

Section 2

Making the Most of a Visit

School excursions have been popular for many years, but they should be more than just an excuse to get out of the classroom. To make a visit to a science centre or museum a learning experience for the students, both teachers and centres need to be prepared to maximise the visit to transform an excursion from “an escape from school” into a worthwhile informal learning experience.

The articles in this section establish a link between the formal and informal education settings to enable both teachers and science centres to make the most of the interaction. For the visit to be valuable the visitors (i.e. teachers and students) need to be prepared. The science centre or museum must also be able to offer an experience that will allow this to happen.

The first article by *Leonie Rennie and Terry McClafferty* serves as a guide to teachers taking their students on trips to science centres, museums, zoos, botanical gardens and aquaria. The article outlines necessary steps before, during and after the visit, enabling all parties to have an optimal experience.

Judith Arrowood and Hooley McLaughlin describe how they have set up an education programme within the Ontario Science Centre that can benefit not only the students visiting, but also teachers. This theme is carried over into the following article, by *Neville Gardner*, with reference to a specific programme that makes available, to both students and teachers, resources not often available in schools.

Brett Dunlop's article looks at the museum's perspective of taking into account clients' needs during the design process of an exhibition. The final two articles discuss the importance of evaluation. *Robin Garnett* examines the pre-visit needs and the post-visit evaluation of teachers in relation to satisfying their expectations and objectives of visiting the Science Centre at the Manawatu Museum and Art Gallery. The final article of this section, by *Paul McCorry and Melanie Quin* examines the outcome of student visits to Techniquest and how these are integrated into normal classroom work.

Close collaboration between the formal and informal education sectors, with emphasis on curriculum-based activities, can make a visit to a science centre or museum not only a pleasurable experience, but one that will complement and enhance classroom activities.