 1988 and 19.3 in 1989. They added: "Individual (family) leisure travel within the United States was reported down in many U.S. cities from 1988 to 1989." Foreign tourism was up significantly in Washington and other cities, as reported recently in the national media.

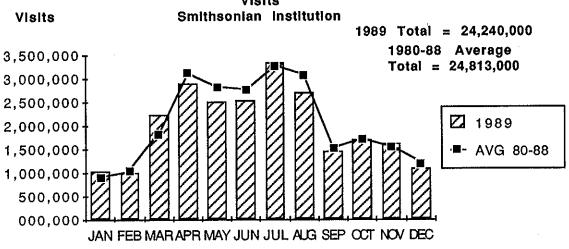
In a January 1990 memorandum, the Convention and Visitors Association said, "Sensational publicity regarding Washington's drug-related crimes certainly had an impact on the individual leisure traveller. In reality, Washington's drug problems were mirrored in other major metropolitan areas and DC's tourism areas remained safe enough through the year. However, the negative publicity created an unfortunate perception that crime pervaded all parts of the city. Also, this publicity came in the spring at a time when many families make their vacation plans."

The reader should also keep in mind that Smithsonian numbers are *visits* and do not describe visitors. Thus, for each museum, figures include multiple visits within a calendar year, as well as multiple entries on a given day of a visit. Conservatively, if we assume that a person visits an average of two museums per trip to the Smithsonian, then the total of 24.2 million visits last year may mean 12.1 million discrete visitors.

As can be seen in Figure 1, in which the 1989 SI monthly visits are compared to the 1980-1988 average, visits in all but four months fell below the previous average. January, March, July and November (marginally) were above average.

Figure 1

1989 Monthly Visits Compared to 1980-88 Average Monthly Visits

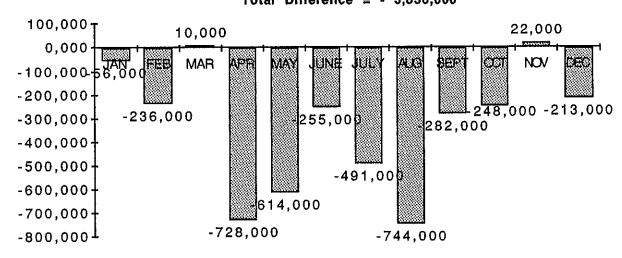


The difference between 1989 and 1988 is shown in Figures 2 and 3. Figure 2 shows that only in March and November did 1989 visits slightly surpass those of the previous year, while substantial decreases were observed in the other ten months.

Figure 2

Difference Between 1989 and 1988 in Number of Visits:
Smithsonian Institution

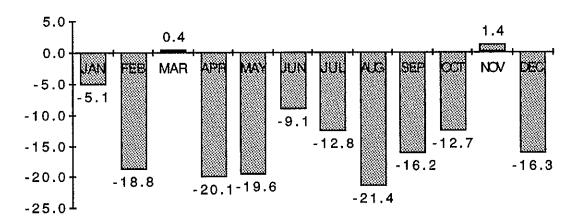
Total Difference = - 3,836,000



In Figure 3, the percentage decrease (or minor increase) between 1989 and the previous year is shown (percentage change = difference/1988). Many of the percentage changes are sizeable, resulting from the fact that 1988 visit counts were the second highest since 1980.

Figure 3
Percentage Change by Month Between 1989 and 1988
Smithsonian institution

Total Change = -13.7%



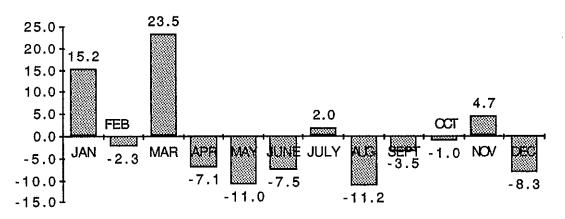
In Figure 4, the percentage change between 1989 and the 1980-1988 average is shown. The Figure shows that visits during January were unusually high compared to the past, as were those in March. In fact, visits in March 1989, were the highest recorded since 1980. May, August and December, however, were especially low.

