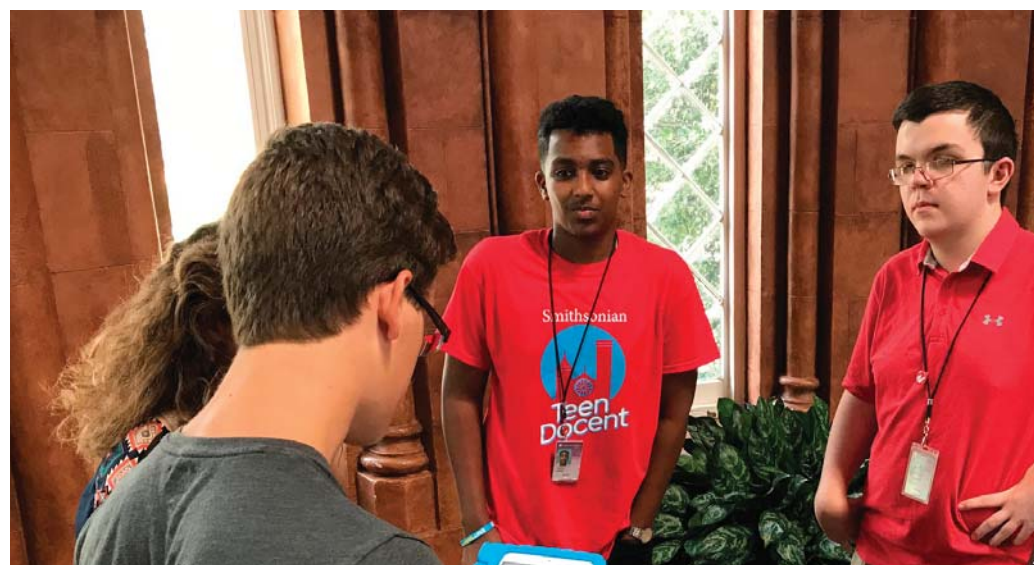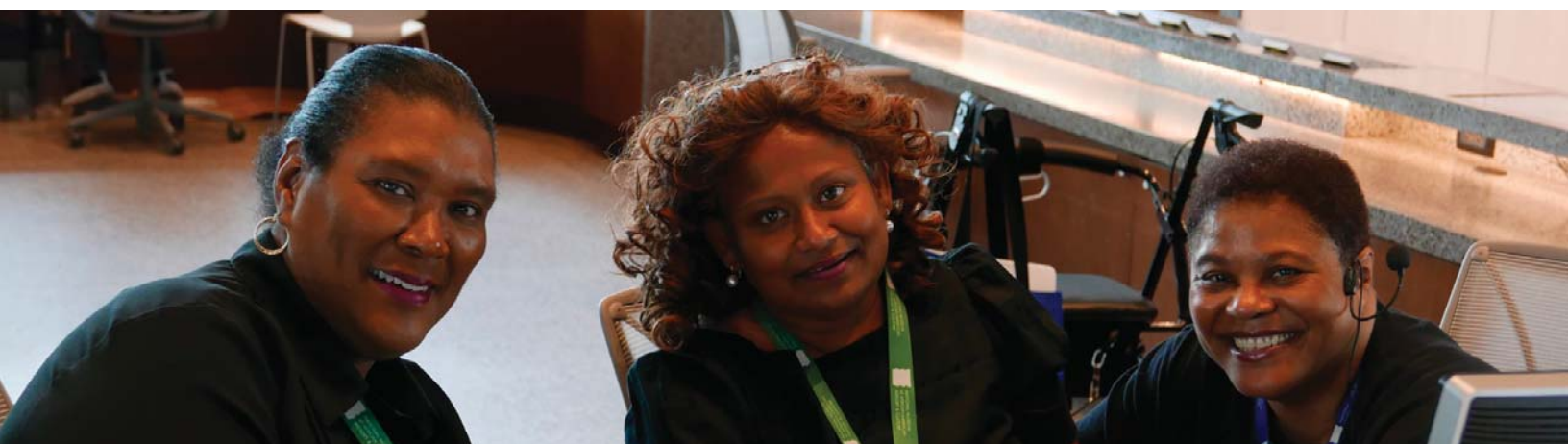# Strength of the Smithsonian

Results from the Smithsonian Volunteer Survey

May 2017

Smithsonian Institution
Office of Policy and Analysis

Wood, Fletcher | Historic Images of the Smithsonian | Featured in TORCH, January 1978

Fletcher Wood, a volunteer docent for the National Museum of Natural History, explains a display to visitors.

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Acknowledgments

The Office of Visitor Services (OVS) plays a critical role in the experience of visitors to the Smithsonian. It provides essential information for planning a trip and navigating the Smithsonian once here. It manages some 6,000 volunteers who directly serve visitors, responding to telephone queries and working at the information desks at the Smithsonian Castle and museum information desks. The public-facing side of the Smithsonian would be greatly diminished without the work of OVS.

In 2016 the Director of OVS, Sherri Wheeler, decided to step back and assess how it was doing and where it could improve. In the process it invited museum directors and staff, OVS staff, and thousands of volunteers to share their perspectives about what worked, what could be improved and how, and what they would like from OVS in the future. OVS contracted with the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) to carry out a comprehensive organizational and volunteer study. It was a great privilege to be part of this endeavor.

Many people deserve credit for carrying out this complex study. At the top of the list is Sherri, who was always responsive to the OP&A team, thoughtful in answering our questions, and willing to be of help however she could. I appreciate both the willingness of the OVS staff to be interviewed, and the very useful information and ideas they provided. OP&A contacted thousands of volunteers, and I thank those who took the time to provide their perspective and valuable ideas. Similarly, we got excellent comments and suggestions from a number of museum directors and their staff.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the team of people within OP&A—staff, interns, fellows, and contractors—who did such a superb job carrying out this study. Claire Eckert and Ikuko Uetani had the challenging task of managing a massive data collection and analysis effort and producing a great report with actionable recommendations, and they exceeded expectations once again. They got magnificent help from OP&A's Kelly Richmond, Kathleen Ernst, Zahava Doering, David Karns, Lance Costello, and interns and visiting researchers Faun Rice, Katrina Umstead, Mackenzie Crowley, Xiaochen Gong, Yongying Dong, and Lanzhou Luo.

I am grateful to them all.

Whitney Watriss

Director
Office of Policy and Analysis
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In Fall 2017, the Smithsonian Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) changed its name to Smithsonian Organization and Audience Research (SOAR). SOAR will continue to be a central planning, research, and evaluation office of the Smithsonian to help SI Units and the greater museum community achieve their goals.

Executive Summary

Background and methodology. In the fall of 2016, at the request of the Office of Visitor Services (OVS), the Office of Policy & Analysis (OP&A) conducted a Smithsonian-wide survey of volunteers to measure their satisfaction and determine ways to improve their experience.

The online survey received a total of 2,557 eligible responses. The vast majority of respondents had one volunteer role (93%).[1] The balance reported that they had multiple roles (7%). The findings reported here are based on the 2,736 volunteer roles reported by 2,557 respondents.

Findings. The volunteers were affiliated with 37 Smithsonian units.[2] Three in five volunteered at one of the following four large museums and the Transcription Center (TC): National Air and Space Museum (18%), National Museum of Natural History (16%), National Museum of American History (11%), National Museum of African American History and Culture (7%), and TC (7%).[3]

Over three-quarters of respondents were public-facing volunteers, whose roles included the three most often selected: *docent/facilitators or education specialists* (33%), *information desk specialists* (27%), and *public programs/events volunteers* (17%). The other quarter consisted of *behind-the-scenes contributors* (16%) and *digital volunteers* (7%).

Smithsonian volunteers were quite satisfied with their volunteer experiences—four in five respondents gave a *superior* or *excellent* rating (80% *superior* and *excellent* combined). One in five selected the lower three categories (20% *good*, *fair*, and *poor* combined). How satisfied the volunteers were varied based on their roles. *Behind-the-scenes contributors* were the most satisfied, closely followed by *docent/facilitators or education specialists*, and *information desk specialists*. Conversely, *public programs/events volunteers* and *digital volunteers* rated their satisfaction lower.

Almost nine in ten respondents felt valued by the Smithsonian: 89% *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the statement "*as a volunteer, I feel valued by the Smithsonian*." Volunteers who selected *neither agree nor disagree*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree*, were more likely to give a lower overall satisfaction rating of *good*, *fair*, or *poor*.

Overall, volunteers wanted to feel meaningfully involved in the Smithsonian. Factors that impacted volunteer satisfaction positively and negatively, as explained by volunteers in open-ended responses, fell into four main categories: (1) roles and relationships (social and professional), (2) training and enrichment, (3) administration and management, and (4) Smithsonian resources, perks, and environment. High-quality experiences with these factors improved the volunteer experience, while dissatisfied volunteers experienced poor quality versions of the same (little to no training, poor workplace relationships, and so on).

A third of the respondents had suggestions for changes to enhance their volunteer experience. Those who gave lower satisfaction ratings were more likely to have suggestions. From their open-ended comments, it is clear that volunteers care about strengthening relationships, improving timely communication in the workplace, enhancing enrichment opportunities, and refining systems for administration and management such as standardized scheduling.

The majority of volunteers contributed three to twenty hours per month (38% 3-10 hours and 33% 10-20 hours). The number of hours varied by role: *public programs/events volunteers* and *digital volunteers* tended to report fewer hours and *behind-the-scenes contributors* more hours. Overall, the number of hours volunteers committed to was strongly associated with their satisfaction: the more they volunteered per month, the higher their overall satisfaction. It is unclear

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1 *Appendix A includes the definition of five volunteer role categories used in this study.*
2 *Appendix B lists all the units with which respondents were affiliated.*
3 *Although the National Zoological Park (NZP) has the largest volunteer corps across Smithsonian units, the Friends of the National Zoo (FONZ), which manages the majority of volunteer programs at NZP, chose not to participate in the survey. At that time, the FONZ did not use EVANS, the centrally managed Smithsonian volunteer database. A dozen non-FONZ managed volunteers responded to the survey.*

whether providing more volunteer hours increased engagement and led to more satisfaction, or if higher satisfaction led to more hours volunteered (or some combination of both).

The average age was 58, with a median of 64. Over half of the volunteers were in their 60s or 70s. Volunteers in their 70s contributed nineteen hours per month, the most hours. Those in their 60s and 70s contributed 60 percent of the total of Smithsonian volunteer hours. Three in five volunteers said that they had been with the Smithsonian for less than five years (59%). The average years of service was six years and the median was three.

Three in five respondents were women (62%). The distribution of men and women differed by age: in their 20s and 30s women were most prevalent and in their 70s and 80s women were half or fewer. The volunteers were mostly White (76%) followed by one in seven Black or African American (15%).

Just over half of the respondents were retirees, and two in five were employed. Volunteers' demographic distribution varied by role: men's proportion was higher compared to other roles among *docent/facilitators or educators* and *behind-the-scenes contributors*; *public programs/events volunteers* and *digital volunteers* were slightly younger and more likely to be employed than others; and Blacks or African Americans made up higher proportions of *information desk specialists* (21%) and *public programs/events volunteers* (24%) and lower proportions of *behind-the-scenes contributors* (7%) and *docent/facilitators or education specialists* (9%) than in other roles.

The volunteers wanted to be recognized for their service. Most preferred that the appreciation involve enrichment program opportunities and informal thanks by staff. Many also mentioned formal acknowledgement, such as appreciation events or years-of-service pins.

The volunteers said they were especially well supported in four areas: scheduling, training, work instructions, and timely information. By comparison, the results show support was less adequate in two areas: technical support and feedback about their performance. Notably, one-third of respondents didn't agree or were ambivalent that they received adequate feedback.

Volunteers' top motivations were quite altruistic and learning-oriented. The three reasons for volunteering selected as very important most often were: *support a mission I believe in*, *help the public*, and *exposure to different experiences*. The second tier of motivations included *learn about the Smithsonian*, followed by *interact with Smithsonian staff*. Reasons that may be construed as for volunteers' own personal benefit were less important.

Motivation showed interesting patterns by role, age, and sex. *Support a mission I believe in* was consistent across all roles. *Help the public* was more important for the public-facing *information desk specialists* and *docent/facilitators or education specialists* and less important for *behind-the-scenes contributors*. *Exposure to different experiences* was more important for *public programs/events volunteers*. *Information desk specialists* and *public programs/events volunteers* saw *learn about the Smithsonian* as very important, while the non-public-facing volunteers more often identified this motivation as not important. The opportunity to *interact with Smithsonian staff* was more important for *behind-the-scenes contributors* and less important for *digital volunteers*.

Two reasons stood out as more important for women: *exposure to different experiences* and *access to "perks."* The top three reasons, *support a mission I believe in*, *help the public*, and *exposure to different experiences*, topped the list for each age cohort except teens, who found supporting a mission less important than other age groups. Aside from the dip among teens, supporting a mission was consistent across ages, as was *help the public*. *Exposure to different experiences* was more important for younger volunteers and declined in importance for older cohorts. *Learn about the Smithsonian* was less important to teen volunteers and those over 70 than to volunteers between those age groups. *Interact with Smithsonian*

staff was most important for teens and 20 year olds and then saw a fairly steep decline until it stabilized with those in their 40s or older.

Conclusions. Overall, Smithsonian volunteers are satisfied with their volunteer experience and feel valued by the Smithsonian. The results suggest that volunteers are mission-driven and happiest when they feel purposeful, social, appreciated, well-supplied, well-prepared, and consulted. Enhanced opportunities for teambuilding, social events, enrichment, flexible scheduling, and professional development would improve the volunteer experience. Additionally, many volunteers have need of a central informational resource that provide timely updates, event calendars, feedback mechanisms, and information regarding roles, rights, and responsibilities.

Public programs/events volunteers were the least satisfied with their volunteer experience. Their lower satisfaction may be linked to several factors: fewer volunteer opportunities due to inflexible scheduling, unfulfilling assignments, and insufficient training. Also, their reasons to volunteer were slightly different than those of other public-facing volunteers. The Smithsonian can pay more attention to pairing volunteers with projects that best suit their skills and interests, and supervisors would benefit from support and training from OVS regarding how to best manage volunteers.

Smithsonian volunteers are not representative of the US population nor the DC metropolitan area. If OVS prioritizes volunteer diversity, it should lead the Smithsonian in considering whether or not the Institution is inadvertently excluding some people because of the way volunteer programs are marketed and structured. The findings should inform its recruitment strategies.

It is clear that volunteers appreciated the opportunity the survey provided them to give their feedback to OVS and the Smithsonian. Many would like the consultation to continue, with the Smithsonian developing ongoing systems for volunteer input. Over three-quarters of respondents were public-facing volunteers. In that capacity, they are the face of the Smithsonian, with the power to "make or break" visitor experiences. Many public-facing volunteers enjoy helping the public and are willing to give feedback about how to better serve visitors. Efforts to recognize volunteers' value and listen to them should continue; volunteers are part of the team and a great strength of the Smithsonian.

Background

In early 2016, the Office of Visitor Services (OVS) approached the Office of Policy & Analysis (OP&A) and asked it to undertake a study of volunteers' perspectives throughout the Smithsonian. The study's goal was to enable OVS to improve support for volunteers from supervisors, museums, and other channels so that they can perform their work effectively and derive more satisfaction from it. Volunteer satisfaction at the Smithsonian and support services, from minor workspace details to rewards from senior management, had not been systematically explored in recent years. The study collected information from a literature review, external interviews with visitor services staff at other organizations, internal interviews and discussion groups with Smithsonian staff engaged with volunteers, and a Smithsonian-wide survey of its volunteers. This report presents the results from the Smithsonian Volunteer Survey.

Methodology

The intent of the Smithsonian Volunteer Survey was to reach out to as many current Smithsonian volunteers as possible to measure volunteer satisfaction and determine ways to improve their experience. OP&A used Qualtrics, an online survey platform, to distribute the survey via email to volunteers' registered email addresses.[4] The data collection took place between October 13 and November 8, 2016.

Design and Questions

OP&A designed the online questionnaire to capture:

a. Volunteers' satisfaction
b. Whether they felt valued by the Smithsonian
c. How they would like to be recognized and appreciated
d. What support and resources they need to perform their responsibilities effectively
e. What changes, if any, they would like to see in their roles and work environment
f. Demographic characteristics and volunteer history (e.g., years of service)

OP&A first asked respondents to identify the volunteer role(s) they currently engaged in at the Smithsonian.[5] The response options were: *information desk specialist, public programs/ events volunteer, behind-the-scenes contributor, docent/ facilitator or education specialist, digital volunteer (Transcription Center), other,*[6] and *I am not currently a volunteer.* Respondents were required to select one or more to proceed. (See Appendix A for the role definitions used in this study.)

One in twelve on-site volunteer respondents indicated that they were not currently volunteers (8%). OP&A asked these ineligible respondents only two questions, thanked them, and ended the questionnaire.

The role question allowed respondents to select as many roles as applied. Subsequently, respondents who reported more than two roles selected the role they wanted to talk about first and later answered another set of the questions for a second role. The findings are based on the 2,736 volunteer roles reported by 2,557 respondents.[7] Some questions that were independent of a role were asked only once, e.g., preference as to how volunteers would like to be recognized and the demographic questions.

