

## **Five Key Types of Museum Visitors** **Based on John Falk's book *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience***

Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

*What is meant by identity? And why is it important according to Falk?*

- For him, "(m)ost leisure experiences are initiated not by a desire to see or do something specific, but...as a desire to fulfill one of many highly need-specific, identity-related motivations."
- "If that individual's identity-related motivations align with his or her perceptions of what a museum is like, then he or she will decide that a museum might be a good venue for a leisure experience."
- Therefore museums should "understand the nature of the different identity-related needs the public perceives [the museum] afford[s] and then, help to distinguish for the public how [the museum] best support[s] these needs."
- Visitors can have more than one identity.

**Explorers:** They say they visit because they are curious, or have a general interest in discovering more about the topic or subject matter of the institution. They describe themselves as curious people who enjoy learning new things.

**Facilitators:** They visit in order to satisfy the needs and desires of someone they care about rather than just themselves. Two types: **Facilitating Parents** and **Facilitating Socializers**. They want their companion to be satisfied.

**Experience Seekers:** Often tourists. Typically motivated to "collect" an experience, want to feel like they've "been there, done that." Main goal: see the destination, building, and what's iconic or important on display. Most of them like to attend with others.

*NOTE: "Most museums do not attract large numbers of pure Experience seeker-motivated visitors; most are hybrids such as Experience Seeking Facilitators or Experience Seeking Explorers."*

**Professional/Hobbyists:** Smallest category of visitors. They come "to use the museum setting as a vehicle for achieving one narrow, personally-important task." Often don't come in a group.

**Rechargers:** "Although comprising a modest percentage of visitors at most museums, individuals with a Recharger motivation represent a discrete and important visitor population. These are individuals who visit in order to reflect, rejuvenate, or generally just bask in the wonder of the place." Have awe or reverence for the subject matter or setting. See museums as a place to avoid "noisiness, clutter, and ugliness of the outside world", for rest and relief. (Rechargers were originally named Spiritual Pilgrims.)

From: Falk, John. *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009.