



Report from Ecsite Conference 2006

Mechelen, Belgium

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Everything you always wanted
to know about *science centres*
but were afraid to ask



Ecsite 2006

- 713 Delegates from 40 countries
- 71 sessions
- Themes:
 - Trends and challenges in cutting edge research and technological development
 - Science centres: Children only?
 - What are they really learning?



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Presentations that stood out.



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Session: What can Science Centres Learn from their Visitors Evaluation Techniques and Conclusions

Claudia Bade, Le Vaisseau, Strasbourg, France

- Border France and Germany – trilingual offer
- Teacher Questionnaires:
 - Cultural differences revealed
 - led to improved communications with teachers
- Visitor observation
 - family group interaction
 - accessibility issues for disabled

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Session: Successful ways of teaching children about difficult topics

A successful way of teaching children about a difficult topic

Alex Burch, Science Museum, London

- Interactive gallery 7-14 year olds
- Front-end evaluation
 - Teachers – difficult topic, key area
 - Children – unfamiliar with terms, boring
- Looked at:
 - content – curriculum links, related to everyday life
 - look and feel – strong visual images
 - learning – shared experience, diversity of experience
 - website component – teachers packs, links, games
- Result – gallery enjoyable and educational

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Session: How to enhance our impact.

What do we know about impact – and what should we know?

Dr. Persson, Director, Heureka, Vantaa, Finland

- Science Centre Impact Study – Robin Garnett
- Impact can be personal, social, political, economic
 - Most studies have looked at personal impact
- Science centres recognizable as one of six factors influencing career choices among young people
 - based on only a few studies
 - A science centre visit takes three hours in a life-time of learning – high impact
- Science centre and museum visits leave a memory trace that can be recalled after years or even decades – very few long term studies.
- Need for a research strategy to look at long term effects.

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Conclusions

- Many presentations were focused on results
- Lack of new techniques discussed
- Most useful presentations:
 - Talked in general about the whole approach including techniques.
 - Stimulated discussion
- Most common criticism – Lack of attempt / techniques to monitor impact / learning over the longer term.

Business Bistro

Showcasing latest products and services

- Exhibit designers and fabricators
- Graphics companies
- Touring exhibitions
- New technologies
- Science Centres / museums
- Good for networking



HÜTTINGER
Exhibition Engineering

Engineered Arts limited

glasgow
science
centre

Technopolis

- The Flemish Science Centre
- Bringing Science and Technology to the people
- Similarities with GSC
 - Less stringent H&S policies **OR**
 - Has slightly more intelligent visitors !?!



Networking

- Ecsite UK Meeting
- Social events every evening
- Conference ‘Diamond’ Dinner



Thanks to the VSG bursary !!



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