Narrative Evaluation

There are a number of ways to analyse and report on interviews, project logs and other narrative feedback or written material, such as visitor comments collected over time. A typical approach would be to identify the main themes and then select quotes which illustrate the themes and use them as part of the narrative of a report. Another approach to identifying themes in a narrative is through a word search; which will tell you the number of occurrences, or sorting.

For example, to see how an organisation valued their activity we analysed their annual reports to see how often words like impact, quality, and participation appeared. This can be done manually in Excel, or using software such as Nvivo. If it's a general impression rather than numbers you need, using Wordle or other word cloud software is effective. This one was created by Chiltern Open Air Museum:

Another method enables you to quantify themes within a narrative. Using Excel, divide the narrative so each point starts on a new line then paste the data into a spreadsheet. Record the theme in the next column, then use the function =countif in column C below to see how many times the theme appears.

We've used conditional formatting here to show the high and low scores in colour, and we've used a filter on the column so that when you want to look for quotes demonstrating 'imaginative' experiences, you can filter out the others and choose from just those categories.

Observation	Emotion	
	excited	2
	quiet	2
	fun	1
	negative	0
	enthusiastic	0
	creative	0
	imaginative	2
	VSA observation	1
One little girl picked up the smallest spider and carried it around before placing it carefully on the floor.	imaginative	
Another child shouted 'don't wake the spider!'	excited	
A group of children started jumping on the bubble wrap shouting 'is it real?'	imaginative	
One parent said to his children 'don't wake the spider' so they tiptoed towards it had a look and then carefully walked away.	quiet	
Several children walked into the area with parents and tip toe over the bubble wrap to see the display cases- it appeared they thought they shouldn't walk over it.	VSA observation	
With a little encouragement two children tried to walk around the spider without making any noise, competing with each other.	quiet	
Towards early afternoon many children taking pieces of bubble wrap to jump on- no longer trying not to wake the spider.	excited	
A number of children sitting amongst the bubble wrap and popping it.	fun	

Narrative evaluation guidance

Complete the spreadsheet using your selected narrative – which may be feedback forms, entries to a visitors' book, comments sheets or project logs, for example.

1   Put each bit of feedback in a separate cell.

2   Put in any information you might want to keep about the source, like date or person, by every entry for sorting or filtering.

3   Start identifying themes for the feedback so you can group them. When you're happy with your themes write them into the pale green boxes.

4   The number of times the theme appears will automatically be counted by a formula. Conditional formatting automatically shades the cell.

5   If you want to just look at one theme you can filter out the others using the filter arrow.

Narrative evaluation feedback to analyse

The following features are what make a Happy Museum. They could be themes which you look for during narrative evaluation, of a visitors' book or project log, for example.

Share a wellbeing vision	Share a Story of Change	Use time, resources and scope creatively
Measure what matters to people	Use everyone's potential	Work experimentally: anticipate change and discomfort
Share ownership and ensure mutual benefit	Work across hierarchies and teams	Consider playfullness, creativity, activity and aesthetics
Be a good host	Broker relationships	Consider the social and financial benefits of being green
Lead by example: care of people, place and planet	Use the museum's unique resources	Re-think what matters
Create happy, resilient people	Create happy, resilient teams	People learning
People interacting	People feeling happy, satisfied and worthwhile	People aware of the environment and their surroundings