

# VISIT the Explor in San Francisco, Ft. Worth, Sarasota...

This summer, if you're in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Rochester, New York; San Diego, California; or Toledo, Ohio, you may be surprised to see the Exploratorium there, too. Of course, you won't find an exact replica (while we do many amazing things with science, cloning the museum isn't one of them). However, you will find lots of our exhibits, and, supporting them but not easily visible, a lot of our educational know-how. Through a program called the Exploratorium Network for Exhibit-Based Teaching (ExNET), we are offering our exhibitry and educational expertise to a growing number of science centers nationwide. Current ExNET partners include the Museum of Discovery and Science in Fort Lauderdale; the Rochester Museum and Science Center; the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center in San Diego; GWIZ (Gulfcoast Wonder and Imagination Zone), Florida; the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History; and COSI-Toledo (Center of Science and Industry) in Toledo, Ohio.

It all started with an experiment. In the late 1990s, the Exploratorium's Executive Director, Dr. Goéry Delacôte, helped establish the Explor@dome, a small independent science center in Paris. Using the Exploratorium's exhibitry and its educational acumen, the Explor@dome proved very popular, and it sparked an idea in Dr. Delacôte: "I envision clusters of Exploratorium exhibits, thematically arranged around school curriculum topics and taken from our strongest pedagogical collections. The exhibits could rotate annually among several long-term partners, who benefit as much from our educational programs as from our exhibit base." And so the exhibit-based museum partnership concept was conceived.

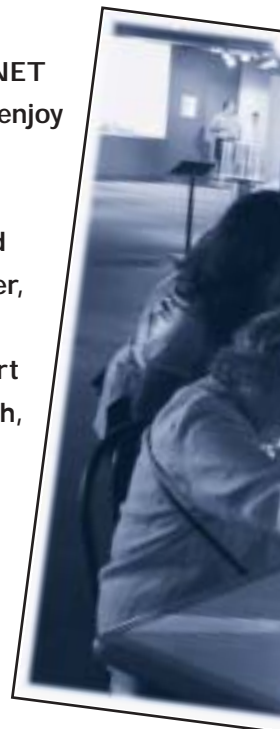
From the beginning, the idea was to combine four elements in one space: an annually rotating set of thirty to forty exhibits, a cluster of ten networked computers, a hands-on/discovery area with tabletop activities, and a combination Webcast/program/demonstration area. In practice, each partner presents its own combination of these elements—often with great success. According to Lynne Kennedy, Deputy Executive Director for Education & Exhibit Programs of the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center in San Diego, "The partnership clearly fulfills our mission of science education, but more than that, it has been a positive and collegial enterprise for the Fleet Science Center."

The partnership has a large impact on the Exploratorium, too. It provides staff-development opportunities, extends our audience, and teaches us new things about our exhibits and training methods. Ultimately, it allows us to better pursue our mission "to create a culture of learning" beyond the walls of the Exploratorium.

Once connected with our ExNET partners, we share ideas and innovations. In addition to exhibits, the Exploratorium provides a total of forty days of consulting over the

Visitors at some of the ExNET partner sites shown below enjoy Exploratorium exhibits.

(Bottom from left: the Rochester Art Museum and Science Center in Rochester, N.Y.; aerial view of the Rochester Museum; the Fort Worth Museum, Fort Worth, Tex.; and the Museum of Discovery and Science in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.)



# exploratorium

three-year term of each partnership. The training takes many forms, depending upon the needs of a given museum. We start with training our museum partners on the exhibits themselves: how to use them, the science behind them, and related activities. After covering the basics, anything is possible, though we stick to our strength in inquiry-based teaching. So far, partners have received support in teacher training, inquiry workshops, exhibit development, strategic planning, public programming, exhibit-space planning, and development of Explainer and volunteer programs.

Each partner venue has its own reasons for teaming up with the Exploratorium. Fort Worth wanted to jump-start a move into interactive exhibits, building on its strengths in paleontology and Texas history, and solidifying its position as a regional leader in teacher training and informal educational research. San Diego's Reuben H. Fleet hoped to reposition itself as a science center with an IMAX, rather than an IMAX with science exhibits. And GWIZ—a new 25,000-square-foot museum on the Florida Gulf coast—hopes to use Exploratorium staff and exhibits to establish its culture and strategic direction as a science resource integral to its school community.

