

**Session:****Growing ideas into 'good' exhibits: connecting creativity with practicality**

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**Designing the interaction**

Ultimately: when designing for science centres, the focus should be on the interaction, not on the exhibit itself. You are designing an interaction, and the form of the exhibit should follow the interactive function. This should be obvious in the land of the Bauhaus, but it is often missed. Think of the interaction first, then design the exhibit.

Real things and real processes: Many people speculate nowadays that museums and science centres are going out of date. Certainly, things change and people's habits change, and there is much exciting stuff on the internet and elsewhere. But it is difficult to imagine a time when people do not go out to see and use and be with real things and real processes - especially as we have so much more image and virtuality in our lives now. There is an excitement and satisfaction in seeing or using the real thing, or watching or carrying out a real process, and the experience can be repeated later with equal satisfaction.

In contrast, simulations have less impact in general, and once experienced, tend to lose their appeal. And if a simulation is somehow needed, the visitor must be told that it is a simulation.

Visitors should never be deceived by hidden simulation. Experience shows that they sooner or later find out that they have been deceived, and their trust and liking for the centre is forever damaged or destroyed. And anyway, the experience of real things and real processes is more complicated and richer than simulations, and therefore a much better base for learning.

OF, not ABOUT: When you are asked to design an exhibit about some subject, start immediately looking for the real objects and experiences in that field that make good exhibition, and don't worry too much about covering the whole subject. For, if you go into it with the „exhibition about“ mindset, you will quickly start wanting to do simulations, diagrams, add large amounts of explanatory text etc. An exhibition OF things and processes and interactive experiences related to the subject, can be very good. An exhibition ABOUT the subject that focuses on the subject as presented in lectures, textbooks, etc is never good.

Another way of looking at this: to make a good exhibition of any subject, you must first translate the subject into exhibition language, and not try to take too much of the native language of the subject into the exhibition medium.

Are there subjects that are not suitable for exhibition? Yes! That is, there are subjects that simply do not yield good exhibition material, however hard one kneads them. Generally, these are highly abstracted subjects, usually involving complicated mathematics, with little concrete material for exhibition.