

Observatory of Audiences of the Cultural Heritage of Catalonia

Catalan Institute of Cultural Heritage Research

Visitor count model for the museums and heritage centres of Catalonia

V3.0 visitor count 2016

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1. The Observatory of Audiences of the Cultural Heritage of Catalonia

Audiences are one of the main *raison d'être* of museums and heritage centres. They are institutions that open up to society to generate knowledge and stimulate education, while working to ensure the enjoyment of the local people of Catalonia and our visitors.

The Observatory of Audiences of the Cultural Heritage of Catalonia (OPPCC) was conceived to serve museums and other heritage centres in Catalonia, to contribute to improving their understanding of and relationships with their audiences.

Hence, the OPPCC aims to provide the owners of the cultural heritage (local and regional administrations, consortiums, public and private foundations, as well as the bishoprics of Catalonia) with tools and studies, training and information that will add value to the planning, management and evaluation processes of the museums and other heritage centres.

The Observatory of Heritage Audiences aims to provide service on a regular and ongoing basis.

The Observatory of Audiences of the Cultural Heritage of Catalonia is a project of the Catalan Institute of Cultural Heritage Research (ICRPC), an independent institute that receives support from the General Directorate of Archives, Libraries, Museums and Heritage of the Government of Catalonia and the University of Girona.

2. Purpose

The research of the Observatory of Audiences of the Cultural Heritage of Catalonia (OPPCC) has opened our eyes to the many different visitor count methods used here at home, as well as the non-existence of a single universally applied count model. The extensive diversity of the count methods in use makes it impossible to make comparisons or to draw up an aggregate assessment of the data.

This report proposes a new visitor traffic count model for the museums and heritage centres in Catalonia, which aims to standardise the quantification of visitors. This will ultimately enable us to draw comparisons, while serving as a tool for planning and management.

We understand that the museums and heritage centres serve diverse purposes with different services and that visitor volume is not always the essential or main indicator of those functions. The publication of visitor rankings in the mass media generates a certain degree of unease among professionals, as those rankings tend to ignore the complexity of the other functions and objectives of heritage centres, which are just as important for museums: conservation, research, exhibition, education, etc. All the same, the visitor volume is not a secondary datum, as it enables us to measure the evolution of the social use of the heritage. The number of visitors is therefore highly useful for the assessment of certain functional purposes of heritage, as well as for the draft of indicators and for the management of resources.

The project presented here is based on a model that was agreed to among the different sector agents in order to standardise and regulate visitor data and give them greater strength and credibility.

In this sense, it must be noted that the model presented here is based on the valuable work of the System of Indicators of the Barcelona Institute of Culture (known by its acronym in Catalan, SICUB), which has more than seven years of experience compiling data from the cultural centres of the city of Barcelona. Based on the concepts and terms used by the SICUB, the model proposed by the OPPCC aims to extend some of the terms, in order to address the diverse situations of the Catalan heritage centres when it comes to managing their visitors.

Finally, the Audience Observatory project aims to return to the museums and heritage centres useful information for their management and for the understanding of the sector. Hence, one of the features of the system is the submission of indicators that apply to each individual centre, as described in Section 5.

3. Scope of the model

This model addresses Catalonia's entire cultural heritage, taking in museums, collections, monuments, archaeological sites and interpretation centres. In any case, the heritage centre must have a timetable that is open to the public and a visitor access point that enables the visitors to be counted.

The count model aims to cover the following numbers of elements:

- 114 registered museums and 117 extensions
- 380 collections open to the public and 18 extensions
- 95 paleontological and archaeological sites and monuments
- 116 cultural heritage interpretation centres

4. Objectives

The proposed model is based on a uniform design for the counting of the visitors of museums and heritage centres. The model must respond to a number of very specifically defined objectives, with a previous statement of exactly what is to be assessed. Knowing these objectives allows for the precision and standardisation of the variables, therefore providing information that can be aggregated and compared.

Specifically, the model aims to respond to the following objectives:

- ✓ To offer a uniform system that can therefore be standardised, that affords a precise monitoring of the evolution of the social use of the cultural heritage.
- ✓ To count the people who access the centres, as well as their uses of the different activities offered.
- ✓ To assess the work of each centre in supporting education, measuring their impact on the school group audiences.
- ✓ To measure the impact of free admission to the heritage.
- ✓ To evaluate the efficiency of the different types of organised activities.

