



A visitor study approach to INGV exhibition at Genova Science Festival 2011

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The Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia (INGV) is one of the largest European scientific institution dealing with Earth Sciences research and seismic and volcanic surveillance. We organize every year intense educational and outreach activities focalizing in particular on causes of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and how to behave properly and deal with these events. This approach derived from the consciousness on the social role of a correct information on natural hazards and on the awareness that preparedness is the best way to live with and to mitigate natural hazard. The Genova Science Festival, held since 2003, is the most remarkable among the Italian Science Communication events and for the 2011 edition, the INGV realized an exhibition called COME E' PROFONDO IL MARE, la geofisica in acqua (HOW DEEP THE SEA IS, geophysics in water). The exhibition shows and explains the main geodynamic processes through interactive exhibits and colorful panels exploring events as earthquakes, volcanic eruption and tsunami, their impact on our territory. In order to approach a visitor study related to this scientific educational path we elaborated questionnaires designed for students, for teachers and for general public. We have chosen this survey instrument for its advantage to get a wide variety of information and quantitative data. In developing the questionnaire three main aspects were taken in account: its shortness, clarity in the questions, and answers structure able to grade different indicator of visitor opinion and exhibition impact. That will also allow us to combine indicators scores during data elaboration phase. The questionnaire goes through all the sections of the educational path, trying to have a feedback on the proposed layout and its efficacy. The Science Festival lasted 2 weeks and was visited by about 8000 people. During the event were handed out and recollected about 300 questionnaires that allows us to make a reliable assessment on the impact of our exhibition.

This first effort of visitor study has the aim to have a framework for exhibition impact and its educational appeal, and represent a starting point in a wider and specific study on visitor learning. These kind of survey contribute to set up a reliable feedback loops between scientists and end users of natural hazards information that can help to close the gap between science and society.