

Working with “Image Whisperers” for voluntary audio description

ARSAD

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Background + stakeholders



Original request: 2013 Nocturnes

- ✓ Each year mid-September to mid-December
- ✓ Late-night openings on Thursday evenings (5 to 10 p.m.)
- ✓ 5 to 8 museums per night (> 60 museums in total)
- ✓ 2014 close to 20,000 visitors



Voluntary “image whisperers” (1)

Practical reasons:

- ✓ 5 to 8 museums per Late Night Opening
- ✓ No budget is not (necessarily) a practical reason!

Voluntary “image whisperers” (2)

- ✓ Not audio describers!
- ✓ One image whisperer for one visually impaired visitor
- ✓ Describing works of art + practical guidance
(in the museum + to and from public transport
if needed)
- ✓ Training to be followed (mandatory) - early September
separate language groups (mostly theory)

Second request: 2014 Museum Night Fever

- ✓ Each year in February / March
- ✓ One night (7 p.m. to 1 a.m. + after-party)
- ✓ 24 museums open
- ✓ > 54,000 visits by 15,500 unique visitors



Voluntary “image whisperers” (3)

- ✓ “Image whisperers” => Blind Dates
- ✓ Again training to be followed (mandatory)
also for people who had followed a training before
- ✓ Second training in February:
 - mixed group (Dutch + French combined)
 - theory + practice in a museum
 - VIPs participating in the training

Project evaluation

✓ Questionnaires:

- “Image whisperers” => training(s) + museum visit(s)
- VIPs => museum visit(s)

“Hierbij wil ik jullie van harte danken om als slechtziende persoon eens kennis te mogen maken van deze fijne en interessante Museum Night Fever 2014”

“Superbe soirée ! Me voici de retour à la maison avec des images, des mots plein la tête !!!”

- Spontaneous feedback from participating museums

Project evaluation

✓ Numbers:

- > 30 volunteers trained, however...
- Museum Night Fever: 13 requests for “Blind Dates” only 6 people attended the event
- Nocturnes (2014): 14 requests, only 4 visits
- Reasons for last-minute cancellations:
no time, other plans, late at night, strikes (2014)...

Conclusion (1)

- ✓ Working with voluntary audio describers certainly has its advantages:
 - Personalised approach (one guide for one VIP)
 - Positive feedback from VIPs who did participate (both regarding the descriptions themselves but also the practical support and social aspect of the visits were appreciated)

Conclusion (2)

- ✓ The Gallo-Roman Museum (Tongeren) offers the possibility to visit its permanent collection with an image whisperer (upon request, no requests so far)
- ✓ The MIAT Museum in Ghent has plans to start working with image whisperers in the near future

Conclusion (3)

The Charlier Museum (Brussels) came up with the idea to organise a training for professional museum guides / staff

First training:

- 12 + 14 January 2015
(FR + NL)
- both fully booked
(max. 20 participants)



Thank you!

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