To ensure its uniformity, the count model is based on the following specific attributes:

- Shared glossary: A dictionary of the terms that define the variables to be measured by the centres, to ensure the uniformity of all the data collected.

- Variables with objective definitions: The variables to be measured must be precisely and objectively defined, with no ambiguities that might lead to different interpretations and therefore invalidate the sought uniformity of the system.
- Simplicity and specificity: The volume and diversity of the data must be just enough to provide the sought knowledge and to facilitate the questionnaire completion process for the centres and the follow-up of the receipt of the data.
- Versatility and suitability: The system must be versatile enough to adapt to the particularities of each centre, regardless of their ownership and management models, yet without impairing the uniformity of the data.
- Applicable with and without ticketing: The system must bear in mind that not all the centres have ticketing systems. Hence, the system must be applicable to all cases, regardless of whether the centre has automated data registry or whether such information is gathered manually.
- Progressive implementation: The implementation of a new visitor traffic count model will imply changes that in some cases may affect the centre's organisational culture itself. For this reason, the system will take into account the different levels of development of the relationships between the centres and their visitors, providing for different implementation phases.

5. Glossary

As can be seen in the international experience and the quantification difficulties in Catalonia, in order to compare the visitor traffic data produced by a diverse group of museums and centres, it is necessary to establish a shared glossary of the terms to be measured.

To ensure the sought uniformity of the model, it is essential that all the agents involved quantify the same variables and limit their odd one-off interpretations. Below is the glossary that provides definitions of the main concepts and describes how the data of each category are recorded.

The system is based on two key concepts: the visitor and the use.

CONCEPT		REGISTRY INFORMATION
KEY CONCEPTS		
VISITOR	<p>A physical person who accesses the premises of the museum to use its services, whether such be exhibitions (both those of the site's own production and those produced by others), its own activities (organised by the museum) and/or the museum services (library / periodicals library, museum archive, collections /reserve, consultation, etc).</p> <p>People who access activities not organised by the museum will be counted as "Visitors to the building" and assigned to the category "Uses of outside activities".</p>	<p>Visitors are recorded through the ticketing system at the ticket office, regardless of the admission purchase channel.</p> <p>In the case of online and advance admission purchases that are not associated with the museum programme, these visitors will have to be entered in the registry manually.</p>
USE	<p>Each of the uses carried out by the visitors while at the museum, whether the person views the exhibits, attends cultural activities or uses a museum service. During his/her visit, each visitor may make one or more uses of the museum.</p>	<p>Each visitor is counted only once, regardless of the number of uses that he/she makes of the museum supply.</p>

Days open	<p>The total number of days that the centre is open during the year of reference. This number includes normal open days, as well as the days that the centre is open by special arrangement or by demand.</p>
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LOCATION		
Central location	<p>The centre in which the main institution is located.</p>	<p>The headquarters will record the visitors by type of admission fee at the extensions only in the case that such extensions do not have ticket offices of their own.</p>
Extension	<p>A place in which museum functions are carried out. Such place is managed by the staff of the main headquarters, yet with a different location. The number of visitors is monitored by either the permanent staff or by the staff accompanying the visitors in keeping with demand. This includes both the museum extensions and the other headquarters.</p>	<p>The extensions will individually count the visitors that come through their ticket offices (if such exist), the visitors of the building and the visitors of events and all the uses made of their space, regardless of where the admission ticket is purchased.</p>
Outside of the museum	<p>A place outside of the centre. This can be a public square, an educational centre, etc.</p>	
Virtual space	<p>The museum's interactive environment on the Internet: website, social media...</p>	