Figure 4

Percentage Change Between 1989 Visits and 1980-88

Average Monthly Visits: Smithsonian Institution

Total Change = -2.3%



General Sources of Increases in Visits

In 1989, the Office of Protection Services provided data for 14 counting entities. These include 12 museums, the S. Dillon Ripley Center and the Castle. Data are not provided for the National Zoo. With the exception of the Ripley Center and the Sackler Gallery, data exist for the 1980-1988 period for the other twelve. The data for the National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) are not comparable to data from the Capitol Hill location. The Castle was closed until November 1989, thus only two months of data are available. The Freer was closed throughout the year.

Figure 5 shows the 1989 increases or decreases for all 14 facilities compared to 1988; however, the Castle and Freer have been set to zero since completely comparable data for 1988 are not available for the Castle and the Freer. Only two museums, the Renwick and the Cooper-Hewitt show increases. In the overall picture, however, the 74 percent increase at the Renwick is 99,000 visits while the 13 percent decreases at each of the three largest museums (NASM, NMAH, and NMNH) are each over 800,000 visits. All of the increases and decreases in the actual counts are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 5
Percentage Change in Total Visits Between 1989 and 1988:
Museums*

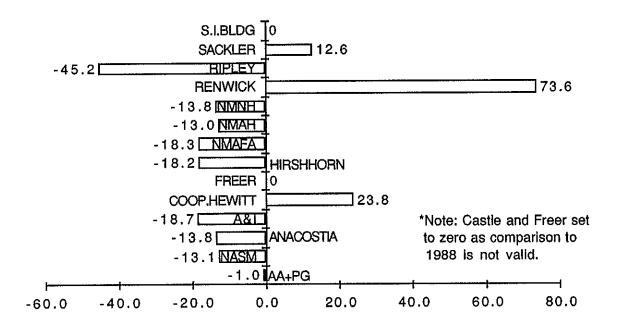


Figure 6

Difference Between 1989 and 1988 in Total Number of Visits:

Museums
(in Thousands)

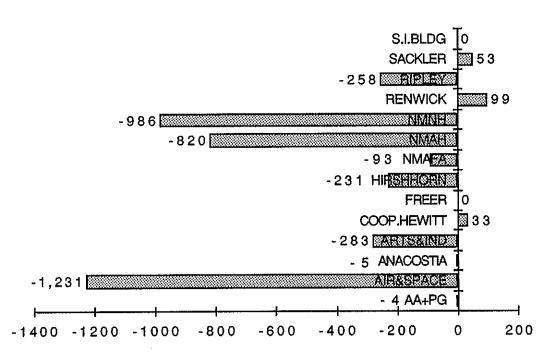
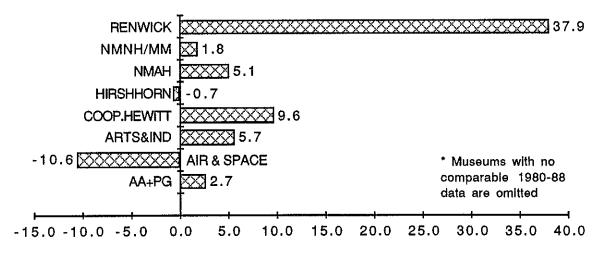


Figure 7 shows the percentage changes between 1989 and the 1980-1988 average for selected museums. The Anacostia Museum, Freer Gallery, National Museum of African Art, Ripley Center, Sackler Gallery of Art and the Castle (SI Bldg) are omitted because comparable data are not available for various reasons.

Figure 7

Percentage Change in Total Visits Between 1989 and 1980-88

Averages: Selected Museums*



1989 Exhibitions and Special Events

Throughout 1989, each of the museums was involved in opening special exhibitions or hosting special events. In the case of the smaller museums, there is often an obvious relationship between changes in the visit counts and museum exhibits (such as the Sackler's *Yani* exhibition). In the small museums, 15,000-20,000 visitors attracted to a special exhibition can radically change a month's data.

In the larger museums, however, no straightforward explanations are possible for either increases or decreases. Even if a particular exhibition has a special draw (e.g. Natural History's *Inside Active Volcanoes: Kilauea and Mount St. Helens*, its "pull" is primarily on individuals already in a major museum. Thus, in a large museum, it would take extremely high numbers of tourists to create a increase that could be attributed to a specific exhibit. For the most part, individuals planning a trip to Washington appear to make the decision on the basis of individual circumstances (e.g. vacation schedules, costs, possibility of visits with local family or friends) rather than on the basis of a particular exhibit.