The number of responses to any given question varied because not all respondents saw every single question as they had different types or number of roles[8] or chose not to answer some questions. (See Appendix C for the questionnaire and Appendix D for the frequencies of responses.)

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4 *A paper version was available for volunteers who had no email addresses and was shared through volunteer supervisors. OP&A added the two responses submitted on paper to the dataset.*

5 *This question about volunteer roles was designed for on-site volunteers. OP&A used a different approach for digital volunteers as described below and documented in the appendices.*

6 *OP&A reviewed the "Other" write-in responses about role. Most referred to behind-the-scenes work, and all but three were recoded into existing categories. In the end, 99.9% fell into the five role categories.*

7 *A comparison between the overall frequencies from 2,557 individuals and those from the 2,736 roles show that they were essentially the same.*

8 *Specifically, in the case of digital volunteers, they did not get some questions, and some response options were modified because of the very different structure of their volunteer environment.*

Distribution and Responses

All active Smithsonian volunteers were eligible to participate in the survey.[9] Because the on-site volunteers and digital volunteers are recruited, trained, and supported differently, OP&A first collaborated with OVS and unit visitor services staff to develop a survey instrument for on-site volunteers. Then it worked with the Transcription Center (TC) staff to tailor the survey for digital volunteers. The two surveys were distributed differently.[10] A total of 2,772 volunteers responded to the survey. Of them, 215 indicated in the first screening question that they were not active volunteers. Thus, the total number of eligible respondents was 2,557.

BREAKDOWN OF RESPONDENTS[11]

	On-site Form	TC Form	Total
Eligible respondents	2,383	174	2,557
Past volunteers (ineligible)	215	N/A	215
Total (eligible & ineligible)	2,598	174	2,772

Units

The volunteers were affiliated with 37 Smithsonian units in total. Three in five were with four large museums or the Transcription Center: National Air and Space Museum (NASM) (18%), National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) (16%), National Museum of American History (NMAH) (11%), National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) (7%), and TC (7%)[12]. One in five was with five smaller units: Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH), Donald W. Reynolds Center (DWRC), which houses the National Portrait Gallery and Smithsonian American Art Museum, Office of Visitor Services (OVS), Smithsonian Affiliates (SA), and Freer and Sackler Galleries (FSG) (each at 5% or 4%). The rest were affiliated with the remaining 27 units (each 2% or less, shown in aggregate as Other in the chart) and unspecified (5%). (See Appendix B for the complete list of the units.)

UNITS WITH THE MOST RESPONDENTS (IN PERCENT)
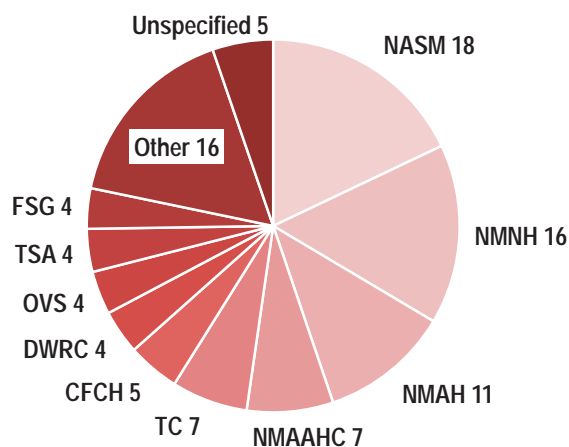
Study Limitations

The Friends of the National Zoo, which manages the majority of the volunteer programs at the National Zoological Park (NZP) and did not use EVANS at the time of the data collection, chose not to participate in the study, although the records show that NZP has the largest number of volunteers across Smithsonian units.[13] The OP&A study team made every effort, assisted by OVS and unit volunteer coordinators and supervisors, to compile a comprehensive list of all other volunteers with the Smithsonian at the time of the study. In the end, it proved impossible to do so, and therefore OP&A cannot be sure if it reached all eligible Smithsonian volunteers, nor determine what, if any, response bias existed. Other issues emerged during the survey distribution (see the data collection notes in Appendix F). Despite these limitations, OP&A believes that the sample of volunteers was large and diverse enough that the information collected provides a very useful picture of the volunteer perspective.

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9 As will be reported in the section on study limitations and data collection notes in Appendix F, OP&A found that it was hardly possible to assemble a comprehensive list of volunteers, current or not, and reach all of them.

10 See Appendix F for further details.

11 For Transcription Center volunteers, those who reported that they were not current volunteers were screened out and not recorded for logistical reasons.

12 In addition to the 174 responses to the TC survey, fifteen digital volunteers responded through the survey form for on-site volunteers, resulting in 189 responses in total.

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13   As of FY2015, NZP reported over 1,800 volunteers, which was roughly the same as the next two units combined (about 1,000 by NMNH and 800 by NASM). Note that some NZP volunteers were registered in EVANS, and 12 such individuals responded to the survey.

Findings

Overall Satisfaction

Volunteers were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with their volunteer experience on a five-point scale of *poor*, *fair*, *good*, *excellent*, and *superior*.[14] Overall, volunteers were quite satisfied—four in five respondents gave a *superior* or *excellent* rating (26% and 53%, respectively). One in five selected the next three (18% *good*, 3% *fair*, and less than 1% *poor*[15]).[16]

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE SATISFACTION (IN PERCENT)

Poor/Fair/Good 20	Excellent 53	Superior 26
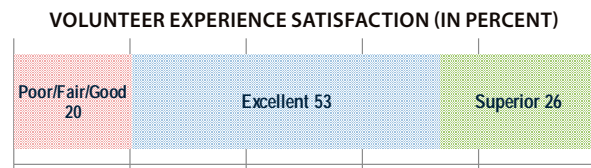
Volunteer Profile

Role

Over three-quarters of respondents were public-facing volunteers, this included the three most often selected roles: *docent/facilitators or education specialists* (33%), *information desk specialists* (27%), and *public programs/ events volunteers* (17%). The other quarter consisted of *behind-the-scenes contributors* (16%) and *digital volunteers* (7%).

The vast majority of respondents had one volunteer role (93%). One in fourteen reported multiple roles (7%), with most of them saying two roles (6% of all respondents), followed by three roles (1%) and four or five (three individuals, who accounted for less than 1%). Those with two or more roles may have performed different roles at the same unit or at separate units.[17]

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14   OP&A has used this five-point scale for many years in studies of visitors to the Smithsonian. In general, visitors who are critical of their experience select one of the lower three categories—poor, fair, or good. Those who are basically satisfied with their visit tend to mark excellent; those who have very positive responses tend to mark superior. In this study, OP&A slightly modified the standard wording of the question after pretesting because some volunteers were uncertain whether they should rate their experience or their performance as a volunteer. OP&A reviewed volunteer responses, including their open-ended explanation about why they chose a rating, and found that the scale worked similarly, i.e., the wording revision appeared not to have impacted the interpretation of the ratings.

15   Six volunteers selected poor.

16   Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

17   The findings are based on the 2,736 volunteer roles reported by 2,557 respondents.

VOLUNTEER ROLES (IN PERCENT)
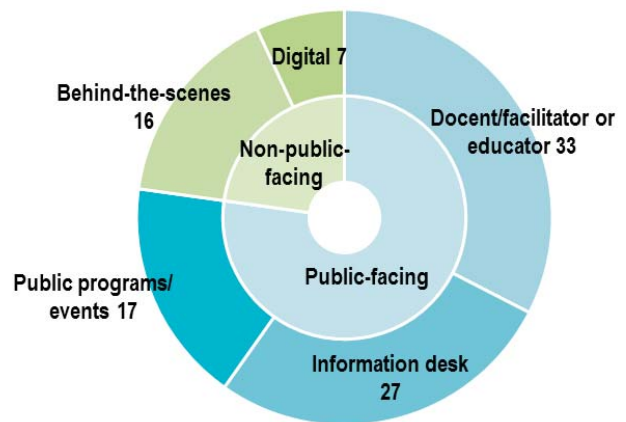
The results show that volunteers' satisfaction varied based on their roles. *Behind-the-scenes contributors* were most satisfied, closely followed by *docent/facilitators or education specialists*, and *information desk specialists*. Conversely, *public programs/events volunteers* and *digital volunteers* rated their satisfaction lower than average. See the chart for the percentages.

VOLUNTEER SATISFACTION BY ROLE (IN PERCENT)

	Poor/Fair/Good	Excellent	Superior
Behind-the-scenes	16	50	34
Docent/facilitator or educator	17	54	29
Information desk	20	53	27
Overall	20	53	26
Public programs/events	25	55	19
Digital/TC	31	55	14
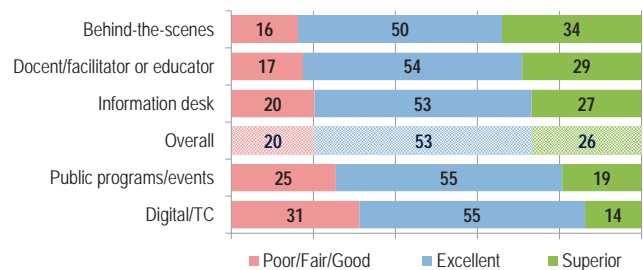
Years of service

Three in five volunteers said they were with the Smithsonian for less than five years: one-quarter for less than one year, and one-third for one to five years (25% and 34%, respectively). The rest, two in five, reported that they had volunteered in their current roles for five or more years: one in six for five to ten years and one in

four for more than ten years (17% and 25%, respectively). Some volunteers had served for an extremely long time: about 100 have been active more than 25 years (4%). The average years of service was six years, and the median was three.

Among on-site volunteers,[18] *information desk specialists* and *public programs/events volunteers* were more likely to be with the Smithsonian less than one year (31% and 32%, respectively) than *behind-the-scenes contributors* and *docent/facilitators or education specialists* (19% and 16%, respectively). *Public programs/events volunteers* were less likely to be with the Smithsonian more than 10 years (20% vs. 26% of other on-site volunteers).

Notably, though one would assume that length of service and volunteer satisfaction are associated, the data did not show any correlation between them.

Hours volunteers contributed

The majority of volunteers contributed three to twenty hours per month (38% 3-10 hours and 33% 10-20

hours). Overall, the average was fifteen hours, and the median was twelve. The number of hours the volunteers reported amounted to nearly half a million hours a year, or an equivalent of 150 full-time employees.[19]

As shown in the table below, the number of hours volunteers contributed varied greatly by role. Notably, but understandably given the nature of the different roles, *public programs/events volunteers* and *digital volunteers* tended to report fewer hours (33% of *program* and 36% of *digital* volunteers contributed 3 hours or less). Conversely, *behind-the-scenes contributors* provided more hours (50% volunteered more than 20 hours).

The number of volunteered hours is a measure to understand volunteers' engagement with their roles. Overall, the number of hours volunteers committed was strongly associated with their satisfaction.[20] The more hours they reported, the higher they rated their overall satisfaction with their volunteer experience—those who reported over 20 hours per month were more likely to give a *superior* rating and less likely to give a

VOLUNTEER HOURS PER MONTH

	Info desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	On-site Overall	Digital	Overall
Up to 3 hours	2%	33%	5%	6%	**9%**	36%	**11%**
3-10 hours	40%	44%	15%	46%	**38%**	37%	**38%**
11-20 hours	47%	16%	31%	34%	**34%**	17%	**33%**
Over 20 hours	11%	7%	50%	15%	**18%**	10%	**18%**
Mean	*14*	*9*	*28*	*14*	***16***	*9*	***15***
Median	*14*	*6*	*20*	*10*	***12***	*5*	***12***
Maximum	*80*	*160*	*140*	*120*	***160***	*60*	***160***

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18   *The Transcription Center launched a beta version in 2013 and opened it to the public in August 2014. Therefore,* digital volunteers *could have served for three years at the most. Roughly two-thirds of* digital volunteers *said they had served one to three years (63%) and the rest said less than one year (37%).*

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19   *Volunteer hours calculated from the 2,736 responses alone totaled to approximately half a million whereas the total volunteer hours reported by more than 6,000 volunteers in FY2015, just a year before, was about the same, half a million hours. This suggests that the volunteer hours are being underreported in the current management system and that volunteers contribute far more hours than the Smithsonian is aware of.*

20   *This correlation was observed in varying degrees across the roles except for* programs/events volunteers.

lower rating (36% *superior* and 11% less than *excellent*); those who reported less than three hours were less likely to give a *superior* rating and more likely to give a lower rating (20% *superior* and 29% less than *excellent*). While the results showed these were linked, it is unclear whether providing more volunteer hours increased engagement and led to more satisfaction or if higher satisfaction led to more hours volunteered (or some combination of both).

Age

Respondents' ages ranged from teen volunteers to those in their 80s. Overall, the average age of responding volunteers was 58, and the median was 64. As shown in the figures below, over half of the volunteers were in their 60s or 70s. This age distribution was shared by *information desk specialists*, *behind-the-scenes contributors*, and *docent/facilitators or educators*. For the volunteers in each of these roles, the proportions in their 60s or 70s was twice or more that of each of the other ten-year age

cohorts. By comparison, *public programs/events volunteers* and *digital volunteers* were younger, with a smaller share of their ranks concentrated in their 60s and 70s (*public programs/events*, mean 53 and median 58; *digital*, mean and median, both 50).

Volunteers in their 70s contributed nineteen hours per month, the most hours. Conversely, those in their 30s through 50s volunteered the fewest hours per month (10 to 13 hours). Others were fairly close to the average of fifteen hours per month. This means that those in their 60s and 70s contributed sixty percent of volunteer hours to the Smithsonian.

Sex

With three in five respondents identifying as female, women outnumbered men in each role. The most parity can be seen in the *behind-the-scenes contributors* and *docent/facilitators or educators* roles, that is to say, men volunteering at the Smithsonian are more likely to have

VOLUNTEERS BY AGE COHORT
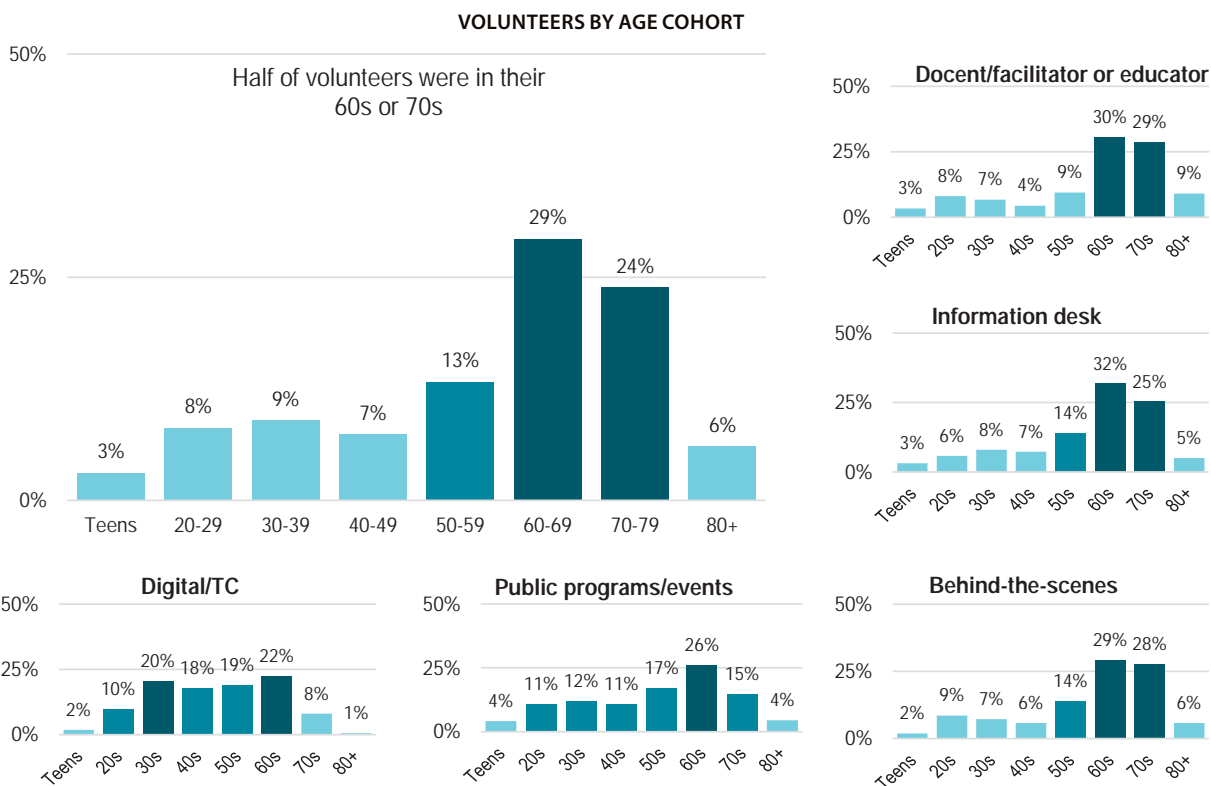
one of those two roles. See the table below for sex by role.

