

The American Association of Museums' Accreditation Program:
An Analysis of the Benefits Perceived By Museums

Sarah Wendt

This study conducted a mail survey of 210 museum directors whose institutions had undergone accreditation through a program sponsored by the American Association of Museums. The study sought to ascertain directors' perceptions of the overall benefit and cost of the program, as well as their perceptions of the degree to which their museums both expected to receive and actually received 16 individually specified benefits. It further sought to determine the extent to which museum size and accreditation history may have impacted their perceptions.

The study found that while the time burden associated with the accreditation process was considered fairly high, most museums felt that the program was very beneficial. In many cases, significant associations were found between perceptions of accreditation benefits and museum size. The smaller and medium-sized museums (defined as those with budgets under \$1 million and \$1 to \$3 million, respectively) were found to have perceived the greatest benefit from the program. There was no association between the number of times accredited and program benefits, although there was a positive association between number of times accredited and perception of program costs. Significant positive associations were revealed between the number of years since a museum was last accredited and the degree to which it perceived benefits in the area of enhanced credibility.