

Catch a Falling Spark

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October 1999

THIS IS NOT A DEFINITIVE FINAL REPORT

FORMATIVE evaluation studies like this one often:

- **are conducted quickly**, which may mean
 - small sample sizes
 - expedited analyses
 - brief reports

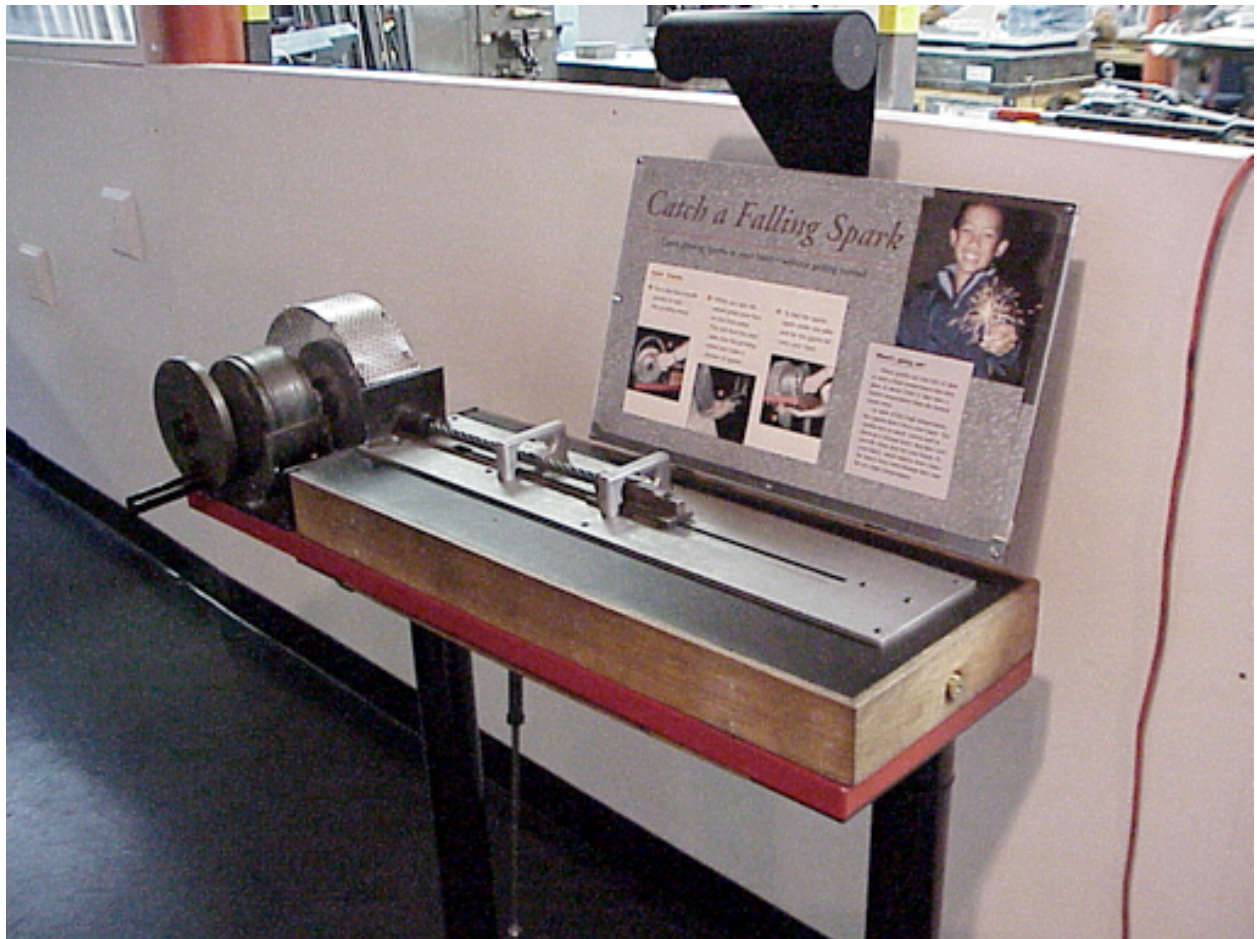
- **look at an earlier version** of the exhibit/program, which may mean
 - a focus on problems and solutions, rather than successes
 - a change in form or title of the final exhibit/program