Visitors by type of admission A physical person who accesses the premises of the museum to make use its supply, whether such be exhibitions (both those of the site's own production and those produced by others), and /or its own activities (organised by the museum)		
In the case that the person makes more than one use with different admission prices, this person will only be counted in the most costly admission payment category.		
	CONCEPT	REGISTRY INFORMATION
General Individual	Access to the centre by paying the general admission fee with no discounts or reductions.	
Discounted individual	Access to the centre by paying a discounted admission fee.	This also includes promotional offers (i.e. 2 for 1 admission), as well as any arrangements that involve the payment of an admission at a discounted price.
Free individual	Access to the centre free of charge because a given trait of the visitor coincides with the offer (i.e. children, unemployed workers). If it is a free-admission museum, the individual visitors will be included in this category.	
Discounted school group	Access to the centre by paying a discounted admission fee for school/ educational groups (including students pursuing baccalaureate studies).	The school group includes students, teachers and those accompanying the group. If the museum has different discounted prices based on the size of the group, all the groups must be included in this section. This section counts both the number of groups that access the centre and the number of individuals who make up each group.
Free school group	Access to the museum free of charge for school groups. If it is a free-admission museum, the visitors arriving as school groups will be included in this category (including students pursuing baccalaureate studies).	The school group includes students, teachers and those accompanying the group. This section counts both the number of groups that access the centre and the number of individuals who make up each group.
Discounted non-school group	Access to the centre by paying a discounted admission fee for groups not associated with schools or educational centres.	If the museum has different discounted prices based on the size of the group, all the groups must be included in this section. This section counts both the number of groups that access the centre and the number of individuals who make up each group.
Free non-school group	Access to the museum free of charge for non-school groups. If it is a free-admission museum, the visitors arriving as non-school groups will be included in this category.	This section counts both the number of groups that access the centre and the number of individuals who make up each group.
General open access	Free access to the centre when the admission fees are not applied, on specifically marked days.	The museum will specify what days are free admission days. In addition to the days that are common to all the

museums (International Museum Day) the specific days of each individual museum will also be considered (for example, the town festival or the monthly or weekly “Open House” days).

Visitors who make use of the museum services: museum archive, library, reserve, etc.	People who access the museum to make use of: library / periodicals library, museum archive, collections /reserve, consultation (on-site), etc.	If in addition to using a given service, the visitor also visits an exhibit, this will be recorded in the museum visitor chart by type of admission, and in the museum services use chart. These are on-site uses.
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	CONCEPT	REGISTRY INFORMATION
Visitors to the building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) People who access the museum premises and do not visit the exhibits or attend the activities of the museum or make use of any museum service (library, reserve, etc.). This includes both those who visit the museum premises for its architectural value without making any other use, as well as those who come to the centre for non-museum purposes (use of the shop, café, toilets...) b) Visitors who attend outside activities, in other words, activities organised by institutions that are not associated with the centre. 	<p>These visitors can only be counted if the museum has an electronic count method of some form (cell, footfall, etc.).</p> <p>These visitors will not be counted in either the "visitors by type of admission fee" or the "general admissions visitors".</p> <p>This category also includes, for example, visitors to the cultural centres during the Girona Flower Festival or during the REC Festival in Igualada.</p>

Visitors of events outside of the museum	<p>People who attend occasional activities organised by the museum within the framework of a celebration, fair, gathering or similar event and which do not involve recorded sign-ups or precise visitor counts.</p> <p>These activities are held outside of the museum and do not form part of its habitual activity.</p>	<p>This count will not include those taking part in guided tours or circuits outside of the museum yet organised by it, which instead will be recorded in the chart corresponding to museum visitors by type of admission, and in the chart that describes the uses of the museum's own activities.</p> <p>Similarly, this count will exclude the visitors to itinerant exhibitions produced by the centre yet held at a different centre.</p> <p>The central museum headquarters and its extensions will count the events that each holds individually.</p>
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USES: Each of the uses carried out by the visitors while at the museum, whether such use involves one or more exhibits, activities or other museum services.		
	CONCEPT	REGISTRY INFORMATION
Uses per exhibition	<p>Total number of visits to the exhibitions of the museum.</p> <p>The basic criteria to distinguish a given exhibition as temporary or permanent are left to the discretion of the museum team. Nevertheless, as an alternative, as a time reference, permanent exhibitions can be considered those that last for a period of more than one year and temporary exhibitions would be those that do not exceed one year in duration.</p>	<p>The model will record both the uses and the number of visits received by the permanent and temporary exhibitions. In the case of the coexistence of more than one exhibition, the person who visits more than one exhibit will be recorded once as a visitor and each of his/her uses, in other words, each exhibition that he/she visits, will also be recorded. The uses will be counted on 31 December of the year of reference.</p>
Uses per permanent exhibition	<p>Total number of visits to the exhibitions considered to be permanent by the management team, and exhibited in closed display halls with controlled access, whether with a differentiated admission or with a manual, mechanical or electronic access control.</p> <p>At archaeological sites and monuments, the archaeological remains themselves or the architectural work itself will be considered permanent exhibitions for the usage count.</p>	<p>The visitors of permanent and temporary exhibitions can only be differentiated if the museum has some sort of specific count system for each exhibition space. Otherwise, a figure can be provided as an estimate or by means of whatever method the centre uses.</p>
Uses per temporary exhibition	<p>An exhibition so considered and exhibited in a closed display hall with controlled access, whether with a differentiated admission or with a manual, mechanical or electronic access control.</p> <p>These uses will not include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Displays: Exhibitions located in an area of passage where there is no control of access. - Itinerant exhibitions promoted by the centre: exhibitions organised by the centre and which circulate to other centres in the region. 	<p>Displays: The model will not count the people who circulate through non-segregated areas where exhibits are shown and which do not allow for a specific recording of visitors.</p> <p>Itinerant exhibitions promoted by the centre: the visitors will be counted as corresponding to the centre where the exhibit is actually displayed; not by the centre that promotes the exhibit.</p>

