

ExhibitFiles Front-End Study: Analysis of ISEN-ASTC-L postings

Evaluators examined archived postings from the ISEN-ASTC-L discussion list to better understand exhibition professionals' questions and the language they use to talk about their work. Analysis was based on 221 postings, dated October 2005 through March 2006, extracted from the ISEN-ASTC-L archives by ASTC staff for their relevance to exhibitions.

ISEN-ASTC-L is an unmoderated e-mail discussion list maintained by ASTC and open to the informal science education community. The 1,330+ subscribers include educators, exhibit developers, evaluators, visitor services staff, and others with an interest in informal science learning. Subscribers are located in more than 25 countries; most are in the United States. More information is available at <http://astc.org/profdev/listserv.htm>. (Note that the list has a strict no-commercials policy, which limits the number of postings about traveling exhibitions.)

Subject headings and content of the 221 messages were sorted into 20 distinct categories, which are listed below in order of descending frequency. Details follow in the Subject Heading Analysis Chart. (Note that in some instances, the subject of a posting falls into two categories; in the chart, these cases are indicated with an asterisk [*].)

ISEN-ASTC-L subject headings, by frequency

- Exhibit ideas/components
- Science programs/demos/activities
- Exhibit materials/fabrication
- Technology (AV, equipment, software)
- Exhibit maintenance
- Topical exhibitions
- Commercial (pre-made) exhibit components
- Traveling exhibits
- Safety (demos and materials)
- Visitor studies
- Age appropriateness
- Scientific explanations
- Exhibits for sale/free
- Institutional policies and procedures
- Marketing/PR
- Consultant recommendations
- Multilingual exhibit graphics
- Offsite exhibits in public spaces
- ASTC conference
- Science pedagogy and politics

Subject Heading Analysis Chart

*Indicates posting is listed in more than one category

Exhibit ideas/components

Seeking examples of experiences with interactive Discovery Box exhibits (3-1-06)
Seeking examples of health-related exhibit components (2-1-06)
Seeking a natural selection computer interactive for new ecology/evolution exhibit (2-8-06)*
Seeking examples of exhibits or programs on fractals (11-21-05) *
Questions about including dioramas in new exhibits (costs, prototyping, audience reaction) (1-20-06)*
Seeking examples of nanotechnology exhibits or activities (1-26-06)*
Seeking sources for Gravity Well exhibit (1-3-06)
Seeking examples of glacier exhibits that demonstrate glacial process (12-20-05)
Seeking unique ways to integrate real people's stories in exhibits (12-22-05)
Seeking examples of great water exhibits (12-14-05)
Seeking video on medical imaging in archeology (11-22-05)
Seeking good exhibits about photosynthesis (11-2-05)
Feedback on pros and cons of simulator rides (11-2-05)
Seeking exhibits related to Jules Verne (11-9-06)
Seeking a natural selection computer interactive for new ecology/evolution exhibit (2-8-06)*
Seeking activity about moon and sun's affect on tides (11-23-05)
Seeking source for Reversed Faces exhibit (12-13-05)
Seeking mechanical exhibit about the change of seasons (10-4-05)
Seeking examples of hummingbird wing motion pattern exhibit (10-31-05) *
Sharing link to successful online exhibit about earthquakes (12-27-05)

Science programs/demos/activities

Seeking examples of chemistry programs/ activities (2-1-06)*
Seeking examples of exhibits or programs on fractals (11-21-05) *
Seeking examples of dehydration demo (10-4-05)
Seeking advice on using synthetic blood in demos (12-13-05)*
Seeking examples of clean water and waste management activities (12-16-05)
Seeking examples of nanotechnology exhibits or activities (1-26-06)*
Sharing information on Oobleck colloid activity (11-8-05)*
Seeking Jules Verne-related activities (11-9-06) *
Information on measuring the speed of sound in microwave (10-26-05)
Seeking examples of activities demonstrating what causes the tides (11-23-05)
Seeking examples of dehydration demo (10-4-05)
Seeking examples of magnetosphere demo (10-13-05)
Seeking examples of emulsifiers for salad dressing demo (10-28-05)
Seeking advice on how to build homemade metal detector for workshop (1-19-06) (1-10-06)
Seeking successful K-12 science experiments for Tryscience.org database (1-6-06)
Seeking advice on using a microwave to conduct gravity experiments (11-1-05)
Seeking examples of technology-based online or exhibit activities for teachers (1-3-06)
Instructions for creating an easy homemade metal detector (1-19-06) (1-10-06)
Information on results of science experiments about toothbrushes and bacteria
Sharing resource for science-based songs (12-2-05)

