

Section 1

Interesting Initiatives – Stories of Success

This section of the book is a selection of successful activities which have enhanced the visitor experience in a variety of settings. The authors are listed alphabetically, forming a random selection for the reader to sample.

In the first article, *Sharifah Barlian Aidid* outlines how the Malaysian National Science Centre decided to publish books for children, which the staff use in an interactive way with parents and children. Other in-house initiatives in science museums are described by *Paul Donahue and Claude Faubert*, whose Fun Days and Curriculum Days at the Canada Science and Technology Museum serve audiences of schoolchildren in very different ways. Bringing school students into the museum environment is also the topic of *Shannon Gilbert's* article, in which she describes summer camps and a popsicle building contest which have proved very successful outreach activities for the Fraser-Fort George Regional Museum.

Ways of bringing the natural environment closer to the science museums are discussed by *Chantal Barriault*, of Science North, and *Monty Reid*, of the Canadian Museum of Nature. Chantal's "Nature Exchange" has stimulated visitors and provided rich learning opportunities for adults and children alike. Faced with a different problem, Monty Reid describes how the Museum has embarked upon an ambitious project to collect data, research and educate about the biodiversity of the Rideau River.

Two articles address the problem of attracting new audiences to a botanic garden environment. *Julie Foster* describes how the Australian National Botanic Gardens set up tracks linking plant and animal life in ecological plantings, with good outcomes for younger visitors. *Janelle Hatherly*, of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, describes using the newly discovered Wollemi Pine to mount a thematic display and how the Gardens made the most of increasing public interest in indigenous culture.

Major outreach programmes require special support and funding. Two such programmes are described, involving many different organisations. The Caribbean Youth Science Forum was an initiative of the National Science Centre, Trinidad and Tobago. *Althea Maund* discusses the rationale for the Forum and describes its structure. From the opposite side of the world, *Allen Rooney* outlines a major travelling programme of *Questacon*, the National Science and Technology Centre, which reached many Pacific island nations.

Finally, four authors address wider issues of public activity. *Karen Fifield* of Taronga Zoo gives an overview of the possibilities of zoo education. *Geoff Snowdon* from PETROSAINS Discovery Centre presents a vision for a science centre. *Susie Bioletti and Philippa Winn* present a perspective on art and science through the lens of the National Gallery of Australia.

The overwhelming conclusion from these articles is that there are many approaches to building bridges with the public which have the potential to be successful. Those described in this section offer a model for others to follow, to adapt and to change to suit many audiences in many different countries. All have responded to local needs and are excellent examples of outreach which really works.