Here, we provide a summary of museum highlights that might be related to the visit counts. These comments are based on conversations with museum staffs and the information from the Office of Protection Services in Appendix A.

National Museum of American Art and National Portrait Gallery

Looking at the attendance of these two museums on a month-by-month basis, we can see it was up from or essentially the same as last year nearly every month. Among the major exhibitions at American Art were *Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray* which opened in late 1988 and continued through Feb. 20, 1989; *Photography of Invention: American Pictures of the '80s* (April 28-Sept. 10); and *Treasures of American Art from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center* (Nov. 22 through Feb. 19, 1990).

At the Portrait Gallery, *To Color America: Portraits by Winold Reiss* opened in late October and continues through this coming March and the *Isamu Noguchi: The Portrait Sculpture* exhibit opened on April 15 and closed Aug. 20.

National Air and Space Museum

As indicated above, visits reports were substantially lower compared to last year, a decrease of 13.1 percent, and somewhat lower when compared to the 1985-88 average (-3.2 percent). When 1989 is compared to the 1980-88 average, it shows a decrease of 10.6 percent. Total visits reported in 1989 was 8.2 million; in 1988 the figure was 9.4 million.

The major exhibit at NASM this year was *Beyond the Limits: Flight Enters the Computer Age* which opened May 12 and continues for an indefinite period. In addition, NASM was the site of a major celebration for the 20th anniversary of the Apollo landing on the moon (July 20). The President, Vice President and Apollo 11 astronauts attended the public event outside the museum on that day.

Anacostia Museum

There were more visitors to the Anacostia Museum for several months this year, undoubtedly due to the nationally publicized exhibition, *The Real McCoy:* African American Invention and Innovation, 1619-1930, which opened May 21 and continued throughout the year.

Cooper-Hewitt Museum

The exhibition that made a difference here was *The Intimate World of Alexander Calder* which opened on Oct. 17 and continues through March 1990. In addition, the Cooper-Hewitt had another major exhibition which commemorated the bicentennial of the French revolution, *L'Art de Vivre: Decorative Arts and Design in France*, 1789-1989 (March 30-Aug.).

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

The exhibition that received rave reviews from the art critics and generated a slight increase in visitors in the fall was *Francis Bacon* which opened Oct. 12 and continued until Jan. 7. The other major exhibition at the museum was *Robert Moskowitz*: 1959-1989 which opened June 21 and closed Sept. 17.

National Museum of American History

Total visits for 1989 were 13 percent lower than the previous year, in line with the 1985-88 average but higher (increase of 5.1 percent) over the 1980-88 period. Among the major shows were *The Ceremonial Court*, a permanent installation that opened April 6; *The Way to Independence: Memories of a Hidatsa Indian Family, 1840-1920* (April 12-Sept. 26) *American Television from the Fair to the Family, 1939-1989* (April 19 through this April); *Sesame Street* (June 20-Oct. 15); and *Men and Women: A History of Costume, Gender and Power* (opened Sept. 20 and continues indefinitely).

National Museum of Natural History

Attendance was lower than 1988, showing a decrease of 13.8 percent and 9.2 percent lower than the 1985-1988 period. However, 1989 was in line with the 1980-88 average (increase of 1.8 percent). Major exhibitions included Inside Active Volcanoes: Kilauea and Mount St. Helens (July 6-Sept. 24); Nomads: Masters of the Eurasian Steppe (Nov. 17 through Feb. 18); The First Egyptians (Dec. 8 and closes in April). The popular Crossroads exhibit that opened in the fall of 1988 continued through April 2.

Renwick Gallery of Art

The dramatic 73.6 percent increase in attendance from 1988 to 1989 can be explained by a single well-publicized exhibition, *Masterworks of Louis Comfort Tiffany*, which opened on Sept. 29 and continues until March 1990. The count of visits went from about 7,600 in September to 57,000 in October, the first full month of the exhibit. The Tiffany exhibit was highlighted in newspapers and

magazines around the country and was featured on CBS-TV's "Sunday" program.

Museum of African Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and the Ripley Center

It should be kept in mind that visit counts at these location reflect totals for their individual entrances and do not take into account visitors walking from one museum to another or to and from the International Gallery. Each museum and the Ripley Center, then, have higher visit counts than are reported by OPS.