SEX

	Info desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	Digital	**Overall**
Female	68%	72%	55%	53%	75%	**62%**
Male	32%	28%	45%	47%	25%	**37%**

The distribution of men and women differed by age cohort as shown in the figure below. Two-thirds of volunteers in their teens were women, and the proportion of women across the next two age cohorts increased to reach the highest disparity among volunteers in their 30s, when four in five were women. The trend then changed, showing a decline back to about two thirds being women among those in their 40s and 50s; and to just over half volunteers in their 70s and under half in their 80s. Simply put, women were more prevalent among volunteers under 70, men were more prevalent among those 80 and over.

AGE AND SEX (IN PERCENT)

Teens	Female, 64	Male, 36
20-29	72	28
30-39	79	21
40-49	67	33
50-59	67	32
60-69	61	39
70-79	51	49
80 and over	44	56

Residence

Over nine in ten on-site volunteers lived in the DC Metro area[21] (92%). Nearly four in five *digital volunteers* lived outside the DC Metro area: about two in three lived elsewhere in the US (64%) and one in seven in another country (15%).

Race/ethnicity

Three-quarters of the volunteers self-identified as White (76%), and about one in seven as Black or African American (15%). Asian, American Indian or 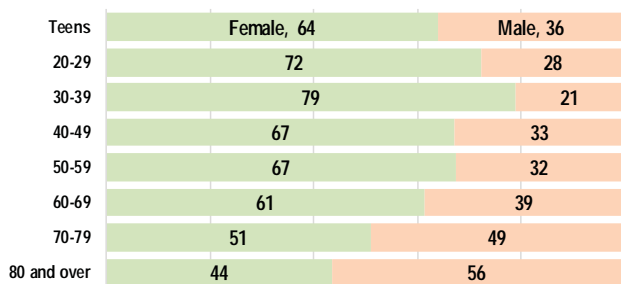Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Other constituted the rest (7%, 2%, 1%, and 3%, respectively).

One in twenty volunteers self-identified as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish (5%).

Race showed associations with volunteer roles. Volunteers identifying as Black or African American made up higher proportions of *information desk specialists* and *public programs/events volunteers* (21% and 24%, respectively) and lower proportions of *behind-the-scenes contributors* and *docent/facilitators or education specialists* (7% and 9%, respectively) than in other roles.[22]

Education

Smithsonian volunteers were highly educated. Among those over age 25, nearly three in five had graduate degrees (42% master's and 16% professional/doctorate degrees), and one-third had a bachelor's degree or had completed some graduate education (21% and 11%, respectively). The rest had completed high school and had some higher education (9%).

Employment status

Just over half of the respondents were retirees (52% retired or semi-retired), and two in five were employed (40%).[23] A small number were students (7%), out of work (5%), or homemakers (3%).

Behind-the-scenes contributors, *docent/facilitators or education specialists*, and *information desk specialists* were more likely to be retirees and less likely to be employed. Conversely, *public programs/events volunteers* and *digital volunteers* were less likely to be retirees and more likely to be employed. See the table below for the percentages.

_____

21   *Based on respondents' self-identification. OP&A used the statistical area defined by the U.S. Census Bureau to determine that two-thirds of respondents lived in the DC Metro area (65%) and one-third lived elsewhere in the US (34%).*

_____

22   **This was coupled with lower proportions of White** information desk specialists *(70%)* and **public programs/events volunteers** *(64%);* and higher proportions of White **Behind-the-scenes contributors** *(84%)* and **docent/facilitators or education specialists** *(84%).*

23   *Including self-employed and worked full or part-time.*

	Info desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent/ educator	On-site Overall	Digital	Overall
Retired/ semi-retired	55%	32%	60%	60%	**53%**	34%	**52%**
Employed	40%	58%	30%	34%	**39%**	54%	**40%**

Women were more likely to be employed (42% vs. 35% of male or other) while men were more likely to be retired (60% vs. 45% of female or other).

Recognition

Valuing volunteers

Overall, almost nine in ten respondents felt valued by the Smithsonian: 45% strongly agreed with the statement *"as a volunteer, I feel valued by the Smithsonian,"* 43% agreed, 8% neither agreed nor disagreed, 1% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed.

Digital volunteers were less likely to strongly agree (34% vs. 46% of on-site volunteers).

I FEEL VALUED BY THE SMITHSONIAN (IN PERCENT)
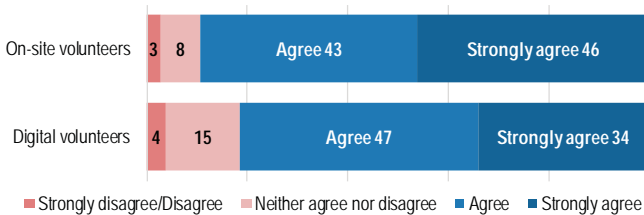
On-site volunteers	3	8	Agree 43	Strongly agree 46
Digital volunteers	4	15	Agree 47	Strongly agree 34

■ Strongly disagree/Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Volunteers who selected *neither agree nor disagree*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree* were more likely to rate their overall satisfaction lower than *excellent* (32% vs. 5% of those who agreed or strongly agreed).

Form of acknowledgement

OP&A asked respondents to select in which of the following three ways they would like to be acknowledged: *formally acknowledged by the Smithsonian*, *formally acknowledged by your unit*, and *informally acknowledged by staff*.

Among on-site volunteers informal thanks received most interest: over three-quarters selected *informal acknowledgement by staff* (78%). Both formal recognition options were also selected by a majority: nearly two in three chose *formal acknowledgement by the Smithsonian* (64%) and roughly three in five marked *formal acknowledgement by their unit* (59%).

Digital volunteers relayed less interest in acknowledgement. They liked the three options in the same order, but were less likely to select each of them (53% *informal acknowledgement*, 49% *formal by Smithsonian*, and 29% *formal by unit*).

PREFERRED WAY TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED, ON-SITE VS. DIGITAL VOLUNTEERS (IN PERCENT)[24]
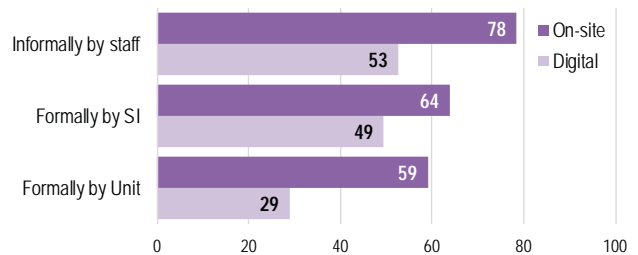
	On-site	Digital
Informally by staff	78	53
Formally by SI	64	49
Formally by Unit	59	29

Among on-site volunteers, *information desk specialists* and *docent/facilitators or education specialists* most often said they wanted to be thanked formally either by the Smithsonian or their unit, whereas *behind-the-scenes contributors* selected those options the least. *Public programs/events volunteers* were in the middle. See the table below for the response distribution.

PREFERRED WAYS TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED ACCORDING TO ROLES, EXCLUDING DIGITAL VOLUNTEERS

	Info desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent/ educator	On-site Overall
Informally by staff	79%	76%	78%	80%	**78%**
Formally by Smithsonian	66%	61%	54%	68%	**64%**
Formally by Unit	62%	56%	52%	62%	**59%**

_____

24 *Respondents could select all that apply; therefore the totals are higher than 100%.*

More than four in five volunteers selected one or more of the listed forms of recognition (85%), i.e., the rest wanted none of them (15%). On-site volunteers were more than twice as likely as digital volunteers to select all of them (45% vs. 21%). Conversely, *digital volunteers* were more than twice as likely as on-site volunteers to say they wanted none of them (31% vs. 13%).

Form of recognition

Volunteers selected their preferred ways of being appreciated from a list of seven options listed below[25] and *other*:[26]

- Appreciation events
- Certificates[27]
- Enrichment programs (e.g., behind-the-scenes tours)
- Informally thanked by staff
- Merit-based awards
- Volunteer of the month program
- Years-of-service pins.

Two ways of recognition rose to the top: about two-thirds or more selected *enrichment programs* and *informally thanked by staff* (74% and 64%, respectively, for *on-site volunteers*; 64% and 70%, respectively, for *digital volunteers*). After that, *on-site volunteers* and *digital volunteers* showed somewhat different preferences.

For on-site volunteers, *appreciation events* closely followed, selected by three in five (60%). Just under half liked *years-of-service pins* (45%). For digital volunteers, the next items were much less often selected: one-third liked *merit-based awards* (35%), followed by *appreciation events* (29%). See the chart below for complete responses.

PREFERRED WAYS TO BE RECOGNIZED/APPRECIATED, ON-SITE VS. DIGITAL VOLUNTEERS (IN PERCENT)
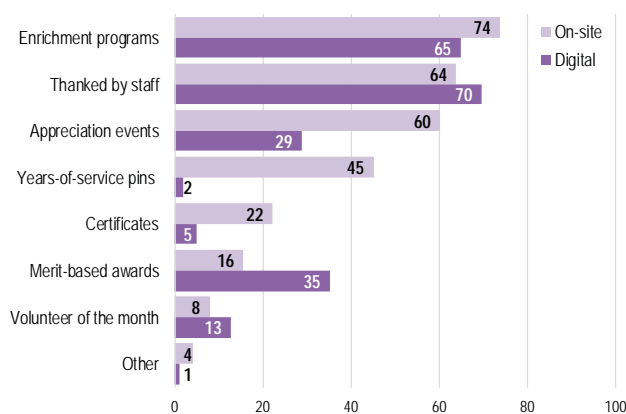
One in twenty respondents suggested other ways of recognition (5%). Their write-in responses can be categorized into the following themes: monetary (discounts or free tickets for programs beyond the perks that already exist); career advancement (e.g., information about paid Smithsonian jobs, referral for employment); merchandise with the Smithsonian logo or name of the museum they serve; feedback from staff, colleagues, and visitors; public recognition (give credit to volunteers in ceremonies, on publications, etc.); and respect/being part of the team (to be valued as staff members). See Appendix E for the analysis of their write-in responses.

Support and Resources

OP&A asked volunteers for their level of agreement on whether they receive adequate support and resources to perform their volunteer responsibilities effectively. They were queried about six areas:

- Adequate training
- Clear work instructions
- Timely information
- Accommodation of my schedule
- Technical support[28]
- Feedback about my performance.[29]

The majority of volunteers agreed to some extent that they were supported in each of the six areas. The highest level of agreement was 95% with regard to *accommodation of my schedule*; three in four *strongly agreed*, and one in five *agreed*. Nine in ten also either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that they received *adequate training* (91%), *clear work instructions* (91%), and *timely information* (90%). For each of these just over half *strongly agreed*.

By comparison, the level of agreement was somewhat lower for *technical support* (80% strongly agree or *agree*) and *feedback about my performance* (69%). One in ten respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* that they received adequate *feedback about my performance* (10%).

The volunteers' thoughts on support and resources showed associations with their roles. Among on-site volunteers:

- *Information desk specialists* were less likely to *strongly agree* with *feedback about my performance* (28% vs. 39% of others).
- *Public programs/events volunteers* were less likely to *strongly agree* with *accommodation of my schedule*

(66% vs. 77% of others) and *adequate training* (51% vs. 60%).

- *Behind-the-scenes contributors* were more likely to *strongly agree* with *accommodation of my schedule* (80% vs. 74% of others), *technical support* (54% vs. 39%) and *feedback about my performance* (51% vs. 32%).
- *Docent/facilitators or education specialists* were more likely to *strongly agree* with *adequate training* (62% vs. 56% of others).
- *Digital volunteers* were more likely to *strongly agree* with *accommodation of schedule* (84% vs. 75% of *on-site volunteers*) and less likely to do so with *adequate training* (17% vs. 58% of *on-site volunteers*), *clear work instructions* (27% vs. 55%), *timely information* (32% vs. 53%), and *technical support* (24% vs. 42%).

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES (IN PERCENT)

	Strongly disagree/Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Accommodation of my schedule	2	3	20	75
Adequate training	4	6	35	56
Clear work instructions	3	6	38	53
Timely information	4	7	38	52
Technical support	6	14	38	42
Feedback about my performance	10	21	34	35

9

IMPORTANT REASONS TO VOLUNTEER (IN PERCENT)

Reason	Not important	Somewhat important	Very Important
Support a mission I believe in	2	19	79
Help the public	3	21	76
Exposure to different experiences	4	25	72
Learn about Smithsonian	10	39	51
Interact with Smithsonian staff	14	46	41
Socialize with other volunteers	21	46	33
Access to "perks"	21	51	29
Heighten self-confidence	42	35	22
Gain skills for career	57	23	20

■ Not important   ■ Somewhat important   ■ Very Important

Motivation

OP&A listed nine reasons and *other* for volunteering[30] and asked how important each was on a scale of *not important*, *somewhat important*, *very important*, and *other*.[31]

- Access to "perks"[32]
- Exposure to different experiences
- Gain skills relevant to my career aspirations
- Heighten my self-confidence
- Help the public
- Interact with Smithsonian staff
- Learn about the Smithsonian
- Socialize with other volunteers
- Support a mission I believe in

Based on their responses, the volunteers were quite altruistic and very learning-oriented. The three reasons most often selected as very important were: *support a mission I believe in*, *help the public*, and *exposure to different experiences*. Respondents also appeared to be interested in the Smithsonian and its inner workings: the top of the second tier of options was *learn about the Smithsonian (as an organization)*, followed by *interact with Smithsonian staff*. Reasons that may be construed as personally beneficial were less important. See the chart for complete responses.

Volunteer motivations showed interesting patterns by role, age, and sex.

Support a mission I believe in was similarly important across all roles and for both sexes; it was relatively consistent across ages, aside from teen volunteers who did not cite it as important as did older volunteers.

Help the public was more important for the public-facing *information desk specialists* (*very important*, 86%) and *docent/facilitators or education specialists* (*very important*, 86%) and less important for *behind-the-scenes contributors* (*not important*, 14%). *Help the public* was consistently cited as important among all age cohorts.

Exposure to different experiences was more important for women (*very important*, 78% vs. 61% of male or other), for *public programs/events volunteers* (*very important*, 83%), and for younger volunteers. It declined in importance for older cohorts.

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30   *The ordering of reasons was randomized on each questionnaire to avoid bias toward options listed near the top.*
31   *OP&A reviewed the **Other** write-in responses and recoded some into existing categories.*
32   *The wording for on-site volunteers was Access to "perks" (e.g., programs, lectures, discounts), whereas digital volunteers saw Access to "perks" (e.g., virtual get-togethers, increased access to behind-the-scenes collections).*

VERY IMPORTANT REASONS TO VOLUNTEER BY AGE

Legend:
- Support Mission
- Help public
- Exposure
- Learn Smithsonian
- Interact with Staff
- Socialize
- Perks
- Self-confidence
- Career Skills

X-axis: Teens, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, 80 and over
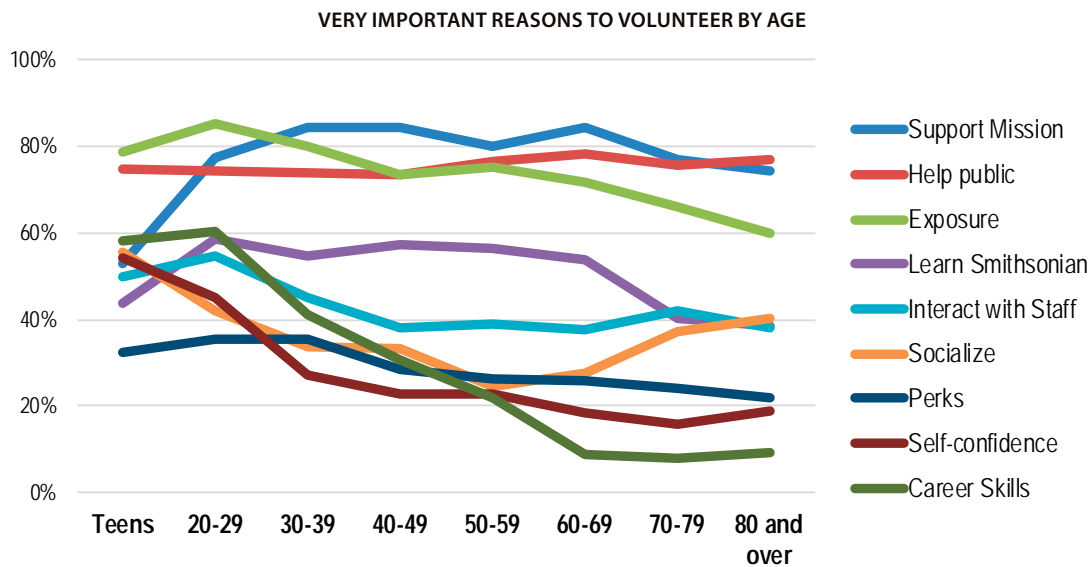
Volunteers' roles had the biggest effect on how important they regarded *learn about the Smithsonian*. *Information desk specialists* and *public programs/events volunteers* saw this as *very important* (63% and 57%, respectively), while *digital volunteers* and *behind-the-scenes contributors* were more likely to identify this motivation as *not important* (20% and 14%). *Learn about the Smithsonian* was also affected by age, with teen volunteers and those 70 and over finding it less important.

