



Security in museums and galleries: The environmental visual assessment (EVA)

What is an EVA?

An EVA is an observational walk around the museum inside and outside, to identify areas of concern from the threats of theft, fire and flood. An EVA encompasses the perimeter, all external areas and the external fabric of the building, including any outbuildings and grounds.

The EVA concept is borrowed from Community Policing, where it has been used very successfully to raise and maintain security awareness, and reduce crime. An EVA is based entirely on observation: a member of staff (the reviewer) walks the building, probably starting from the approach and walking inwards, aiming to complete the EVA in around 30 minutes, depending on the size of the building. They record their findings on paper, and may use a digital camera. Reviewers are only looking for areas of concern – they are not recording detail of different security aspects.

There is no single method of conducting an EVA. It is sensible to start from the furthest point away from the facility, usually the perimeter, looking in towards the main building, and then work your way inwards towards the main building. Inside the building reviewers should walk all areas, including stores and non-public areas.

What is the purpose of an EVA?

The purpose of the EVA is to provide a snapshot in time of the physical aspects of the museum grounds and buildings. The EVA is a tool which identifies issues of concern from a fire, flood, or security perspective and is based entirely on the observations of the person carrying out the EVA. The results of an EVA will probably indicate a range of concerns which are impacting negatively on the organisation.

The result of an EVA is a list of items which may signal a potential problem. These items will be physical evidence of things that may flag up that the museum is vulnerable in some way – eg graffiti may be sending signals to potential thieves that the building is not well maintained.

An EVA is also an excellent way of raising security awareness amongst staff, and ensuring that security awareness is maintained. EVAs bring a fresh pair of eyes to security issues.

Are EVAs effective?

The more that EVAs are embedded into the daily activity of the museum, the more powerful they will become, as a 'fresh pair of eyes' and as a way to generate a sense of ownership for security amongst all staff. They can be used in the induction of new staff, or as a prompt for discussion at staff meetings.

How to carry out an EVA

The EVA only identifies issues of concern, it is not necessary to describe what appears to be satisfactory or recommend any action to be taken.

Reviewers are looking for evidence of:

- Poor maintenance of grounds, buildings and infrastructure
- Criminal reconnaissance and tampering
- Anti-social behaviour and vandalism
- Poor housekeeping
- Unsecured maintenance equipment, or buildings infrastructure, which may be useful to an intruder
- Objects which may be vulnerable

Start at the entrance to the grounds of the museum building, look at and record your observations of the condition of:

- Entrances; gates; signage
- Fences, hedges, walls
- Lighting – both security and otherwise
- CCTV cameras – appearance, maintenance, placing, visibility
- Surfaces such as grass, roads, floors
- Security measures such as alarms, padlocks, fencing
- Guttering and water flows
- Signage
- Entrances, internal doors

- Cases and barriers in displays
- Public spaces

A completed EVA may look like this:

Environmental Visual Assessment

[*Museum Name*]

Two people [*Names*] walked the grounds and perimeter of [*Building Name*] on [*Date and Time*] and found:

1. unwanted graffiti on outside wall to the left of the gate
2. sign at entrance worn with lettering faded
3. opening times were incorrect on sign at entrance
4. two loose pales in palisade fencing 3m to the left of the main entrance
5. lighting along footpath obscured by overgrown tree canopies
6. pot-holes in tarmac on footpath between pedestrian entrance and building
7. parking bay lines and directional arrows worn and faded in parking area
8. pot-holes starting to appear across parking area
9. empty beer cans lying on grass areas to rear of building
10. overgrown bushes obscuring vision to rear of building
11. flattened cardboard boxes lying in recess of unused rear access door
12. light fitting glass broken in light at rear of building near fire exit
13. felt tip markings (lines) on window sill to the right of the fire exit
14. empty cola bottle and crisp packet lying on ground near fire exit
15. drain on side of building overlooking housing estate is overflowing
16. signs of rainwater running down outside wall near to store entrance

Who carries out an EVA?

Anyone working for the museum can carry out an EVA, in fact it is a good idea for EVAs to be included in the written responsibilities of all staff. It is also a good idea for EVAs to be carried out in pairs, so that reviewers can discuss their findings as they walk around. An EVA requires no specialist skills or training other than being confident in carrying out the EVA. There are no right or wrong answers and it is likely that there will be some differences if two EVAs are carried out separately by two people at the same time at the same location.

When is an EVA carried out?

EVAs should be carried out frequently, and their use should be embedded in the operational activity of the museum. It is a good idea to carry out EVAs on an ad hoc basis, for example at different times of the day, month and year. An EVA carried out in the hours of darkness after the museum is closed will have a different outcome to one carried out in daylight when the museum is open. EVAs should also be used when there is any change to museum routine, for example when a new exhibition is starting, or on the first day of the school holidays.

What happens to the results of an EVA?

The EVA results are passed onto the person responsible for assessing the findings who will then decide if action needs to be taken and may compare the results against previous EVAs to determine if there are on-going operational or organisational issues of concern. The results of EVAs will also inform the next component of the toolkit: the Security Audit. We suggest that the written record of an EVA should be scanned and kept as an electronic record for the short term.

Although the results of an EVA will probably not contain any sensitive security information, they should still be treated as confidential documents which are protected appropriately.