National Museum of African Art

Two major exhibits this year were Gold of Africa: Jewelry and Ornaments from Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal, which opened April 5 and ran through Aug. 28 and Icons: Ideals and Power in the Art of Africa, which opened Oct. 25 and continues through this September.

Sackler Gallery

The June 25 opening of *Yani: The Brush of Innocence* coincided with public interest in the turmoil in China. It also was highly publicized in such national outlets as Time magazine and the network news and was accompanied by an extensive local advertising campaign. The result, in terms of visitors, was obvious: an increase from 36,000 in June to 65,000 in July. Higher than normal attendance continued throughout the run of the exhibition which closed on Oct. 22.

Another well-publicized exhibition at the Sackler was *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* which opened April 14 and closed July 9.

Ripley Center

The exhibition in the International Gallery this year was *Caribbean Festival Arts*, which opened June 3 and continued through the year. Attendance was lower than the previous year when the tropical rainforest exhibition was in place.

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION VISITOR COUNT STATISTICS MULTI-YEAR STUDY	JUL	127559 655645	111212 648098	177285 737301	121218 649734	727841 3857134	1073181 5365007	965157 4756479	828181 4176587	11777	19811 123784	12778 83541	12483 76511			95892 292327	51870 165722
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GROVCR2ARX REPORT RAN 01/02/90 COVERING FROM 01/01/86 TO 12/31/89	,	HIRSHHORN 86 YTD TOTALS	87	88	68	NAT. HIST. 86 YTD TOTALS	87	88	89	RENWICK 86 YTD TOTALS	87	88	88	RIPLEY CENT 86 YTD TOTALS	87	₩	68

	TOTALS	1053937	1154567	24670	151414		209871	425322	478706	22723166	27065743	28078154	24242443
4	DEC	53810 1053937	43112 1154567	24670	65120 151414		43713 209871	23903 425322	27070 478706	1111912 22723166	1474826 27065743	1305663 28078154	1092328 24242443
PAGE:	NOV	68333 1000127	65802 1111455	24670	86294 86294		65405 166158	27240	32395 451636	1421124 21611254	1766519 25590917	1599599 26772491	1621461 23150115
	ОСТ	87684 931794	94825 1045653	24670			93658 100753	29081 374179	54378 419241	1542146 20190130	2152649 23824398	1948752 25172892	1700563 21528654
	SEP	76131 844110	70409 950828	24670			7095 7095	27959 345098	41779	1258524 18647984	1766041 21671749	1744230 23224140	1462438 19828091
	AUG	149309 767979	158739 880419	24670				33892 317139	52725 323084	2805918 17389460	3233854 19905708	3473471 21479910	2729693 18365653
STITUTION STATISTIC DY	JUL	124795 618670	180782 721680	24670				38516 283247	64973 270359	2787677 14583542	3566005 1667 1854	3837083 18006439	3345957 15635960
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION VISITOR COUNT STATISTICS MULTI-YEAR STUDY	NOS	111049 493875	116485 540898	24670			,	39893 244731	35963 205386	2405987 11795865	2892146 13105849	2812985 14169356	2557922 12290003
SMITH VISITO MULTI	MAY	94692 382826	116681 424413	24670				43405 204838	43663 169423	2526541 9389878	3087865 10213703	3132298 11356371	2518255 9732081
	APR	112875 288134	135668 307732	24670				55850 161433	50458 125760	2881467 6863337	3357773 7125838	3628945 8224073	2900660 7213826
•	MAR	88733 175259	86849 172064	24670				39783 105583	31368 75302	2095801 3981870	1895549 3768065	2240843 4595128	2250851 4313166
12/31/89	FEB	44928	49417 85215	24670				29676 65800	21421	988841 1886069	1051675 1872516	1252206 2354285	1016492 2062315
GRDVCR2ARX REPORT RAN 01/02/90 COVERING FROM 01/01/86 TO 12/31/89	OAN	41598 41598	35798 35798	24670 24670				36124 36124	22513 22513	897228 897228	820841 820841	1102079	1045823 1045823
		86 TALS	87	88	6	86 ITALS	87	88	68	86	87	88	68
GRDVCR2ARX REPORT RAN COVERING F		S.I. S.YTD TOTALS				SACKLER YTD TOTALS				TOTALS			