The opportunity to *interact with Smithsonian staff* was more important for *behind-the-scenes contributors* (*very important*, 59%) and less important for *digital volunteers* (*not important*, 51%). Across the age cohorts, *interact with Smithsonian staff* was most important for teens and those in their 20s, then saw a fairly steep decline in importance until stabilizing for those in their 40s or older.

Socialize with other volunteers was more important to teens than any other age cohort. The importance saw a steep decline moving from younger to middle-aged cohorts, with those in their 50s the lowest. The proportion then rose for the older cohorts, and socializing grew more important again moving into retirement age. *Socialize with other volunteers* was also dependent on role—a higher proportion of *information desk specialists* saw it as very important (41%) while *digital volunteers* and *behind-the-scenes contributors* were more

likely to describe socializing as *not important* (79% and 30%, respectively).

The importance of *access to "perks"* declined gradually in the case of the older cohorts. By role, it was more important to *public programs/events volunteers* (*very important*, 34%) and less important to *digital volunteers* (*not important*, 59%). Women were more likely to say the *"perks"* were a *very important* reason to volunteer (34% vs. 19% of male or other).

Heighten my self-confidence and *gain skills relevant to my career aspirations* were higher for younger cohorts and decreased rather steeply and steadily for older volunteers. *Heighten my self-confidence* was cited as less important by *digital volunteers* (*not important*, 60%). *Gain skills relevant to my career aspirations* was more important for *behind-the-scenes contributors* (*very important*, 29%) and less important for *information desk specialists* (*not important*, 61%).

One in seven respondents specified other reasons to volunteer (14%), which, understandably, they rated as *very important*. OP&A identified several common reasons, each mentioned by 2-3% of all volunteers, as follows: learning about a subject, general learning, sharing knowledge/skills with visitors and the Smithsonian, socializing with visitors, and general fun/satisfying use of leisure time. See Appendix E for details.

Analysis of the Open-Ended Comments

The survey asked open-ended questions to elicit detailed information about the respondents' volunteer experiences:[33]

1. An explanation of their overall satisfaction rating.
2. What they liked most.
3. Suggestions for improvements.

OP&A analyzed the volunteers' responses to all three questions. The team first reviewed a selection of comments to develop a coding typology.[34] It then coded the responses[35] to identify patterns and trends in the data, which are presented below according to themes. A few categories vary significantly by volunteer role. In these places, a chart identifies which role(s) the feedback was most relevant to; the absence of a chart indicates that the section is equally relevant to all types of volunteers.

The comments included in this summary were lightly edited for anonymity, clarity, and readability.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Satisfaction

What makes a volunteer happy?

Based on the volunteers' comments, the factors that contributed to or detracted from volunteers' overall satisfaction fell into four major categories.

1. *Roles and Relationships*: volunteers wanted to be well-utilized and to make a meaningful contribution, and they desired quality one-on-one interactions with staff, other volunteers, and visitors.

2. *Training and Enrichment*: volunteers performed best when they got adequate training that started at the time of onboarding and continued after that with additional guidance and refresher courses; they also appreciated access to enrichment, learning, personal growth, and skill development opportunities beyond what was required to perform their role.

3. *Administration and Management*: respondents preferred thoughtful and considerate scheduling and time management, prompt and consistent communication, and a smooth onboarding process.

4. *Smithsonian Offerings and Environment*: volunteers enjoyed (and requested) consistent access to resources, amenities, and conveniences, which made volunteering easier, more affordable, and comfortable. Their comments suggested that their enthusiasm for volunteering stemmed from a love for the Smithsonian setting and its museums, research, history, mission, and collections.

The vast majority of volunteers reported being happy in their roles, but about a third had suggestions for changes to enhance their volunteer experience.[36] Those who gave lower ratings for their volunteer experiences were more likely to have suggestions (48% of those who marked less than *excellent* vs. 27% of others). OP&A organized the responses into the four categories used above.

Roles and Relationships

A major theme across all of the volunteers' written feedback was the desire to feel useful, be a part of the workplace team, and be part of a strong social and professional network.

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33   Respondents saw two to four such questions depending on how they answered preceding questions. Volunteers with multiple volunteer roles were asked about each role separately. Only those few volunteers with multiple roles (7% of all respondents) saw the fourth question at the very end of the survey about additional thoughts about any aspect of their volunteer experience. The questionnaire is included in Appendix C.

34   OP&A identified a few categories that did not contribute to deepening understanding of volunteers' experiences, for example, general positive comments such as "thank you!" "continue what you are doing," and "bring me back again." Those comments are excluded in this summary.

35   In cases where responses were in the thousands, a stratified sample of comments was used.

36   The majority of respondents (69%) did not suggest changes. This was consistent across roles except that *behind-the-scenes volunteers* were even more likely to say they did not have suggestions (81% vs. 66% of others).

Feeling utilized: making a meaningful contribution

The impact of feeling useful

The comments indicated that feeling useful was a key component of a fulfilling volunteer experience, even more so where volunteers could be uniquely useful because of their skills, abilities, and academic or professional background. They wanted to feel that their contributions to the Smithsonian were rewarding and had a purpose. They derived personal satisfaction from helping others and contributing to the Smithsonian's mission. One public-facing volunteer commented that it was satisfying to be an important resource and "feel [you] can help when there is an obvious need."

Some volunteers particularly valued opportunities to apply skills and share expertise, with several retirees noting that volunteering at the Smithsonian allowed them to continue doing what they love in a useful way. One retired scientist commented that "volunteering is a way to share [his] love for science and engineering," as his work "personalizes and enhances" visitors' experiences in the museum. Another public-facing volunteer said that he had a very accomplished career before volunteering, and being at the Smithsonian was his opportunity to apply his talents and to "pay it forward." Public-facing volunteers were not the only ones who wanted to apply their skills to the job and feel like they were doing something worthwhile: *behind-the-scenes volunteers*, who often worked in more solitude with smaller groups of staff members for longer periods of time, also wanted projects that aligned with their skills and interests (bold face added):

> I always enjoy my time volunteering... I feel that **great attention was paid to my specific area of interest and skill level** and I was placed accordingly. **I do feel that my work and time is appreciated and I feel rewarded just being able to contribute**.

> I'm learning amazing things from amazing people. I get informal recognition and respect from my immediate supervisors, and **recognition through**

more challenging assignments. I set a rather high bar in that: as a retiree who once held leadership positions in a successful career, working as a volunteer is an adjustment and carries some potential for some disheartening situations… I want to make a significant contribution while continuing to learn more. **The people with whom I work directly, their willingness to teach and listen and the amazing things they've taught me have given me more than I have been able to give back**.

VOLUNTEERS WHO DISCUSSED FEELING USEFUL AS A POSITIVE COMPONENT OF THEIR EXPERIENCE[37]

Information desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	**On-site overall**
21%	26%	32%	23%	**25%**

The impact of feeling useless

Not all volunteers felt that their time was put to good use. Some respondents in this category reported that their work was "pretty dry and routine" or "not very stimulating." One went so far as to comment, "I feel I could be replaced by a robot." These volunteers derived little satisfaction from their roles and wanted their knowledge, skills, and expertise to be acknowledged by their supervisors and better utilized. Some requested opportunities to do other volunteer activities to break up the monotony:

> On slower days when there are not so many visitors and nothing much to do really at one's designated spot in the shift, I do **feel under-utilized and pointless**. While I understand that this is in line with my scope of work as a volunteer, I wish there was an option to opt-in for assisting with other activities or tasks.

In addition to the problem of too few visitors, there were sometimes too many volunteers. One event volunteer noted:

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37   For each table showing the proportion of experience by role, "on-site overall" is an average of all four categories. Roles are color-coded by frequency as compared with the average (so, for example, a role much higher than average will be a dark green, while a role much lower than average will be white). The percentages represent the proportion of open-ended responses in each role that were coded in each category (e.g., feeling useful, having positive interactions, etc.).

*Sometimes there are so many volunteers that we really have almost nothing to do – not always true, but sometimes. And when that happens **we feel we wasted our time** traveling to and from the event.*

Beyond workforce and scheduling issues, volunteers sometimes felt upset if the work they did for the Smithsonian was not used or taken seriously. Comments from both behind-the-scenes and public-facing volunteers reflect this concern:

*…a project I worked on for years ended up being a waste of time when **SI staff reorganized everything without consulting me**. Since then, I don't feel that the work I did on that project was appreciated.*

I think the program could do a better job in respecting those volunteers who bring professional and academic expertise to their programs.

Interactions with staff and colleagues[38]

Positive professional and social interactions with staff and volunteers

Volunteers placed a premium on professional and social interactions with Smithsonian staff, and some even requested that staff focus on building stronger informal, friendly relationships with them. Satisfied volunteers praised staff for being "kind, intelligent and helpful," and "warm and genuine." For these volunteers, when museum personnel were respectful and called them by name, it contributed to a "pleasant" and "family-like" work environment. As one volunteer put it, staff "know me by name and always take the time to greet me when I am there. Overall it is a very caring and helpful atmosphere."

Good workplace relationships extended beyond warmth and friendship to collegiality and professional respect. Volunteers were thankful for professional feedback and training from their supervisors. Volunteers were also eager to have their performance evaluated more frequently by their peers, staff, and visitors (e.g., peer-

evaluations, anonymous visitor comment cards, and guidance sessions with staff).

One education program volunteer connected her high levels of volunteer satisfaction with the performance of her supervisor, who provided "logical training in all relevant aspects" of her role and supported the volunteers both "technically and personally." Most importantly, this supervisor "listened and helped us learn. We had a steady, consistent point-of-contact within the team. My supervisor needs to be commended on her positive straight forward direction."

Many Smithsonian volunteers also had strong working relationships with their fellow volunteers that often extended to friendship among "like-minded" people with common interests. One volunteer described his fellow volunteers as "smart people who care about art and culture." These volunteers "made many new friends through our shared experiences," and these friendships greatly enhanced their sense of satisfaction.

Some volunteers wanted even more occasions to mix and mingle, expressly stating that they don't have to be expensive because "It's the opportunity to mingle that I'd value most, more than the quality of refreshments."

Another volunteer requested pan-Institutional events:

[Please provide] More volunteer events (they do not have to be elaborate or costly) where we can mix and mingle would be great, especially for those of us at a smaller museum where there are fewer total volunteers.

As well, it's important to note that strong social bonds did more than just impact how much volunteers enjoyed their time at the Smithsonian. They also shaped how volunteers performed. Volunteers relied on one another for encouragement and feedback; some volunteers even mentored and trained one another and were a consistent source of guidance, especially when the appointed volunteer coordinator was hands-off.

The importance of having good relationships with both staff and other volunteers is encapsulated in the following statement from an *information desk specialist*:

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38 *Smithsonian staff and colleagues may include paid staff, other volunteers, visiting researchers, contractors, etc.*

*I appreciate how **warm and genuine** everyone is with whom I work. The Smithsonian staff has made me **feel welcomed from the very beginning**, and the other volunteers I've met and worked with are also very friendly. After a few training sessions and staff events that I participated in, **I've felt like we were all part of a big family**. In a way, I believe we are because we all share the same interests in the arts (i.e., history) and the goals for the Smithsonian of serving and educating the public.*

Interactions with visitors

Teaching, sharing knowledge with and helping Smithsonian visitors

Visitor-volunteer interactions were a great source of satisfaction for many Smithsonian volunteers. Respondents described interaction with the public as "gratifying." They were enthusiastic about helping visitors "understand museums" and "enjoy their experience." Public-facing volunteers felt enriched by sharing their expertise and were routinely rewarded with appreciation from diverse visitors. Docents, Welcome Center specialists, and other volunteers felt proud of their ability to share detailed information about topics they love with the visitors. They enjoyed "seeing visitors' eyes light up as they interact with [the] exhibit and ask thoughtful questions," and being a fundamental part of a guest's memorable Smithsonian experience.

*Being part of the Smithsonian Institution is an honor, and **it gives me immense satisfaction to connect with the public** and to try to **inform the visitors** about the diversity and the richness of the information they can get by visiting Smithsonian museums.*

*The work provides **an opportunity to help educate the public** about aviation and spaceflight at a time when a large fraction of the American population is woefully unaware of its importance.*

Socializing with visitors

Respondents also liked meeting new people and having interesting conversations with a wide range of visitors. Most commonly, volunteers responding to this topic reported being excited to "meet people from all over the world," or to interact in ways that did not necessarily involve their teaching role.

VOLUNTEERS WHO DISCUSSED VISITOR INTERACTIONS AS A POSITIVE COMPONENT OF THEIR EXPERIENCE

Information desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	On-site Overall
52%	41%	49%	49%	**48%**

Negative or inadequate professional interactions

Overall, volunteers' comments about their professional and social interactions with others were positive. Some volunteers, however, talked about the impact of a negative work atmosphere. They described feeling exploited, disrespected, and disconnected from staff. Supervisors or colleagues were not listening, giving feedback, or interacting with them in a professional manner: "Staff generally do not acknowledge our presence unless they have tasks for us to perform." And "[the] volunteer coordinator makes little attempt to communicate, and treats volunteers like children." In some instances, respondents wanted their supervisors to mitigate the tension between particular staff members and volunteers, or among the volunteers themselves.

VOLUNTEERS WHO DISCUSSED INTERACTIONS AS A NEGATIVE COMPONENT OF THEIR EXPERIENCE[39]

Information desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	On-site Overall
13%	10%	12%	21%	**14%**

Roles and relationships: improvements

In addition to the volunteers' requests for improvement mentioned in the above sections, it is evident from

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39   *These proportions represent the combined volunteers who mentioned relationships with colleagues and staff in a negative light. Discussions of visitors were overwhelmingly positive and thus are not included here.*

the volunteers' comments that they wanted two-way communication about the volunteer program, their roles and responsibilities, and the Smithsonian in general. They welcomed the ability to fill out suggestion forms and participate in post-event debriefs and regular all-staff meetings. Some wanted the museum to create a board of volunteers with elected representatives. They would like to be consulted about important matters that impact them, such as policy changes. Some volunteers would even like to rate the performance of staff, which could be shared with upper management.

They requested that their input be taken seriously and outcomes acted on. For example, one volunteer requested the results from this survey and an explanation of the changes that will be made because of it:

> *I will be interested to see if you share the results of this survey with us. Please do, and even better, show us that you listen not by thanking us, but by making changes where the survey leads you to, or explaining to us why you can't.*

Training and Enrichment

Many volunteers come to the Smithsonian to pursue lifelong learning. The quality of both formal training and informal enrichment or professional development opportunities can greatly enhance or detract from a volunteer experience.

Formal training

The positive impact of comprehensive training

Many volunteers reported that they had received the training they needed to do their jobs well. Some were extremely pleased with their training, describing it as "comprehensive," "intense," and "excellent." Unfortunately, many did not provide many details about why the training was highly valued. From the comments, key elements were positive interactions with trainers, feedback on performance, and feeling supported and prepared. The respondents who lauded their training tended to be public-facing volunteers. One volunteer

described how adequate training could make a Welcome Center volunteer feel especially confident and well-equipped to accomplish their tasks:

> ***The training that I received (on-line and in person) was just outstanding!*** *Now that I have been "officially" serving on-the-job in the museum, I have totally enjoyed every minute and anticipate that my future volunteer experiences in the museum will continue to be superb, outstanding and fantastic! I look forward in many, many years of service with the Smithsonian in whatever role that I am needed.*

VOLUNTEERS WHO DISCUSSED FORMAL TRAINING AS A POSITIVE COMPONENT OF THEIR EXPERIENCE

Information desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	On-site overall
10%	3%	1%	10%	**7%**

The negative impact of inadequate training

Some respondents felt their training was fragmented, insufficient, unnecessary, or, worse, non-existent. One volunteer wrote that haphazard training, in his experience, led to "inconsistencies amongst volunteers as a whole." For public-facing volunteers, "unhelpful" training left them unprepared for the realities of working with the public. One respondent wrote: "Although it was interesting and fun, it did not efficiently prepare volunteers to be docents." Many volunteers did not receive adequate (or any) orientation to the Smithsonian and their museum. For several volunteers, knowledge about how to do their job was simply passed down informally from a previous volunteer or "self-acquired as a result of self-motivated research." Volunteers who criticized their training tended to be public-facing, but this category was equally important for all public-facing roles.

Opportunities for learning, enrichment, and professional development

Opportunities for life-long learning

Volunteers liked having opportunities for learning, enrichment, and professional development, and

that they were even baked into their positions. They talked enthusiastically about numerous on-the-job opportunities to develop new skills or knowledge: colleagues, curators, the public, and artists were all valued teachers. Volunteers also felt challenged to learn through exposure to Smithsonian artifacts, training, history, facilities, plants and animals, and research. Museums that supported their volunteers by allowing them to pursue independent projects or post their results on an Institutional platform got very positive feedback. Many volunteers voiced their appreciation for having access to experts, being able to immerse themselves in a collection or artistic environment, doing docent research, or being challenged to learn public speaking and leadership skills.

> I love the Smithsonian. It's a great organization. I spend my lunch hour walking through the gardens or looking at an exhibit… It's truly a learning organization, and that's what I love the most about it. **I've learned so much about art, science, history – you name it**.