GWIZ isn't alone in its involvement with science education. All ExNET partners are deeply committed to working with their local school communities, and in leveraging shared resources to tackle tough science-education issues. In the future, our ExNET partners will be closely integrated with the Exploratorium's Center for Informal Learning and Schools (CILS), our international program of research and scholarship that examines the role of informal

learning and K–12 school reform.

Future plans also include continuing to expand our ExNET partners' Web site. This site provides a huge array of digital resources related to our exhibits, as well as teaching techniques developed over time by the Exploratorium staff. In addition, there are three discussion groups on the site that enable partners to exchange ideas and communicate with Exploratorium teachers and exhibit staff.

We're also considering new ways to work with ExNET partners. Currently, we act as the hub of a spoked wheel, with exhibits and services traveling down the spokes to other science centers. In the future, existing partners may adapt the ExNET model, working as hubs themselves and reaching out to underserved and new communities in their states or regions.

Don't be surprised, then, if you're strolling through a science museum in Indiana sometime and see exhibits that seem strangely familiar and Exploratorium-like. Most likely, you'll be witnessing the results of a strong partnership, made possible by the Exploratorium Network for Exhibit-Based Teaching. ■

by Eilyn Hament



## Our Web Site Has New Resources—and Gets an Award Nomination

If you haven't been to our Web site in a while, now's a great time to visit. We're launching two new resources—and we've been nominated for a Webby Award, an Oscar of the online world.

The first of our new sites, **Global Climate Change: Research Explorer**, launches in July (watch our Web site for the exact date and the URL). This resource opens a window onto current research efforts related to climate change and to data available on the Web. The site explores up-to-date scientific data about the earth's surface, the atmosphere, the cryosphere, and the biosphere. Scientists are trying to fully understand the properties and interactions among these components, and the possible impacts that global climate change has on them. Here's your chance to discover the process of scientific research, to learn about global climate change, and to ask questions about both.



In August, we'll launch another exciting resource, **The Accidental Scientist**, designed to help you understand and enjoy the science

behind the activities you do everyday. The first of this three-part series, supported by the National Science Foundation, will focus on the science of cooking. Topics include baking bread, cooking eggs and meat, seasoning, pickling, and candymaking, and will feature interactive exhibits, video clips, activities, recipes, and text. You'll find everything from an interactive dinner party fix-it for seasonings to a pickle lab complete with a "crunchometer" to a Candy-o-Matic thermometer. Later this year, we'll add at least one live Webcast to the mix. Check it out, beginning August 1, at [www.exploratorium.edu/cooking](http://www.exploratorium.edu/cooking).

Finally, we're proud to announce that we've been nominated for a **Webby Award**. The Webby Awards honor the best 150 Web sites in 30 categories as selected by members of the Academy of International Digital Arts and Sciences. The Exploratorium received Webby Awards for Best Science Site three years in a row (1997–1999). Our Science of Hockey resource was nominated for Best Sports Site in 1998. This time, we're in a whole new category: We've been nominated for Best Education Site. According to the Webby Awards Web site: "These nominees exemplify the very best that the Internet has to offer."

No argument here.

**Cool Stuff for Summer from Our Store**

**Wirbelfix Bubble Airplane**  
(\$16.90; \$14.35 for Members)

How often do you get the chance to play with two things at once: bubbles and an airplane? Take this fun toy airplane outside for a whirl and watch as a trail of bubbles forms behind it. You'll see science at work as centrifugal force keeps the bubble juice in the plane's reservoir during flight.



**Sun Magic** (\$19.50; \$16.58 for Members)

Use the power of sunlight to create a beautiful silk scarf! This kit contains a specially treated photosensitive scarf, various stickers and doilies to help decorate it, and a test swatch so you can practice. There are also step-by-step instructions to help in the creative process.

To purchase any of these products, visit the Exploratorium Store in person or at [www.exploratoriumstore.com](http://www.exploratoriumstore.com).

*Take advantage of your 15% Members' discount! All proceeds support the activities of the Exploratorium.*