	CONCEPT	REGISTRY INFORMATION
Uses of the centre's own activities	Activities that make up the centre's cultural and educational supply and which are organised by the museum's own team.	The number of uses takes in the sum of all the activities organised by the centre and in which the visitors take part. Hence, a person who is registered as a visitor can be registered with more than one use, taking into account all the activities in which that person takes part. The uses will be counted in the place in which they are effectively made, whether at the central headquarters of the museum or at a given extension, regardless of where the admission ticket is purchased.
Activities for school groups	Activities targeting educational centres. Uses by school centres, uses by children or youths not associated with school centres will be included in uses of activities for families or for the general public.	If there is no specific admission fee, these activities will be considered as though they were for the general public.
Activities for specialised audiences	Congresses, conferences, etc. These include the activities that target researchers, university students, etc.	If there is no specific admission fee, these activities will be considered as though they were for the general public.
Activities for families	Activities for families.	In order to be counted as a family, the group must include children under age 14 (non-school groups), regardless of their relationship with the adults accompanying them. If there is no specific admission fee, these activities will be considered as though they were for the general public.
Activities for the general public	Activities conceived for the general public.	These also include children's activities that are not associated with school groups or family programmes (i.e. Christmas or summer workshops).
Uses of outside activities	Activities promoted by other organisations and which are held on the premises of the museum, whether by means of loan or rental.	Number of people who attend the activities promoted by other organisations and held at the museum facilities, whether by means of a loan or rental of the space. The people who take part in the outside activities are recorded as visitors to the building. For example, in the case of people attending a medical conference at the museum and who also visit a permanent exhibition, then the way they are registered would have to be modified: as visitors in keeping with the admission (rather than visitors to the building) and uses of exhibitions in addition to uses of outside activities.
Loan	Use of the facilities free of charge by an institution or organisation other than the one that manages and directs the museum.	This also includes uses by other departments of the administration that owns or runs the museum (i.e. if it is a municipal museum, a conference organised by the Department of the Environment)

Rental	Paid use of the facilities by an institution or organisation other than the one that manages and directs the museum.	
Uses of museum services	Other offers related with the specific functions of the centre: library / periodicals library, museum archive, collections /reserve, consultation (on-site), etc.	The total number is the total sum of the uses of the services related with the specific functions of the centre (on-site uses). This does not include complementary uses, such as uses of the café or the shop.

Virtual space		
	CONCEPT	REGISTRY INFORMATION
Centre website	<p>Sessions: The number of browsing sessions or “visits” at the website.</p> <p>Pages viewed: The total number of viewed pages within the website.</p> <p>Average time per session: The average time spent at the website during each session.</p> <p>Bounce percentage: The percentage of users that have entered the website and left it without going beyond the first page.</p> <p>Pages per session: The average number of pages of the website browsed by the users during each session.</p>	<p>This model will count the number of visitors indicated by <i>Google Analytics</i>, excluding bots, trackers and other unreal visitors.</p> <p>This will be counted on 31 December of the year of reference.</p>
Social media followers	Number of followers in each of the social media networks in which the museum takes part.	This will be counted on 31 December of the year of reference.