> I enjoy learning about new and different plants and learning about the design concepts that each person has. I have enjoyed the trips that have been made available for us. Learning is always a good thing for me.

> The interactions I am offered are **valuable learning experiences from curators, staff members, visiting speakers and special programs as well as from guests** who often bring their insights to a tour. In addition to all of these things, I find being part of the docent program affords a positive learning and social experience that I greatly value.

A few volunteers said they learned so much from their roles that they felt inspired to pursue a career in the same field.

VOLUNTEERS WHO DISCUSSED ENRICHMENT AS A POSITIVE COMPONENT OF THEIR EXPERIENCE

Information desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	**On-site Overall**
15%	18%	23%	19%	**19%**

Few opportunities for growth

Given that volunteers looked for learning and/or professional development, a dearth of enrichment opportunities was felt keenly:

> In order for my satisfaction to improve I would like to see more opportunities for professional development.

> It's been ten years. Not much growth, incentive, or opportunity, really.

Notably, many volunteers commented that enrichment events were often scheduled so that weekend volunteers cannot attend. Therefore, while some respondents felt there were not enough opportunities for growth, others simply weren't able to access those that did exist. Still others wished they had more opportunity to switch between roles and tasks to acquire new skills.

The volunteers believed that enrichment would not only incentivize them to stay with the Smithsonian but would also allow them to perform better in their roles. For example, greater programmatic knowledge would allow docents and Welcome Center volunteers to greet visitors with more complete and accurate information. At least one volunteer requested training from curators to help them answer visitor questions.

Training and enrichment: improvements

Volunteers requested a more comprehensive, standardized orientation program for new volunteers. Regarding content, volunteers wanted to know about the Smithsonian's "history, organization, operations, funding, and current issues/trends." They wanted to be informed about volunteer rights, roles, and responsibilities, both their own and the roles of other volunteers. They wanted volunteer manuals which they could consult after the initial training was complete.

Seasoned volunteers requested additional, periodic training that would go beyond their initial orientation, which sometimes was many years ago, and keep them fresh and knowledgeable about content, best practices, and technology, all of which change and evolve:

"[please provide] at least one annual training session [to bring volunteers up to date with what is new at the Smithsonian]." As well, volunteers requested that staff play a more active role in their training and enrichment.

Some volunteers wanted to broaden their exposure to the Smithsonian through cross-training and "job swaps" at other departments and museums where they could do similar or completely different things. Some volunteers were curiosity-driven and wanted to be encouraged to learn about areas of interest whether or not they applied directly to their volunteer roles. For example, one person thought it would be fun and enriching to be "paired with a researcher for a day."

More pragmatically, some volunteers requested opportunities to acquire marketable, career-oriented skills, and they would like the Smithsonian to support their career aspirations (e.g., provide internships opportunities and research positions, career workshops or job fairs, and reward performance with promotions and certificates).

Administration and Management

Numerous comments fell into the large category of Administration and Management, and all noted experiences that were either enhanced or hampered by management or administrative systems. Some found the Smithsonian to be well-organized and smoothly run, with volunteer management systems that talk to each other and are well-coordinated. Others felt that the Smithsonian was heavily bureaucratic and were confused by or uncertain about position descriptions, museum policies, and staff expectations. Some said there was no system in place to support them, and no mechanism to appeal a decision made by a supervisor or staff member.

Time management

Positive experiences: flexibility and accommodation

Volunteers greatly appreciated flexible schedules, the ability to work their volunteer commitments into the rest of their lives, and an attitude of accommodation

from supervisors and managers. A good work pace and shift length also contributed to a positive experience. When given the opportunity to fit the Smithsonian into their existing schedules, volunteers were able to stay committed for a long time:

> *Most importantly, through all my years here, I have been allowed to work at my convenience. After meeting my initial commitment of 3-5 days per week for a year, I had to cut back on hours. I even went overseas for two years and had a position waiting for me when I returned. Now that I have retired, I manage 2-3 days per week when I am not traveling. I am allowed to set my own hours. As long as I can contribute, I want to keep volunteering here.*

Inflexible and restrictive scheduling

Inflexibility in scheduling created stress and frustration. Some volunteers found the demands of their jobs were unrealistic for anyone working full-time outside the Smithsonian. Shifts were too long or could not be adjusted to fit into a time before/after work. The number of required hours was sometimes unachievable. Inflexible standardized shifts and requirements caused problems for many people, e.g., "mandatory identical 4-hour schedules… represent everything that can go wrong within a bureaucracy." Volunteers wanted their supervisors to be more considerate of volunteers' time restrictions as well as their individual abilities and needs, such as advanced age and physical limitations.

> *I feel like the volunteer experience is really geared toward retirees. I work 40+ hour weeks and I'm planning my wedding. **Some months, as much as I want to, I can't make my 8-hour requirement.** I'm constantly afraid that I'm going to get fired as a volunteer, which is frustrating because I've put so much time into learning how to be a good volunteer (and the Smithsonian has put a lot of time and money into making me a good volunteer).*

Volunteers requested that staff take a more personal and considerate approach to scheduling:

*Museum Staff **Coordinators need to know their volunteers well enough to ensure that shift assignments are made smartly and delicately***, *not only to maximize volunteer value but also to improve the museum visitor's experience.*

Comments regarding EVANS

Most respondents did not enjoy interacting with EVANS, which they described as "a terrible piece of software and very difficult to use." They were disheartened that EVANS did not reliably track their hours (and therefore they could not reliably measure their work and/or progress) and that it was difficult to sign up for, cancel, or swap shifts: "[it is] tedious and makes signing up for shifts a chore." Additionally, they complained that the system did not always notify them of cancellations so that they showed up unaware of the canceled shift. They also didn't appreciate that EVANS has limited features:

> *The policy change in standardizing shift times and insisting on EVANS sign-up before a shift indicates to me that **no volunteers were consulted**…The EVANS sign-up has several limiting features from the volunteer perspective. Unlike the previous online sign-up site, volunteers cannot see how many others have signed up for a shift. And the shifts are VERY LONG/exhausting even! I can't imagine how some of the older volunteers can manage that.*

Volunteers had many suggestions for improving the volunteer management software. They include adding features like a message board, an ability to cancel, add, or swap shifts, a record of hours completed year-to-date, and an event and task calendar. For the greatest ease of use, volunteers would like the system to be mobile-friendly or available as an application so they can check in on the go from their phone or tablet. In general, they wanted the software to be fast, reliable, and user-friendly.

Communication

High quality and timely communication

Volunteers valued reliable, clear, and two-way communication, as was previously mentioned in the

Roles and Responsibilities section. They wanted to be "in the know," both about the logistics of their shifts or workspaces, and about things that affected the visitors, such as exhibition openings and closings, special events, and day-to-day changes in the museum. Satisfied volunteers said they "had a steady, consistent point-of-contact," felt well-informed, and were able to get the information they needed. Below is one example of an excellent communication experience:

> *Staff visit the [welcome] desk to **check in and advise about any activities for the day; they keep us informed** through "Building Business" notes when on duty at a desk. **Communication through email updates is helpful** to keep up to date on activity throughout SI. It helps keep us informed to help visitors.*

Inconsistent, poor quality, and slow communication

Some volunteers experienced breakdowns in communication. They said they did not have a point-of-contact and/or access to timely information, which impacted their ability to do their job. Several commented that they were never kept abreast of events in their museum; in one unfortunate case, a volunteer exasperatedly asked, "why aren't we notified about evening events? Visitors always ask, and we look like idiots because we know nothing about them."

Inadequate communication also took the form of inconsistency. For example, one volunteer heard a different set of operating procedures from each staff member on shift. Other volunteers said that when they arrived on the first day, they received no communication at all about new roles, events, and tasks, and got no guidance from their volunteer coordinator as to their responsibilities. In a small number of extreme cases, volunteers felt entirely cut off from Smithsonian staff, for example:

> *I love the museum and some of the staff, but my initial introduction to the museum was very weak. The original coordinator gave me a tour of the museum but **never introduced me to any of the staff**. After my first visit with him, he was **impossible to find or***

get any calls returned... Over time I learned how to maneuver around the museum and any administrative issues. Recently there was a new education/volunteer staff member hired – she works from home on the day I volunteer and is **not reachable by phone or email** at that time. I am about to change museums. I am writing all this not to complain but to urge the Smithsonian to do more to enrich the experience of my replacement.

A lack of staff support tended to most affect volunteers who only worked on weekends or evenings. Some said they did not get the same guidance, training, and support as those at the Smithsonian during regular working hours.

I volunteer on the weekends, and the **support from staff on the weekends is inadequate**. We have implemented various programs over the years to help docents engage the public in the halls – but the staff have limited many of these initiatives to the M-F docents. Equipment like iPads, for example, are locked away all weekend and unavailable to weekend docents.

Volunteers thought this was unacceptable. Volunteers with scheduled shifts requested "clear, unambiguous guidance" and access to staff during their designated volunteer hours, regardless of day or time.

A subset of these respondents said they were not consulted about museum decisions that impacted their performance, such as changes in volunteer roles and requirements. To add proverbial insult to injury, they often had no mechanism for appeal. Volunteers requested that a system for appealing decisions be created.

In addition to the quality of communication, types of communications were also important to volunteers. While some volunteers also thought that the SI email announcements were rarely relevant to volunteers (and would like a newsletter or mail-out specific to their needs and interests), others wanted the choice of in-person interactions instead of email notifications.

Onboarding

A smooth start

Satisfaction was enhanced when recruitment and enrollment ran smoothly and overall were "well organized." Administrative processes, such as the application process or getting a badge, were found to be simple and user-friendly, and it was "an easy process to apply to be a volunteer." One volunteer wrote fondly:

I've been really impressed with how **well organized** the Smithsonian recruitment and onboarding process has been. The **commitment, enthusiasm, and dedication** the Smithsonian staff have for the volunteer program are commendable. The process has been enjoyable, and I feel like I'm a "partner" to the Smithsonian. I hope to be a long-time volunteer at the Smithsonian!

A rough start

Volunteers who encountered administrative problems or issues with management described their dissatisfaction in much more detail than those who thought the systems were functioning well. Many of these respondents were frustrated with long badge and application processes, commenting:

It seemed to take **two or more months** to get a security clearance, ID card, and it involved what seemed to be endless days trying to find the right person to let me into secure areas.

As a newer volunteer, I am still taken aback by the **labyrinthine bureaucracy and glacial pace** of getting set up to volunteer and interact with the SI.

In addition to problems with onboarding, inadequate recruitment strategies impacted the experiences of current volunteers. A small number of comments from those who felt the number of volunteers in their programs was too small for their tasks noted dissatisfaction that "there is not a very aggressive program for recruiting volunteers," and that their unit lacked volunteer volume and/or diversity. Conversely, units or events with indiscriminate recruitment could

end up with too many volunteers with too few tasks, leading to them feeling unfulfilled (as seen in *Roles and Relationships*).

To make the onboarding process less painful and more straightforward, volunteers requested the guidelines and timelines for getting a badge. They reiterated that they would like information about their and other volunteer position descriptions, rights, responsibilities, and perks. Some would like to meet with a counselor who would help them find a volunteer position that would best match their interests and skills. Finally, some volunteers also suggested that the Smithsonian amplify its recruitment strategies to ensure there are always enough volunteers and diversity among the corps.

Administration and management: improvements

In addition to the volunteer suggestions already mentioned in the paragraphs above regarding scheduling, access to staff, EVANS, and onboarding, respondents had suggestions for enhancing information sharing to improve their ability to serve visitors. Volunteers want information about events, changes to programming, and any other pertinent information delivered to them in a timely and accessible fashion, with e-notifications for some and a physical resource binder for others. Some volunteers would like the Smithsonian to invest in new information systems and technology, like online monthly event and task calendars that would serve two roles: keeping the volunteers organized and informed about any changes (i.e., supervisor X is out sick) and keeping them informed about what is happening across the campus so that they can quickly and correctly answer visitor questions (i.e., where is exhibition X). Of course, technology cannot replace human interaction: going forward, volunteers would like a clear staff point-of-contact for every volunteer, and others requested daily check-ins and staff-volunteer meetings, where a variety of topics could be discussed and possible improvements made.

Smithsonian Offerings and Environment

Volunteers saw significant value in what the Smithsonian had to offer beyond the volunteer opportunity, from the cultural capital associated with its name to the concrete benefits it provides. Volunteers commented on resources, amenities, and "perks," as well as the Smithsonian environment and atmosphere, with their sentiments often tied to a feeling of connection to the Smithsonian mission or ethos.

Resources, conveniences, and perks

Adequate resources

Many volunteer roles require resources and amenities, including technical A/V and computer support, printed materials, workspace, and equipment. Respondents felt adequately supplied in this regard. Several also mentioned that they liked having the same perks as staff, such as free or discounted IMAX tickets, access to the libraries, internal lectures and brown bags, previews (such as the pre-opening tour of NMAAHC), special exhibits, and weekend parking. They also appreciated tokens of thanks, such as years of service pins. Their comments were not limited to any particular type of volunteer: whatever their roles, they needed resources, amenities, and thanks.

> *I have a career in marketing/events with a major city, and I found the integrity of the events, the quality of the event supplies, volunteer resources and refreshments thoughtful and the environment outstanding.*

> *I enjoy my time volunteering and appreciate the perks – 20% discount, free admission to other museums, enrichment training.*

> *I've been very satisfied with the benefits I get from the Smithsonian.*

Inadequate resources

More volunteers reported inadequate job-enabling resources than insufficient "perks." However, several respondents did request improved rewards for volunteering, such as bigger Smithsonian discounts, merchandise (including a more consistent distribution

of service pins), clothing like t-shirts and jackets, or calendars or exhibition catalogs. Those respondents who made resource requests experienced difficulties with equipment, often IT-related, or found that they lacked equipment and supplies like amplification aids, maps, or brochures. Some volunteers strongly felt that there should be more multi-lingual materials. Others did not have access to facilities and conveniences such as a volunteer lounge, kitchen, and free or discounted parking, which otherwise was "very expensive." Some volunteers requested reimbursement or vouchers for transportation and food: the cost and time investment involved in commuting to the Smithsonian were significant for many respondents.

In some cases, volunteers had fewer basic amenities than staff, which was a source of frustration. One volunteer wrote:

> …there is a bathroom and kitchen for staff but when we ask to use the facilities we are instructed to go outside (out of the office or in another building.) Getting a cup of coffee in the morning would be nice, especially if I didn't have to go outside to get one and pay for it.

Another volunteer complained that volunteers did not receive discounts to special events even though they subsidized staffing costs:

> I'm tired of hearing about the lack of permanent staff at museums and their expectations of having volunteers picking up the slack, but not providing them with access to special events at a reduced price. The expectation that volunteers should volunteer like servants...

Smithsonian environment

A great place to work

Volunteers described the Smithsonian environment as "magical," "fantastic," and "world class." They loved being surrounded by everything Smithsonian, and they felt great coming to the Smithsonian to volunteer. One wrote, "The Smithsonian feels like my second home." They found the work atmosphere to be pleasant, welcoming, and familiar and were deeply committed to the Institution's

mission and history. For these people, volunteering at the Smithsonian was a source of personal and patriotic pride.

> I feel privileged to be a part of this national treasure. **I am so proud to welcome visitors to the Postal Museum**, especially our foreign guests. Thank you, Smithsonian, for allowing me to be a volunteer for the American people in this small way.

A hectic place to work

Some volunteers had complaints about their museum setting or environment. For example, they found certain museums and exhibitions to be uncomfortably overcrowded and "chaotic." Some were unhappy with how security personnel interacted with visitors and noticed that the security procedures created bottlenecks that aggravated visitors. Respondents also had concerns about the aesthetics and functioning of different visitor amenities (such as the restrooms) and volunteer work spaces (such as the placement and size of their service desks, e.g., some high information desks are equipped with low seating that put volunteers "at an awkwardly low height to interact.")

> It's **frustrating to be the face to the public when facilities are poor** (restrooms especially), and when the only staff who seem to care are the low-level contractors with little ability to make positive changes.

Many respondents wanted to improve Smithsonian resources and settings for visitors through improved wayfinding, crowd control, and signage for specific buildings or exhibitions, for example. Others wanted specific items from collections storage displayed, more frequent public programs, and greater accessibility (such as adding Braille to various places and resources or digitizing collections for those who cannot visit). Other volunteers critiqued the content and quality of existing exhibits.

> I am somewhat disappointed in the collection and choice of exhibits.

> The museum seems to have lost its zest, its vision. We should NEVER have exhibit space that is empty.

Smithsonian offerings and environment: improvements

Overall, volunteers wanted adequate resources to perform their duties well, including materials for visitors like up-to-date maps, brochures, answers to visitors' FAQs, and audio guides (available in English and other languages). Additionally, many requested a museum vest or smock, because some locations do not have uniforms, and public-facing volunteers felt that they needed a more recognizable appearance. Some requests were as simple as "pens and paper" or "computer access," while others included technologies that could enhance education and outreach duties such as tablets, interactives, or video conferencing tools.

Another group of respondent suggestions entailed ensuring that all volunteers have a comfortable and accessible work environment. This included very basic needs, such as adequate "lighting, ventilation, equipment, and furniture" and sufficient places for older volunteers to sit. Some other comments requested spaces reserved for volunteers, such as a lounge or social space. Finally, as alluded to earlier, volunteers requested transportation subsidies, such as Metro pass discounts, or improved shuttle service.

