

Section 4

A Snapshot of Science Centre Research

Research in science centres and museums is increasing all over the world. The articles presented here are snapshots of the kind of work being done and the kinds of conclusions being drawn. All the authors have long research experience and are characterised by work which probes further than simple visitor surveys. We hope that you find them useful.

In the first article, *John Gilbert and Mary Priest* uncover some of the strengths and weaknesses of interactive activity and discussion during a visit of primary students to a science museum. *David Anderson and Keith Lucas* follow the recommendations of Léonie Rennie and Terry McClafferty, made earlier in this book, and develop the theme of effective post-visit activities. *Susan Stockmayer and John Gilbert* examine adult visitors' responses to interviews about their interactions with exhibits and highlight some of the problems of exhibit design.

All the authors are concerned to describe effective learning in the context of a science-based exhibit. From the point of view of a school based group, the intent of the teacher is usually to promote specific learning outcomes and these can be greatly enhanced by pre- and post-visit activities which are designed carefully. All three articles emphasise the need for engagement by the visitor if learning is to occur. The task for the museum is to provide opportunities for successful engagement and satisfying outcomes.