A few examples:

Visitors to exhibitions who also take part in activities:

Example 1: A person visits the permanent exhibition and a temporary exhibition.

The model will register: 1 visitor (in keeping with the corresponding admission price) + 1 permanent exhibition use + 1 temporary exhibition use.

Example 2: A person visits the permanent exhibition and takes part in an activity.

The model will register: 1 visitor (in keeping with the corresponding admission price) + 1 permanent exhibition use + 1 use of the centre's own activity (in keeping with the visitor type).

Example 3: A person takes a guided tour through the permanent exhibition.

The model will register: 1 visitor (in keeping with the corresponding admission price) + 1 permanent exhibition use + 1 use of the centre's own activity (in keeping with the visitor type).

Example 4: A person goes on an outing or takes a guided tour outside of the museum –with the corresponding sign-up or count -.

The model will register: 1 visitor (in keeping with the corresponding admission price) + 1 use of the centre's own activity (in keeping with the visitor type).

Example 5: A person visits the permanent exhibition on museum night or during an open house schedule.

The model will register: 1 general open access visitor + 1 permanent exhibition use.

Visitors at events outside of the museum:

Example 6: A fair or festival outside of the museum.

The model will register: Visitors at events outside of the museum (with no added use).

Visitors per museum services:

Example 7: A person visits the archive or the library.

The model will register: 1 visitor who makes use of museum services + 1 use per museum service specifically used.

Visitors to the building and visitors to outside activities (loaned or rented spaces):

Example 8: A person comes to the museum to see a conference held in the conference hall (lent to the town council) and organised by the town council.

The model will register: 1 visitor to the building + 1 use of an outside activity (in keeping with the lending or rental of the space)

Example 9: A person enters the museum building but does not go through the ticket office to make use of the exhibits, the activities or the museum services.

The model will register: 1 visitor to the building (with no added use).

Visitors to events outside of the museum:

Example 10: A fair or festival outside of the museum with approximately 240 people.

The model will register: visitors to events outside of the museum (with no added use).

6. Return of data

One of the main advantages of the implementation of this model is the opportunity for the museums and heritage centres to gain access to the data on their centres and the whole of Catalonia's heritage. This is a valuable source of information for the management and assessment of the centre.

The current media practice of ranking the numbers of museum visitors often entails the publication of simple figures that do not provide more than a competitive approach, without bearing in mind the many other functions of museums and heritage centres.

The OPPCC proposes not publishing the individual data on visitors for either the mass media or the museums. Rather, the idea is to provide a statistical approach. Based on the comparative international research carried out by the Observatory, the proposed model is similar to that used by the Observatory of Culture and Communications of the Statistics Institute of Quebec.

The OPPCC will not publish the numbers of visitors of each museum in an individualised manner, but rather proposes presenting the visitor figures in keeping with four dimensions:

- Regional area: Alt Pirineu i Aran, Barcelona, Camp de Tarragona, Centrals Counties, Counties of Girona, Penedès, Western Catalonia, the rest of the Metropolitan Area, and Terres de l'Ebre.
- Visitor count: Up to 10,000 visitors; from 10,001 to 25,000; from 25,001 to 50,000; from 50,001 to 100,000; from 100,001 to 250,000 visitors; and more than 250,000 visitors.
- Total of the museums by theme: art, science, history, archaeology, multi-disciplinary, etc.
- Ownership: public and private.

The OPPCC will send each museum the data and indicators on its own activity as well as those of three dimensions (total, regional, theme), in order to allow the museum to compare itself with other museums in the area and with the overall scenario of the heritage centres in Catalonia.

Three types of indicators will be drawn up:

- Descriptive indicators: the variables are presented in absolute numbers or in percentages according to the themes of the museums and the regional areas.

- **Assessment indicators:** The proportional variables that provide information of use in assessing the achievement of the objectives of the centre. Among others, these proportional variables include: the daily average of visitors, the use-visitor ratio, the proportion of the visits by school groups, the percentage of people who have free admission, etc.
- **Changes through time:** This enables the museum to monitor the changes in visitor traffic through time. The aim of the OPPCC is to present information and indicators on a quarterly basis as of 2017.