Conclusions

The vast majority of volunteers felt valued by the Smithsonian, and they were happy with their volunteer experiences; they found their work fulfilling, exciting, and full of occasions to help out, socialize, learn, and be enriched. They were very pleased that OVS offered this opportunity to deliver their feedback to OVS and the rest of the Smithsonian. Their willingness to take the time to complete the survey and the thoughtfulness of their comments is indicative of their commitment and their value as observers of the volunteer and visitor experiences. OP&A offers the following conclusions based on the survey results.

Usefulness, impact, and recognition. Above all, volunteers are mission-driven; they want to be useful to an Institution they believe in. Satisfied volunteers

feel utilized and believe their skills and talents are being put to good use; they are deeply involved with the Smithsonian. Volunteer managers need training and support to trust volunteers with important and meaningful tasks and show them how they are making a difference. Informal thanks, social events, and enrichment programs are some of the most effective means for showing volunteers that they are appreciated. Furthermore, events can be managed centrally, as volunteers desire opportunities to interact with colleagues in other units. They need not be prohibitively costly but will enhance volunteer happiness. Satisfied volunteers regard the Smithsonian as a community, and have positive interactions and stimulating conversations with staff and volunteers. Some volunteer supervisors need more support and training for how to interact with volunteers and nurture community.

Performance, learning, and support. Volunteers wish to perform well from the start and improve over time. The Smithsonian can pay more attention to pairing volunteers with projects that best suit their skills and interest. They do best when they receive continuous performance feedback and training, as well as access to personal growth and skill development opportunities beyond what is required to perform their role. Furthermore, happy volunteers are unencumbered by administration and management issues. Volunteers appreciate a smooth onboarding process, and at a bare minimum, they need their schedules to be accommodated. For volunteers to succeed, strong communication is essential; they require prompt, consistent, accurate information from a staff point-of-contact or reliable paper/electronic resource. Additionally, the Smithsonian could make the volunteer experience even better by providing regular access to resources, amenities, technical support, and conveniences, which make volunteering easier, more affordable, and comfortable. Assessing where and when volunteers have significantly fewer amenities than staff will allow units to identify the most important places for improvement.

Proximity to visitors. Over three-quarters of respondents were public-facing volunteers. In that

capacity, they are the face of the Smithsonian, with the power to "make or break" visitor experiences. It is a lost opportunity when those volunteers cannot give feedback to the Smithsonian. Many public-facing volunteers enjoy helping and interacting with the public and are willing to offer valuable feedback about how to better serve visitors.

Volunteer diversity. Volunteer feedback subtly raised an important question: *is the Smithsonian inadvertently excluding potential volunteers because of the way volunteer programs are marketed and structured?* If so, who are they? Smithsonian volunteers tend to be highly educated, older, white females, which is similar to the volunteer demographics at other museums and heritage organizations nationwide, but not the American population nor the DC metropolitan region, according to US census data. The challenge is to continue to attract and support these committed volunteers while broadening the Smithsonian's reach to recruit people with a wider variety of demographic characteristics. OP&A has no way of assessing the needs and priorities of potential volunteers. However, volunteers' comments suggest that there are some policies and procedures that potential volunteers may find difficult to cope with, such as cumbersome onboarding processes, inflexible scheduling, and prohibitive costs (e.g., transportation, childcare, memberships, or cafeteria food). Mitigating these extra hurdles may make Smithsonian volunteer opportunities more attractive for potential volunteers. Survey responses about reasons to volunteer with the Smithsonian should also inform future recruitment strategies for building a more diverse volunteer corps.

Public program/event volunteers. Relative to the other public-facing roles, *public programs/events volunteers* were the least satisfied with their volunteer experience. Their lower satisfaction may be linked to the fact that these volunteers were less likely to be retirees and more likely to be employed. As such, some felt that their schedules were not accommodated, while others felt useless, like there were too many volunteers, too few tasks, and that their time had been wasted. Others thought their training was inadequate. These

volunteers were mission-driven, yet slightly less altruistic than the other groups: they were motivated by more self-referential benefits such as exposure to different experiences, learning about the Smithsonian as an organization, and having access to "perks." Enhancing their volunteer experiences also has implications for building diverse volunteer corps since the role appears to attract volunteers with different ages, ethnicities, and employment statuses than other on-site volunteers.

Overall, the most important lesson from this feedback is to listen to volunteers. They would like to be consulted about issues affecting them, and they have myriad ideas, suggestions, needs, and praises for their colleagues, supervisors, and for the Smithsonian itself. The volunteer survey worked well in understanding volunteer perspectives and yielded valuable information. It is an effective vehicle for the Smithsonian to convey its recognition of and commitment to the volunteers and for volunteers to candidly share their thoughts, and efforts such as this should be continued. It is clear that with adequate support and integration, the Smithsonian's volunteer force constitutes a significant contribution to the Institution's operations, programs, and mission.

Appendices

Appendix A: Definition of Volunteer Roles

Information desk specialist: a volunteer who assists visitors at a Museum Information Desk, Welcome Center, or similar. It includes a Call or Mail Center volunteer (including greeting).[40]

Public programs/events volunteer: a volunteer who contributes to special outreach programs or events, such as evening programs, seasonal or annual festivals, and more. Does not include volunteers who assist with on-going, on-site programs such as education labs.

Behind-the-scenes contributor (e.g., collections/research): a volunteer who supports less public activities in a variety of areas, such as administrative work, archive/collection management (incl. gardens), research, translation services, social media initiatives.

> *Sample of Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer opportunities*[41]
>
> **Administrative:** *general office support (answering phones, filing, data entry)*
>
> **Archival:** *cataloguing; organizing and storing paper materials, photographs, film, audio tapes.*
>
> **Collections Management:** *labeling, sorting, storing artifacts; entering information about the collection into a database.*
>
> **Computer:** *assisting network managers, helping develop Internet applications, scanning and enhancing images, developing CD ROM applications.*
>
> **Conservation:** *creating protective storage containers, cleaning and repairing artifacts.*

> **Curatorial:** *responding to written inquiries from the public, providing research support for staff in a variety of departments.*
>
> **Development:** *researching prospective corporate, individual, and foundation donors.*
>
> **Education:** *scheduling tours, responding to public inquiries, providing administrative assistance to docent and intern programs.*
>
> **Horticulture:** *working in greenhouses, potting, planting, weeding.*
>
> **Libraries:** *shelving; cataloguing; storing books, pamphlets, serials; creating annotated bibliographies; maintaining departmental reprint libraries.*
>
> **Membership:** *answering written inquiries, responding to phone calls, assisting with mailings, developing flyers, maintaining membership databases.*
>
> **Public Affairs:** *preparing press packets, assisting with special events and media relations, clipping newspaper and magazine articles about exhibitions and museums.*
>
> **Translation Services:** *Translating documents, correspondence, and journal articles for Smithsonian staff. Translators generally work at home at their own pace, but occasionally, may be called upon to provide oral interpretation assistance for official visitors during meetings and conferences.*

Docent/facilitator or education specialist: a volunteer who engages with visitors through daily interactive activities, such as sharing stories or leading tours, gallery talks, demonstrations (cart or lab), and hands-on experiences in galleries, centers, or lab spaces. (Including those under ambassador programs at NMAH)

Digital volunteer (Transcription Center): an online volunteer for Smithsonian Transcription Center.

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40   *In this study, Visitor Information Advocates with NMAAHC were considered as Information Desk Specialists, as were Blue Crew volunteers with NASM. Their duties are sometimes broader than welcoming visitors at the visitor information desk near the museum entrance and include guiding visitors in galleries.*

41   *The sample list of behind-the-scenes volunteer opportunities was retrieved from* https://www.si.edu/Volunteer/Behind-the-Scenes-Volunteer *(accessed 11/16/2016).*

Appendix B: Units Responding to the Survey

Unit Acronyms

AAA	Archives of American Art
ACM	Anacostia Community Museum
AP	Accessibility Program
APAP	Asian Pacific American Program
CCRE	Caribbean Coral Reef Ecosystems
CFCH	Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
CHSDM	Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum
DWRC	Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture
FSG	Freer and Sackler Galleries
HMSG	Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
MSC	Museum Support Center
NASM	Air and Space Museum (Mall & Udvar-Hazy Center)
NMAAHC	African American History and Culture Museum
NMAFA	African Art Museum
NMAH	American History Museum
NMAI-DC	American Indian Museum
NMAI-NY	American Indian Museum Heye Center
NMNH	Natural History Museum
NPG	Portrait Gallery
NPM	Postal Museum
NZP	National Zoological Park
OA	Office of Advancement
OVS	Office of Visitor Services
SA	Smithsonian Affiliations
SAAM	American Art Museum
SAAM-RG	Renwick Gallery
SAO	Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory
SCLDA	Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access
SERC	Smithsonian Environmental Research Center
SG	Smithsonian Gardens
SIA	Smithsonian Institution Archives
SIE	Smithsonian Exhibits
SSEC	Smithsonian Science Education Center
SIL	Smithsonian Institution Libraries
SMSFP	Smithsonian Marine Station at Fort Pierce
STRI	Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
TC	Transcription Center
TSA	Smithsonian Associates

Unit Breakdown of Responses[42]

Descending order by frequency

Unit	Number of Responses	Percent
NASM	491	18%
NMNH	427	16%
NMAH	307	11%
NMAAHC	205	7%
TC	189	7%
CFCH	124	5%
DWRC	105	4%
OVS	103	4%
TSA	101	4%
FSG	96	4%
SERC	61	2%
SAAM	51	2%
NPM	46	2%
NPG	43	2%
NMAI-DC	34	1%
SG	29	1%
NMAFA	28	1%
NMAI-NY	24	1%
HMSG	23	1%
SMS	16	1%
SAAM-RG	14	1%
NZP	12	Less than 1%
ACM	11	Less than 1%
STRI	9	Less than 1%
CHSDM	8	Less than 1%
SAO	8	Less than 1%
SIA	7	Less than 1%
SA	6	Less than 1%
SIL	6	Less than 1%
CCRE	5	Less than 1%
AP	3	Less than 1%
OA	2	Less than 1%
AAA	1	Less than 1%
APAP	1	Less than 1%
MSC	1	Less than 1%
SIE	1	Less than 1%
SSEC	1	Less than 1%

Alphabetical order by unit

Unit	Number of Responses	Percent
AAA	1	Less than 1%
ACM	11	Less than 1%
AP	3	Less than 1%
APAP	1	Less than 1%
CCRE	5	Less than 1%
CFCH	124	5%
CHSDM	8	Less than 1%
DWRC	105	4%
FSG	96	4%
HMSG	23	1%
MSC	1	Less than 1%
NASM	491	18%
NMAAHC	205	7%
NMAFA	28	1%
NMAH	307	11%
NMAI-DC	34	1%
NMAI-NY	24	1%
NMNH	427	16%
NPG	43	2%
NPM	46	2%
NZP	12	Less than 1%
OA	2	Less than 1%
OVS	103	4%
SA	6	Less than 1%
SAAM	51	2%
SAAM-RG	14	1%
SAO	8	Less than 1%
SERC	61	2%
SG	29	1%
SIA	7	Less than 1%
SIE	1	Less than 1%
SIL	6	Less than 1%
SMS	16	1%
SSEC	1	Less than 1%
STRI	9	Less than 1%
TC	189	7%
TSA	101	4%

42   One in twenty did not specify their unit affiliations (137 or 5%).

Appendix C: Volunteer Survey 2016 Questionnaire

Questionnaire[43]

On behalf of the Office of Visitor Services (OVS), the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) is collecting your thoughts about your experience volunteering at the Smithsonian. Your answers are confidential. OP&A will report combined data and only non-personally identifiable information to OVS. Your candor is appreciated!

Q1_1 What best describes your current role(s) at the Smithsonian? [Select one or more] Click here for a definition of Role.[44]

- ❏ Information desk specialist
- ❏ Public programs/events volunteer
- ❏ Behind-the-scenes contributor (e.g., collections/research)
- ❏ Docent/facilitator or education specialist
- ❏ Digital volunteer (Transcription Center)
- ❏ Other volunteer
- ❏ I am not currently a volunteer

Display this question if Other volunteer is Selected in Q1_1

Q1_2 Please specify what Other volunteer is.[45]

_____

Q2_1 How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your experience as a volunteer at the Smithsonian?

- ❍ Poor
- ❍ Fair
- ❍ Good
- ❍ Excellent
- ❍ Superior

Q2_2 As a/an [volunteer role]...

How long have you volunteered with the Smithsonian?
_____ Years/ Months/ Weeks/ Days

How many hours do you spend volunteering with the Smithsonian?

_____ per week/ per month/ per year

Display this Question if Digital volunteer (Transcription Center) is Not Selected in Q1_1

Q2_3 What is the primary unit with which you currently volunteer? [Select only one]

- ❍ ACM/ Anacostia Community Museum
- ❍ APAP/ Asian Pacific American Program
- ❍ CFCH/ Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
- ❍ DWRC/ Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture
- ❍ FSG/ Freer and Sackler Galleries
- ❍ HMSG/ Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
- ❍ NASM/ Air and Space Museum (Mall & Udvar-Hazy Center)
- ❍ NMAAHC/ African American History and Culture Museum
- ❍ NMAFA/ African Art Museum
- ❍ NMAH/ American History Museum
- ❍ NMAI-DC/ American Indian Museum
- ❍ NMAI-NY/ American Indian Museum Heye Center
- ❍ NMNH/ Natural History Museum
- ❍ NPG/ Portrait Gallery
- ❍ NPM/ Postal Museum
- ❍ OA/ Office of Advancement
- ❍ OVS/ Castle
- ❍ OVS/Multiple museums, scheduled by Bill Blandy[46]
- ❍ SA/ Smithsonian Affiliations
- ❍ SAAM/ American Art Museum
- ❍ SAAM-RG/ Renwick Gallery
- ❍ SCLDA/ Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access
- ❍ SERC/ Smithsonian Environmental Research Center
- ❍ SG/ Smithsonian Gardens
- ❍ SIL/ Smithsonian Institution Libraries
- ❍ SMSFP/ Smithsonian Marine Station at Fort Pierce
- ❍ STRI/ Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
- ❍ TSA/ Smithsonian Associates
- ❍ Other

---

43   *Questions are numbered here for ease of reference, though they were not on the survey form.*

44   *The definition would be displayed in a separate window. The text is included on the last page of this appendix.*

45   *Question flow diverge after this question based on how many roles respondents select in Q1_1. The questionnaire sequence that immediately follows is for those with one role, which were the vast majority of the responses. For the other two patterns and Transcription Center forms will appear later in this appendix.*

46   *This option was displayed if Information desk specialist is selected in What best describes your current role(s) at the Smithsonian?*

Q2_3_repeat It seems you did not select your unit. Your feedback is very important for the Smithsonian to improve volunteers' experience. Remember that your responses are confidential—
[Repeat Q2_3]

Q2_4 What is the unit?

_____

Q2_5 What are the museums? [Select all that apply]
- ❏ ACM/ Anacostia Community Museum
- ❏ DWRC/ Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture
- ❏ FSG/ Freer and Sackler Galleries
- ❏ HMSG/ Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
- ❏ NMAAHC/ African American History and Culture Museum
- ❏ NMAFA/ African Art Museum
- ❏ NMAH/ American History Museum
- ❏ NMAI-DC/American Indian Museum
- ❏ NMNH/ Natural History Museum
- ❏ NPM/ Postal Museum
- ❏ OVS/ Castle
- ❏ SAAM-RG/ Renwick Gallery
- ❏ Other

Q2_6 How much do you agree with the following statements? To perform my current volunteer responsibilities effectively, I receive(d)...
- ❍ Strongly disagree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Neither agree nor disagree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Strongly agree
- ❍ Not applicable

Adequate training
Clear work instructions
Timely information
Accommodation of my schedule
Technical support (e.g., computer equipment, software, troubleshooting)[47]
Feedback about my performance[48]

Q2_7 As a volunteer, I feel valued by the Smithsonian:
- ❍ Strongly disagree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Neither agree nor disagree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Strongly agree

Q2_8 Below is a list of some reasons people say they volunteer. How important is each of the following to you?
- ❍ Not important
- ❍ Somewhat important
- ❍ Very Important

Help the public
Learn about the Smithsonian
Interact with Smithsonian staff
Socialize with other volunteers
Access to "perks" (e.g., programs, lectures, discounts)[49]
Exposure to different experiences
Support a mission I believe in
Heighten my self-confidence
Gain skills relevant to my career aspirations
Other. Please specify: _____

Q2_8_repeat It seems you did not answer this question. Your feedback is very important for the Smithsonian to improve volunteers' experience!
[Repeat Q10]

---

47 *Different wording was used for* **digital volunteers***: Technical support/troubleshooting.*
48 *Not displayed for* **digital volunteers.**
49 *Different wording for* **digital volunteers***: Access to "perks" (e.g., virtual get togethers, increased access to behind-the-scenes collections)*

Q2_9 As a volunteer, would you like your contribution to be...

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

...formally acknowledged by the Smithsonian?