Exhibit materials/fabrication

Seeking appropriate materials for producing plastic boats (3-10-06)
Seeking examples of durable materials for sand play areas (3-6-06)*
Seeking inexpensive faux column material (2-1-06)
Seeking materials and maintenance advice for fog walls (2-17-06) *
Seeking advice and source for foam brick construction material (1-13-06)
Seeking honeycomb baffling material for wind tunnel prototype (1-25-06)
Seeking best material for Chladni Plate and/or a Sound Cannon exhibit (11-29-05)
Seeking appropriate materials/technology for CT scan demonstration (1-9-06)
Seeking advice on using synthetic blood in demos (12-13-05)*
Seeking advice on how to cushion drawers for proper snake display (11-2-05)

Seeking information on green materials for exhibit design and construction (12-20-05)*
Seeking device to power a wave tank (10-31-05)
Seeking materials for projecting sunlight prism effect in museum building year-round (11-9-05)
Seeking how to successfully use 12 volt battery for electrical generator exhibit (10-12-05)

Green exhibit materials

Seeking information on using green materials for exhibit design and construction (12-20-05)
Seeking feedback from those with experience using energy efficient metal halide lights in museums (11-23-05)

Technology (av, equipment, software)

Seeking advice about maintenance and feasibility of audio tours (2-6-06)
Seeking recommendation for large plasma monitors to be used video interactive (2-21-06)
Seeking image/photo database management program (11-21-05)
Seeking appropriate materials/technology for CT scan demonstration*
Seeking Program Launchers for Windows touch screen (1-17-06)
Seeking CAD drafting software recommendations (11-14-05)
Seeking opinions of Pioneer DV7400 DVD player (10-20-05)
Seeking advice on how to do rear projection in a small space (11-30-05)
Seeking recommendations for an AV designer/producer (2-6-06) *
Seeking examples of IT technology plan and policies for museums (10-6-05) *
Seeking design drawings for sliding plasma wall (1-13-06)
Seeking computer program to calculate sunrise/sunset (11-17-05)

Exhibit maintenance

Seeking materials and maintenance advice for fog walls (2-17-06) *
Seeking mild cleaners for eyepieces (2-14-06)
Useful trick for maintaining wheels and levers on interactives (2-12-06)
Seeking cleaner system for 3-D glasses (11-4-05)
Dealing with humidity created from rainforest exhibit (10-7-05)
Advice on maintaining Scalar scopes (scope-on-a rope) (10-31-05)
Seeking manual for repairing Kokoro dinosaur models (1-21-06)
Seeking source for Starlab dome patches (12-20-05)
Seeking advice on maintaining simulator rides (11-2-05) *
Seeking advice on hot air balloon heaters (1-11-06);
Seeking advice on how to make hot air balloon heaters run faster (1-3-06)

Topical exhibitions

Current science

Seeking examples of cutting edge science and technology shows (3-2-06);
Seeking examples of exhibits interpreting current science issues (2-9-06)

Environmental exhibits

Seeking examples of clean water and waste management exhibits or programs (12-16-05)*;
Seeking examples of alternative fuel exhibitions (11-17-05);
Seeking examples of exhibitions on nuclear and fossil fuel

Evolution exhibits

U.S. museums take on "intelligent design" in evolution exhibits and programs (11-10-05)*;
Seeking evolution exhibition for documentary film (2-17-06);
Developing meaningful evolution exhibits

Other

Seeking traveling exhibition on food (3-7-06)*
Seeking examples of exhibit areas for preschool children (2-24-06)*
News about community-based exhibition, *Exhibit Commons* (10-12-05)