Catch a Falling Spark Interview Results — 10/27/99

Goals & Method

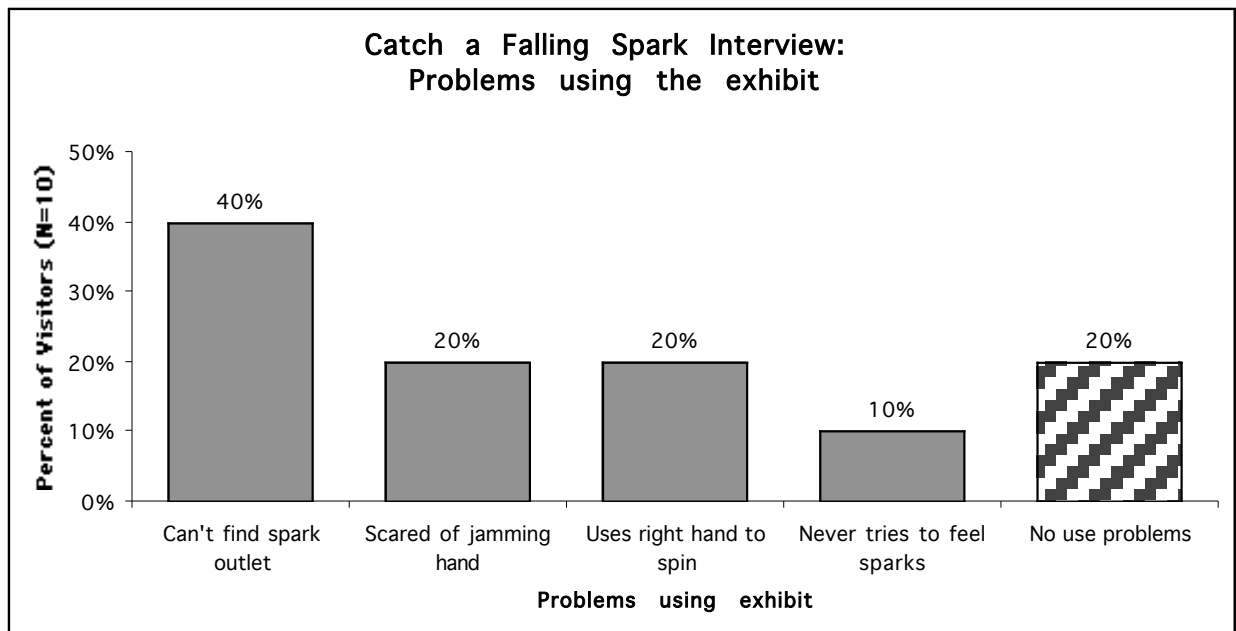
Conducted cued interviews with 10 visitors. Used the version of the exhibit label that has a photograph of a boy holding a sparkler (instrument Catch Falling Sprk.sprklr.iv.01). Wanted to determine whether the photo added to the experience or detracted from it. The questions were:

1. Play with the exhibit.
2. Was there anything about the exhibit that was confusing or difficult to use?
3. Was the main point of the exhibit clear to you? [What was the main point for you?]
4. Was there anything about the exhibit that feels relevant to the world outside the Exploratorium? [What seems relevant to you?]
5. Does the photo (of the boy holding the sparkler) add or detract from the experience?



Findings

- 80% of the visitors had a difficult time using the exhibit (see graph below for types of problems they had).
- 70% of the visitors understood the main point that the sparks are at a high temperature, but don't burn because they are so small.
- 70% of the visitors felt that they could see how the exhibit was relevant to the world outside the museum.
- 80% of the visitors liked the photograph of the boy holding the sparkler. Of the two visitors who did not, both felt that it was misleading because the sparkler creates sparks by burning something and the exhibit creates them by moving something.



Recommendations

Reducing use problems

- Add label on edge of table saying something like “hold hand under here” to show visitors where to place their hand under the table.
- When there's time, redesign exhibit so that right hand spins wheel.
- When there's time, redesign exhibit so that the sparks can be felt above the table.

Deciding on the photograph

- Include the photo of the boy holding a sparkler.