...formally acknowledged by your Unit?

...informally acknowledged by staff?

Q2_10 Below is a list of ways volunteers are thanked by organizations. Which are your preferred ways? [Select all that apply]

- ❑ Informally thanked by staff
- ❑ Volunteer of the month program
- ❑ Certificates[50]
- ❑ Years-of-service pins[51]
- ❑ Appreciation events
- ❑ Enrichment programs (e.g., behind-the-scenes tours)
- ❑ Merit-based awards
- ❑ Other. Please specify: _____

Q2_11 Earlier on this survey you said you would rate your overall satisfaction "[selected rating in Q2_1]" on the scale of Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent and Superior. Please explain why you rated it so.

_____

_____

Q2_11_repeat It seems you did not answer the previous question. Your feedback is very important for the Smithsonian to improve volunteers' experience! [Repeat Q2_11]

Q2_12 Do you have suggestions for changes to enhance your volunteer experience?

- ◯ No
- ◯ Yes

Q2_13 What are the suggestions?

_____

_____

Q2_13_repeat It seems you did not answer the previous question. Your feedback is very important for the Smithsonian to improve volunteers' experience! [Repeat Q2_13]

We now have demographic questions. Remember: your responses are confidential.

Q3_1 What is your sex?

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Other

Q3_2 What year were you born?

[A list of years to choose from 1916-2007]

Q3_3 Where do you live?

- ◯ DC Metro area. ZIP code: _____
- ◯ Elsewhere in the United States. ZIP code: _____
- ◯ I live in another country (not USA) —please specify: _____

Q3_4 Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

---

50 *Not displayed for* digital volunteers.
51 *Not displayed for* digital volunteers.

Q3_5 Please select one or more races you identify as:

- ❑ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ❑ Asian
- ❑ Black or African American
- ❑ Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
- ❑ White
- ❑ Other. Please specify: _____

Q3_6 What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- ○ Some high school
- ○ High school graduate or equivalent (GED)
- ○ Trade/technical/vocational training
- ○ Associate degree
- ○ Some undergraduate
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Some graduate
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Professional/doctorate degree
- ○ None of the above

Q3_7 Are you currently...? [Select all that apply]

- ❑ Employed for wages / Self-employed
- ❑ Out of work and looking for work
- ❑ Out of work but not currently looking for work
- ❑ A homemaker / Stay-at-home caregiver
- ❑ A student
- ❑ Retired
- ❑ Other. Please specify: _____

Q4a Lastly, share your thoughts about what you like most about your volunteer experience with the Smithsonian.

—End of Survey—

[Questionnaire flow after Q1_2 if respondents select multiple roles in Q1-1]

Q1_3 You selected multiple roles as a volunteer at the Smithsonian. For the following, we would like you to base your responses on one of the roles you selected. Which one would you like to talk about? (Don't worry, you will have a chance to talk about your other roles later.)
[A list of roles selected in Q1_1]

Q2_1-13[52] and **Q3_1-7** for Role 1

Q4b Please share your thoughts about what you like most about your volunteer experience with the Smithsonian.

_____
_____

—End of Role 1 questions —

You selected multiple roles as a volunteer at the Smithsonian. Please tell us about the other role.[53]
Q2_1-8 and **Q2_11-13** for Role 2

Q4b This is truly the last page—any additional thoughts?

_____
_____

Q4c You selected three or more roles as a volunteer at the Smithsonian. Could you briefly tell us your thoughts about your experience with the other role(s)?

_____
_____

Thank you so much for taking extra time. Please submit and finish the survey!

—End of Survey—

_____

52   *For those with multiple roles, question wording was slightly modified in some questions (e.g., "your experience as [a/an selected role]" was used in place of "your experience as a volunteer.")*
53   *For those who had more than three roles were asked to select another role.*

[Transcription Center Questionnaire flow]

The Smithsonian's Office of Visitor Services (OVS) would like to know about your experience as a "digital" volunteer for the Smithsonian's Transcription Center. Please answer honestly and candidly. Your answers are confidential. Thank you!

Q1_4 What best describes your status as a digital volunteer for the Smithsonian's Transcription Center?

- ❑ I am a Transcription Center volunteer (includes currently inactive volunteers, e.g. "taking a break.")
- ❑ I haven't volunteered yet, but I am considering it.
- ❑ I am neither of the above.

If a Transcription Center volunteer in Q1_4

Q2_1

Q5_1 Do you volunteer for the Smithsonian in a role outside of the Transcription Center?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

Display these Questions if No is Selected in Q1_4

Q2_2, **6-13**, and **Q3_1-3** and **7**

Q4d Please share your thoughts about what you like most about your volunteer experience with the Smithsonian.

_____

_____

Display this Question if Yes is Selected in Q1_4

Q5_2 In the past few weeks, have you completed an online survey about your experience as a volunteer at the Smithsonian?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes
- ○ I'm not sure

Display this Question if No or not sure is Selected in Q5_2

Q5_3 We would like to send you a survey about your overall experience volunteering at the Smithsonian. Please submit your name and email address in the space below to have a survey link sent to you.[54]

_____

If Not (yet) a Transcription Center volunteer

—End of Survey—

Definition of Role

Information desk specialist: a volunteer who assists visitors at a Museum Information Desk, Welcome Center, or similar. It includes a Call or Mail Center volunteer.

Public programs/events volunteer: a volunteer who contributes to special outreach programs or events, such as evening programs, seasonal or annual festivals, and more.

Behind-the-scenes contributor (e.g., collections/ research): a volunteer who supports less public activities in a variety of areas, such as administrative work, archive/ collection management, research, translations services, social media initiatives.

Docent/facilitator or education specialist: a volunteer who engages with visitors through daily interactive activities, such as sharing stories or leading tours, gallery talks, demonstrations, and hands-on experiences in galleries.

Digital volunteer (Transcription Center): an online volunteer for Smithsonian Transcription Center.

Other volunteer: one who volunteers in a role none of above describes.

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54   *OP&A then sent the respondent an invitation with a personalized link to the normal survey where respondents could share their thoughts about multiple roles.*

Appendix D: Volunteer Survey 2016 Frequencies of Responses, All Units

What best describes your current role(s) at the Smithsonian? [Select one or more]	
Information desk specialist	27%
Public programs/events volunteer	17%
Behind-the-scenes contributor (e.g., collections/research)	16%
Docent/facilitator or education specialist	33%
Digital volunteer (Transcription Center)	7%
Other volunteer	0%

	Info desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	On-site Overall	Digital	Overall
How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your experience as a volunteer at the Smithsonian?							
Superior	27%	19%	34%	29%	**27%**	14%	**26%**
Excellent	53%	55%	50%	53%	**53%**	55%	**53%**
Good	18%	21%	13%	15%	**17%**	26%	**18%**
Fair	2%	4%	3%	2%	**3%**	4%	**3%**
Poor	%	%	%	%	**%**	1%	**%**
How long have you volunteered with the Smithsonian?							
Less than 1 year	31%	32%	19%	16%	**24%**	37%	**25%**
1-5 years	26%	33%	35%	33%	**31%**	63%	**34%**
5-10 years	16%	14%	18%	23%	**18%**	0%	**17%**
10-15 years	13%	7%	13%	17%	**13%**	0%	**12%**
15-20 years	5%	5%	7%	3%	**5%**	0%	**5%**
20-25 years	5%	3%	4%	4%	**4%**	0%	**4%**
25-30 years	3%	1%	3%	2%	**2%**	0%	**2%**
30+ years	2%	4%	1%	2%	**2%**	0%	**2%**
Mean (in year)	6	6	7	7	**7**	1	**6**
Median (in year)	3	2	4	5	**3**	1	**3**
How many hours do you spend volunteering with the Smithsonian?							
Up to 3 hours	2%	33%	5%	6%	**9%**	36%	**11%**
3-10 hours	40%	44%	15%	46%	**38%**	37%	**38%**
10-20 hours	47%	16%	31%	34%	**34%**	17%	**33%**
Over 20 hours	11%	7%	50%	15%	**18%**	10%	**18%**
Mean (in hours)	14	9	28	14	**16**	9	**15**
Median (in hour)	14	6	20	10	**12**	5	**12**
Maximum (in hour)	80	160	140	120	**160**	60	**160**
What is the primary unit with which you currently volunteer? [Select only one]							
	See Appendix B						

	Info desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	On-site Overall	Digital	Overall
How much do you agree with the following statements? To perform my current volunteer responsibilities effectively, I receive(d)...							
Excluding Not applicable							
Adequate training							
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	1%	2%	**2%**	1%	**2%**
Disagree	2%	1%	2%	2%	**2%**	7%	**2%**
Neither agree nor disagree	5%	6%	6%	4%	**5%**	14%	**6%**
Agree	32%	40%	35%	31%	**33%**	60%	**35%**
Strongly agree	59%	51%	56%	62%	**58%**	17%	**56%**
Clear work instructions							
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	2%	1%	**2%**	1%	**2%**
Disagree	2%	2%	1%	1%	**2%**	4%	**2%**
Neither agree nor disagree	5%	5%	4%	6%	**5%**	8%	**6%**
Agree	38%	40%	33%	35%	**36%**	59%	**38%**
Strongly agree	53%	50%	60%	57%	**55%**	27%	**53%**
Timely information							
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	1%	2%	**2%**	1%	**2%**
Disagree	4%	2%	2%	1%	**2%**	2%	**2%**
Neither agree nor disagree	7%	5%	6%	5%	**6%**	17%	**7%**
Agree	38%	40%	35%	36%	**37%**	49%	**38%**
Strongly agree	50%	51%	56%	55%	**53%**	31%	**52%**
Accommodation of my schedule							
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	1%	2%	**2%**	1%	**2%**
Disagree	0%	1%	0%	1%	**1%**	0%	**1%**
Neither agree nor disagree	2%	6%	2%	2%	**3%**	6%	**3%**
Agree	21%	27%	17%	18%	**20%**	10%	**20%**
Strongly agree	74%	66%	80%	77%	**75%**	84%	**75%**
[On-site] Technical support (e.g., computer equipment, software, troubleshooting)							
[Digital] Technical support/troubleshooting							
Strongly disagree	2%	3%	2%	2%	**2%**	2%	**2%**
Disagree	5%	3%	2%	5%	**4%**	4%	**4%**
Neither agree nor disagree	15%	14%	9%	16%	**14%**	23%	**14%**
Agree	40%	40%	33%	37%	**38%**	47%	**38%**
Strongly agree	38%	41%	54%	39%	**42%**	24%	**42%**
Feedback about my performance							
Strongly disagree	4%	4%	2%	2%	**3%**	Not asked	**3%**
Disagree	9%	6%	3%	6%	**7%**		**7%**
Neither agree nor disagree	25%	23%	10%	22%	**21%**		**21%**
Agree	34%	35%	35%	33%	**34%**		**34%**
Strongly agree	28%	32%	51%	36%	**35%**		**35%**

	Info desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	On-site Overall	Digital	Overall
.... To perform my current volunteer responsibilities effectively, I receive(d)... (Continued)							
Including Not applicable							
Adequate training							
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	1%	2%	**2%**	1%	**2%**
Disagree	2%	1%	2%	2%	**2%**	7%	**2%**
Neither agree nor disagree	5%	6%	6%	4%	**5%**	14%	**6%**
Agree	32%	40%	35%	31%	**33%**	60%	**35%**
Strongly agree	59%	51%	56%	62%	**58%**	17%	**56%**
Not applicable	0%	0%	0%	0%	**0%**	0%	**0%**
Clear work instructions							
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	2%	1%	**2%**	1%	**2%**
Disagree	2%	2%	1%	1%	**2%**	4%	**2%**
Neither agree nor disagree	5%	5%	4%	6%	**5%**	8%	**6%**
Agree	38%	40%	33%	35%	**36%**	59%	**38%**
Strongly agree	53%	50%	60%	57%	**55%**	27%	**53%**
Not applicable	0%	0%	0%	0%	**0%**	0%	**0%**
Timely information							
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	1%	2%	**2%**	1%	**2%**
Disagree	4%	2%	2%	1%	**2%**	2%	**2%**
Neither agree nor disagree	7%	5%	6%	5%	**6%**	17%	**7%**
Agree	38%	40%	35%	36%	**37%**	49%	**38%**
Strongly agree	50%	51%	56%	55%	**53%**	31%	**52%**
Not applicable	0%	0%	0%	0%	**0%**	0%	**0%**
Accommodation of my schedule							
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	1%	2%	**2%**	1%	**2%**
Disagree	0%	1%	0%	1%	**1%**	0%	**1%**
Neither agree nor disagree	2%	5%	2%	2%	**3%**	6%	**3%**
Agree	21%	26%	17%	18%	**20%**	10%	**20%**
Strongly agree	74%	65%	80%	77%	**75%**	83%	**75%**
Not applicable	0%	0%	0%	0%	**0%**	1%	**0%**
[On-site] Technical support (e.g., computer equipment, software, troubleshooting); [Digital] Technical support/troubleshooting							
Strongly disagree	2%	3%	2%	2%	**2%**	2%	**2%**
Disagree	5%	3%	2%	5%	**4%**	4%	**4%**
Neither agree nor disagree	15%	14%	8%	16%	**14%**	23%	**14%**
Agree	40%	39%	33%	37%	**38%**	47%	**38%**
Strongly agree	38%	41%	54%	39%	**42%**	24%	**42%**
Not applicable	0%	2%	0%	1%	**0%**	0%	**0%**
Feedback about my performance							
Strongly disagree	4%	4%	2%	2%	**3%**	Not asked	**3%**
Disagree	9%	6%	3%	6%	**7%**		**7%**
Neither agree nor disagree	25%	23%	10%	22%	**21%**		**21%**
Agree	34%	35%	35%	33%	**34%**		**34%**
Strongly agree	28%	32%	51%	36%	**35%**		**35%**
Not applicable	0%	0%	0%	0%	**0%**		**0%**

	Info desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	On-site Overall	Digital	Overall
As a volunteer, I feel valued by the Smithsonian:							
Strongly disagree	1%	2%	2%	1%	**2%**	1%	**2%**
Disagree	1%	0%	2%	1%	**1%**	3%	**1%**
Neither agree nor disagree	7%	11%	6%	7%	**8%**	15%	**8%**
Agree	44%	43%	43%	43%	**43%**	47%	**43%**
Strongly agree	46%	44%	47%	47%	**46%**	34%	**45%**
Below is a list of some reasons people say they volunteer. How important is each of the following to you?							
Help the public							
Very Important	86%	77%	42%	86%	**77%**	61%	**76%**
Somewhat important	13%	22%	44%	14%	**20%**	34%	**21%**
Not important	0%	1%	14%	0%	**3%**	5%	**3%**
Learn about the Smithsonian							
Very Important	63%	57%	41%	45%	**52%**	30%	**51%**
Somewhat important	33%	35%	44%	43%	**39%**	50%	**39%**
Not important	4%	8%	14%	12%	**9%**	20%	**10%**
Interact with Smithsonian staff							
Very Important	38%	44%	59%	39%	**43%**	11%	**41%**
Somewhat important	48%	43%	35%	51%	**46%**	38%	**46%**
Not important	14%	14%	6%	10%	**11%**	51%	**14%**
Socialize with other volunteers							
Very Important	41%	34%	24%	36%	**35%**	2%	**33%**
Somewhat important	47%	50%	46%	50%	**48%**	19%	**46%**
Not important	12%	16%	30%	13%	**16%**	79%	**21%**
[On-site] Access to "perks" (e.g., programs, lectures, discounts); [Digital] (e.g., virtual get togethers, increased access to behind-the-scenes collections							
Very Important	30%	34%	22%	27%	**28%**	8%	**28%**
Somewhat important	52%	48%	52%	51%	**51%**	34%	**51%**
Not important	17%	17%	26%	22%	**21%**	59%	**21%**
Exposure to different experiences							
Very Important	74%	83%	66%	70%	**73%**	60%	**72%**
Somewhat important	22%	15%	31%	26%	**24%**	35%	**25%**
Not important	3%	2%	3%	4%	**3%**	5%	**4%**
Support a mission I believe in							
Very Important	77%	82%	78%	81%	**79%**	77%	**79%**
Somewhat important	20%	16%	19%	17%	**18%**	22%	**19%**
Not important	3%	2%	3%	2%	**2%**	1%	**2%**
Heighten my self-confidence							
Very Important	23%	26%	20%	23%	**23%**	11%	**22%**
Somewhat important	35%	31%	34%	40%	**36%**	29%	**35%**
Not important	42%	43%	46%	37%	**41%**	60%	**42%**
Gain skills relevant to my career aspirations							
Very Important	19%	23%	29%	17%	**21%**	17%	**20%**
Somewhat important	20%	33%	18%	24%	**23%**	19%	**23%**
Not important	61%	44%	53%	59%	**56%**	65%	**57%**