Commercial (pre-made) exhibit components

Seeking newest Deep Ocean map (3-7-06)
Seeking boat models to convey engine system (3-10-06)
Seeking weather chart with magnetic symbols (2-28-06)
Seeking flying bird silhouettes (1-12-06)
Seeking large globe (12-15-05)
Seeking used Wentzscope (2-17-06);
Seeking source for Wentzscopes (12-28-05)
Seeking real surveyed mummy to use in exhibition (12-5-05)
Seeking supplier of tops for color demo (11-29-05)

Traveling exhibits

Seeking traveling exhibition on food (3-7-06)*
Soliciting interest in small radio astronomy exhibits (2-5-06)
Seeking venues to rent traveling exhibition *Linnaeus & America* (1-29-06)
Seeking to rent or buy healthy lifestyle-related exhibits (1-31-06)
Seeking advice on appropriate size for traveling exhibition gallery (11-17-05)
Seeking contact for developer of the traveling exhibition *Sport!*
Seeking to rent traveling exhibits for small space (1-16-06)
Seeking advice on issues of exhibit label interpretation for international traveling exhibition (10-26-05)*
Seeking information for insurance, rental, and transportation policies for traveling exhibitions (10-20-05) *

Safety (demos and materials)

Seeking advice about fire code concerns regarding science demonstrations (2-7-06)
Advice on issues associated with using acids in science demos (2-20-06)
Looking for guidelines on proper use and storage of hydrogen tank for demos (1-26-06)
Instances of lycopodium powder used in demos causing rashes in visitors (1-26-06)
Seeking information on risks magnets in exhibits pose for pacemaker users (1-27-06);
Advice on proper warnings on magnet exhibits (1-31-06)

Visitor studies

Seeking metrics (checklists, references) on what makes an exhibit successful (12-8-05)
Seeking reference for using White Oak & Associates for museum planning consultation (10-21-05)* Seeking examples on how audience research & evaluation is situated in institutions (10-28-05)
Questions about including dioramas in new exhibits (costs, prototyping, audience reaction) (1-20-06)*
Adler Planetarium seeking participants in online front-end study (1-25-06)

Age appropriateness

Examples of current science exhibits and programs for children under 10
Exhibits geared to young audiences (below age 3)
Examples of exhibit areas for preschool children (2-24-06)*
Seeking information on age appropriateness of motion simulator experiences (11-4-05)*

Scientific explanations

Seeking explanation for physiological differences between visitors when interacting with Hand Battery exhibit (3-3-06)*
Seeking explanation of physics involved in Let It Roll exhibit (12-5-05)
Resource for explanation of Oobleck (fluid/solid, colloid) activity*
Seeking graph of motion pattern for hummingbird wing oscillation (10-3-05) *

Exhibits for sale/free

Graphic on evolution of solar system for sale (11-29-05)
Free electric eel (12-21-05)
Seeking home for decommissioned Optech exhibit

Institutional policies and procedures

Seeking examples of natural disaster recovery plan policies and procedures (11-4-05)
Seeking information on insurance, rental, and transportation policies for traveling exhibitions (10-20-05) *
Seeking examples of IT technology plan and policies for museums (10-6-05) *

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| <p>Marketing/PR Seeking advice on how to market multi-phase exhibit project (12-15-05) Advice on how to market traveling exhibition (1-25-06)*</p> |
| <p>Consultant recommendations Seeking referral for using White Oak Associates for museum planning consultation (10-21-05)* Seeking recommendations for an AV designer/producer (2-6-06) (2-6-06)*</p> |
| <p>Multilingual exhibit graphics Seeking examples of well-done bilingual exhibit graphics (11-11-05) Seeking advice on multilingual exhibit interpretation for international traveling exhibition (10-26-05)*</p> |
| <p>ASTC conference Seeking panelists for visitors and broken exhibit ASTC session (12-2-05)</p> |
| <p>Offsite exhibits in public spaces Seeking examples of exhibits not in museums (i.e. airports, health centers) (3-7-06)</p> |
| <p>Science pedagogy and politics U.S. museums take on "intelligent design" in evolution exhibits and programs (11-10-05)*</p> |

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