	Info desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	**On-site Overall**	Digital	**Overall**
As a volunteer, would you like your contribution to be...							
...informally acknowledged by staff?	79%	76%	78%	80%	**78%**	53%	**77%**
...formally acknowledged by the Smithsonian?	66%	61%	54%	68%	**64%**	49%	**63%**
...formally acknowledged by your Unit?	62%	56%	52%	62%	**59%**	29%	**57%**
Below is a list of ways volunteers are thanked by organizations. Which are your preferred ways? [Select all that apply]							
Enrichment programs (e.g., behind-the-scenes tours)	76%	78%	61%	76%	**74%**	65%	**73%**
Informally thanked by staff	64%	62%	69%	62%	**64%**	70%	**64%**
Appreciation events	64%	65%	43%	63%	**60%**	29%	**58%**
Years-of-service pins	51%	38%	33%	49%	**45%**	2%	**45%**
Certificates	24%	26%	22%	19%	**22%**	5%	**22%**
Merit-based awards	15%	19%	13%	16%	**16%**	35%	**17%**
Volunteer of the month program	11%	8%	5%	7%	**8%**	13%	**8%**
Other	1%	0%	1%	1%	**1%**	2%	**1%**
*TC did not include Certificates nor Years-of-service pins (Some volunteers offered as "others" and were recoded)							
Do you have suggestions for changes to enhance your volunteer experience?							
No	63%	71%	81%	66%	**69%**	69%	**69%**
Yes	37%	29%	19%	34%	**31%**	31%	**31%**
What is your sex?							
Male	32%	28%	45%	47%	**38%**	25%	**37%**
Female	68%	72%	55%	53%	**61%**	75%	**62%**
Other	0%	0%	1%	0%	**0%**	0%	**0%**
Age (What year were you born?)							
Mean	59	53	60	60	**59**	50	**58**
Median	65	58	66	66	**65**	50	**64**
Up to 19	3%	4%	2%	3%	**3%**	2%	**3%**
20-29	6%	11%	9%	8%	**8%**	10%	**8%**
30-39	8%	12%	7%	7%	**8%**	20%	**9%**
40-49	7%	11%	6%	4%	**7%**	18%	**7%**
50-59	14%	17%	14%	9%	**13%**	19%	**13%**
60-69	32%	26%	29%	30%	**30%**	22%	**29%**
70-79	25%	15%	28%	29%	**25%**	8%	**24%**
80 and over	5%	4%	6%	9%	**6%**	1%	**6%**
Where do you live?							
DC Metro area	94%	94%	85%	92%	**92%**	22%	**87%**
Elsewhere in the United States	6%	6%	13%	8%	**8%**	64%	**12%**
Another country	0%	1%	2%	0%	**0%**	15%	**1%**

	Info desk	Programs/ events	Behind-the-scenes	Docent or educator	**On-site Overall**	Digital	**Overall**
Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?							
No	96%	92%	95%	96%	**95%**	Not asked	**95%**
Yes	4%	8%	5%	4%	**5%**		**5%**
Please select one or more races you identify as:							
White	70%	64%	84%	84%	**76%**	Not asked	**76%**
Black or African American	21%	24%	7%	9%	**15%**		**15%**
Asian	8%	10%	6%	6%	**7%**		**7%**
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	4%	1%	1%	**2%**		**2%**
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%	1%	0%	1%	**1%**		**1%**
Other. Please specify	3%	3%	4%	3%	**3%**		**3%**
What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?							
[Of those over age 25]							
Some high school	%	%	%	%	**%**	Not asked	**%**
High school graduate or equivalent (GED)	1%	1%	1%	1%	**1%**		**1%**
Trade/technical/vocational training	1%	1%	1%	1%	**1%**		**1%**
Associate degree	5%	4%	2%	2%	**3%**		**3%**
Some undergraduate	5%	7%	4%	3%	**4%**		**4%**
Bachelor's degree	25%	21%	21%	15%	**20%**		**20%**
Some graduate	14%	10%	11%	12%	**12%**		**12%**
Master's degree	37%	43%	43%	46%	**42%**		**42%**
Professional/doctorate degree	12%	13%	16%	21%	**16%**		**16%**
None of the above	%	%	%	%	**%**		**%**
Are you currently...? [Select all that apply]							
Retired/ half-retired	55%	32%	60%	60%	**53%**	34%	**52%**
Employed for wages / Self-employed	40%	58%	30%	34%	**39%**	54%	**40%**
A student	5%	11%	9%	6%	**7%**	6%	**7%**
Out of work and looking for work	3%	5%	6%	3%	**4%**	6%	**4%**
A homemaker / Stay-at-home caregiver	3%	1%	3%	2%	**2%**	6%	**3%**
Out of work but not currently looking for work	1%	1%	2%	1%	**1%**	2%	**1%**
Other	1%	0%	1%	1%	**1%**	6%	**1%**

Appendix E: Responses Under the "Other" Category

For two close-ended questions, respondents who wanted to make a comment in addition to the listed response options selected *other* and wrote in an answer. OP&A grouped these responses into new categories, or recoded them into existing categories.

Only a small number of respondents provided these comments, but they felt strongly about what they said.

Motivation

OP&A listed nine reasons to volunteer and the Other option and asked how important each of them was to the respondent. The original options were: *access to "perks," exposure to different experiences, gain skills relevant to my career aspirations, heighten my self-confidence, help the public, interact with Smithsonian staff, learn about the Smithsonian, socialize with other volunteers, support a mission I believe in*, and *other*.

One in seven respondents specified other reasons to volunteer (14%). Most marked the reason as very important, and very few said that the reason was somewhat important. OP&A identified eight extra categories from volunteers' write-in responses.

The following five reasons were mentioned by 2-3% of all who participated in the survey.

Learn about a subject. So many of these volunteers indicated "learning" in their motivations to volunteer that OP&A split them into several categories to better capture the response diversity. Responses in this category were from volunteers who wanted to increase their exposure to and knowledge of a field, topic, or skillset, including "science," "aviation," "AA history," "art appreciation," "natural history," "computer programming," "new cultures," and "ecology."

Learn, general. While some responses were filtered into learning a field or learning about the Smithsonian (in the original set of options), others were too general to place. It is clear that the volunteers in this category were motivated by "continual learning," "intellectual curiosity," and "education" or "research."

Feeling useful/passionate/engaged: sharing knowledge and skills with visitors and the Smithsonian. Volunteers wanted to share their knowledge with the public: to "educate kids on insects," "foster a love of learning," and "tell people about the city [they] love." They also wanted to be of use to the Smithsonian: "collaborate with Smithsonian staff on research projects," and use their "experience," "degrees," and "professional skills" to preserve material culture, inspire the public, and disseminate information.

Socialize with visitors. While respondents were given the opportunity to select "socialize with other volunteers" or "interact with Smithsonian staff" from the listed response options, many explained in their text answers that they particularly enjoyed socializing with visitors. In most of these comments, volunteers said that they liked to "meet people from different countries & cultures," "interact with children" and youth, or simply "meet interesting visitors."

Leisure—a fun/satisfying use of time: Volunteers "just enjoy" their roles; they liked to fill their hours, "get out of the house," be downtown, "work outdoors," or "spend time at the museum." Many respondents seemed to want to use their leisure time productively, for an activity they know is rewarding.

Very few mentioned the last three categories below. These themes, however, also emerged in other open-ended comments in the survey and are potentially important reasons for volunteering.

Be hired. A handful of volunteers were explicit about wanting to be hired as a result of volunteering, and their comments included: "Pathway to a career after retirement," and "get my foot in the door to land permanent position." While some volunteers spoke vaguely of opportunities to gain career-relevant skills, OP&A limited this category to those who are very clear about their intention to get a job.

Flexibility and scheduling. Some volunteers were motivated to choose the Smithsonian because of the

"ability to work from home," a "consistent schedule," and "time availability."

External requirements. A very small number of volunteers responded that they were motivated by "school credit."[55]

Form of recognition

Volunteers' selected their preferred ways of being appreciated from a list of seven options and other as follows: *appreciation events*, *certificates*, *enrichment programs (e.g., behind-the-scenes tours)*, *informally thanked by staff*, *merit-based awards*, *volunteer of the month program*, *years-of-service pins*, and *other*.

One in twenty respondents suggested other ways of recognition (5%), which fall into the common themes detailed below. Monetary appreciation was mentioned most often. The other ideas were suggested about the same number of times.

Monetary (but not wages). Some volunteers would like to have discounts or free tickets for special events and programs beyond the perks that already exist. This could be within the Smithsonian system, or pertain to other services within the DC area (like movie tickets, free food, or a transportation subsidy).

Career development/advancement. Volunteers wanted access to information about "paid Smithsonian jobs," to be referred for employment if their manager thinks they are qualified, or to receive a "mailed letter from Smithsonian Institution for portfolio."

Feedback. Some respondents wanted to be thanked with constructive feedback from Smithsonian staff, volunteers, and visitors. They stated that "getting feedback would be appreciated" and would allow them to "improve their performance."

Merchandise. Volunteers would like T-shirts, cups, calendars, water bottles with the Smithsonian logo

or the name of the museum they serve, among other merchandise ideas.

Public recognition. Many volunteers wanted Smithsonian staff to mention volunteer work at "opening ceremonies," "special events," and "parties," give them credit on publications they contributed to, or highlight their work in a "docent newsletter" or on "social media."

Respect/part of team. Volunteers would like to be valued as staff members, be included, and be treated "as part of the museum culture."

A few volunteers did not think they needed to be thanked. They wrote in that they were not volunteering for recognition and/or that the volunteer experience was its own reward.

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55   *This category could also include mandatory volunteer hours for other external requirements, but OP&A did not gather any such responses.*

Appendix F: Data Collection Notes

Distribution and responses

Because the on-site volunteers and digital volunteers are managed differently, OP&A used different data collection approaches for the two groups as documented below. In total, the survey reached out 7,233 on-site volunteers and 3,977 digital volunteers with the Transcription Center (TC) for their input.

On-site volunteers

OVS provided[56] the OP&A study team with a list of volunteers whose status were identified in its volunteer database (EVANS) as Active, Retired with a SI retiree badge, and Emeritus.[57] Not all volunteers are registered in EVANS, and OP&A also requested unregistered volunteers' names and email addresses from the unit volunteer coordinators.[58] Additional email addresses came from the staff directory on PRISM searched by job title: volunteer and docent. This effort resulted in a list of 7,486 presumably current on-site Smithsonian volunteers with an email address.[59]

Each volunteer received a unique link to the survey to minimize repeat submissions and allow the study to send reminders to those who had not completed the survey and not to those who opted out. OP&A monitored the data collection progress and sent several reminders to increase participation. The survey was open from October 13 through November 2.

When OP&A sent the survey invitation to the 7,486 email addresses, 253 immediately returned as undeliverable. Of the remaining 7,233 invitees, 350 opted out, and 2,599 volunteers participated in the survey (2,400 complete,

199 partially complete[60]), for a response rate of 36%[61] of questionnaires sent to valid email addresses.

Valid email addresses	7,233	
Opted out	350	5%
Completed survey	2,400	33%
Partially completed survey	199	3%

Digital volunteers (Transcription Center)

Digital volunteers with TC are not required to register, and even when they do, they remain anonymous. TC staff were concerned that a survey invitation from OP&A through the survey platform could harm the trust it had established with its volunteers. In light of this concern, the study team altered its approach. TC invited its volunteers to participate in the survey by providing them with an open link[62] to the online form.[63]

The initial invitation went to 3,977 *digital volunteers* who regularly engaged[64] with TC's campaign emails that yielded 28 responses. OP&A monitored the data collection progress and coordinated with TC for repeated survey invitations through additional campaign emails to increase survey participation. The data collection then targeted volunteers that TC identified based on transcription records as most engaged or active to new volunteers and sent them e-newsletters with more tailored messages. In total, five e-newsletters (campaign emails) with a survey invitation were sent between October 18 and November 9, 2016. The table below presents the details:

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56   The volunteers' contact information came primarily from EVANS, the Smithsonian volunteer database.

57   Initially, the list also included Hold status, those who were under onboarding processes. The small number of volunteers in this category were removed from the distribution list shortly after the survey opened when OP&A found that they did not consider themselves active yet and were therefore not qualified to take the survey.

58   FONZ opted out of the study. A relatively small number of NZP volunteers were registered in EVANS, and some of them completed the survey.

59   Some volunteers, often with the same last name, shared one email address.

60   OP&A closed out the survey forms that were started but not completed at the end of the data collection period and included the responses in the analysis (responses that did not provide any answers to the questions besides the first screening question were excluded).

61   This figure includes those who turned out to be past volunteers. Although they were technically ineligible to participate, OP&A had anticipated some responses from past volunteers and prepared a couple of questions. Therefore, they are included here.

62   An open link is open to anyone as opposed to the personalized links used for on-site volunteers, which were unique to each survey invitee and not reusable. Anyone who clicked on the open link could take the survey.

63   TC sent the survey invitation text and link to its volunteers via its regular campaign emails (e-newsletters). It also uses social media platforms (e.g., Twitter or Facebook) for public and volunteer community engagement. However, OP&A chose to only send the open link via the e-newsletter to minimize the chance of non-volunteers accessing the link.

64   Those who had opened any of the previous 10 campaign emails.

Date Sent	Number of Recipients	Engagement Level	Email Opens / Open Rate	Survey Link Clicks
10/18/16	3,977	Had opened any of the previous 10 campaigns + new list members	1,845 / 46%	42
11/1/16	58	Over 1000 transcription contributions[2]	27 / 47%	19 unique (22 total)
11/1/16	224	100 to 999 transcription contributions	105 / 47%	52 unique (55 total)
11/2/16	678	10 to 99 transcription contributions	199 / 29%	79 unique (82 total)
11/9/16	3,134	Had opened any of the previous 10 campaigns	1,678 / 53%	39 unique (43 total)

The TC survey was open from October 18 through November 12. A total of 174 responses was collected[65].

Volunteer registration/database issues

OVS and the study team were already aware at the beginning of the study that the Smithsonian's volunteer registration system for on-site volunteers was incomplete. This section documents the uncertainties or discrepancies in volunteer-related data sources that the study encountered during the data collection process that posed some limitations for survey distribution and data analysis.

On-site volunteers

- The Smithsonian's volunteer registration system for on-site volunteers is currently incomplete. Not every unit registers its volunteers in EVANS and the degree to which units utilize EVANS varies and there are backlogs.
- Unit volunteer coordinators are sometimes uncertain about volunteers within their units but outside their purview, especially about behind-the-scenes volunteers (BTS) who work with researchers.
- Some of the information in EVANS is inaccurate or outdated:

◊ Of 7,486 survey contacts from EVANS, 253 emails bounced back, indicating those email addresses were no longer valid.

◊ Of the remaining 7,233 volunteers, 215 (8%) answered on the survey that they were not current volunteers (their status should have been updated into Inactive in EVANS[66]).

◊ EVANS included SI staff members—staff want to be in the loop regarding volunteer communication so they intentionally put their names in the volunteer database.

◊ From email exchanges with survey invitees, OP&A found that more emails than the above-mentioned 215 had gone to past volunteers (some said they had left the Smithsonian years before) or to unattended inboxes. Some of the 350 opt-out contacts and 4,180 emails that never generated access to the survey were past volunteers.

- Volunteer profiles in EVANS do not necessarily include their current unit affiliation or roles, nor demographic information, such as age and sex.
- OP&A found another discrepancy in that 5,731 people were categorized as volunteers as of mid-November, 2016 in the OPS's system related

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65 The open survey link enabled volunteers to submit multiple responses (kindly responding to repeated survey requests). During the post survey processing, 10 duplicates (i.e., two responses from ten same individuals) were identified by reviewing IP addresses and demographic and other questions. The extra responses were removed.

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66 OP&A shared the information about bounce-backs and former volunteers with OVS for updating the entries in EVANS.

to badging.[67] The number was lower than those marked as Active in EVANS by more than 1,700.

Digital Volunteers (Transcription Center)

- By design, the Transcription Center does not require registration to volunteer.
- Volunteer status, e.g., active or dormant, of digital volunteers is in flux, though the Transcription Center maintains a good track of volunteers' activities and engagement through web analytics.
  - ◊ The number of digital volunteers reported on the SI dashboard is inaccurate. The dashboard uses the number of active contributors to the Smithsonian Transcription Center, but the number of "active" digital volunteers is much lower.[68]

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67   *In an attempt to detect and adjust possible bias in the collected data, OP&A contacted OPS to obtain demographic information that OPS collected through the badging process, such as distribution of sex or age of all volunteers. The attempt failed since OPS's dataset was not set up to export the particular information the study sought.*

68   *In October 2016, at the time of the survey, TC identified 960* digital volunteers *who had contributed at least 10 transcriptions in the recent 18 months.*

Glassman, Larry - Volunteer workers in museums | Historic Images of the Smithsonian | Featured in Torch, January 1989 Supplement

Volunteer Larry Glassman, a retired electrical engineer and attorney, spends his free time at the National Air and Space Museum (NASM), where he conducts Highlights tours and works behind the scenes in the museum's library. Larry is pictured talking about historic aircraft suspended from the ceiling at NASM.

Schirmer, Carolyn (l.) and Orwenyo, Maxine | Historic Images of the Smithsonian | Featured in TORCH, January 1985

Carolyn Schirmer (l.) and Maxine Orwenyo in the National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) courtyard, wearing traditional African dress, demonstrate how they make music a part of their textile program for the elderly.

Smithsonian Institution
Office of Policy and Analysis