
INFORMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

**A SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP OF THE
AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**

Volume 3 Number 1 March 1999

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Doris Ash

As chairperson of our ILER SIG I want to take a brief opportunity to reflect on our excellent progress to date. I am very proud of what we have accomplished with the ILER SIG over the past two years. We have grown in size and stature, we have become known to other organizations, we have produced several fine newsletters, and sponsored two years of excellent programming at AERA.

When Kit Klein, Kirsten Ellenbogen, and I first got together to organize the SIG we had in mind a recognized forum within AERA for exploring research issues relating to informal environments, and to advance the field in general. I think we have accomplished this.

This year we have an excellent slate prepared. Our business meeting on Friday morning features Lauren Resnick reflecting on learning in and out of schools, more than a decade after her seminal AERA Presidential Address. [See 1987 *Educational Researcher*, 16(9), 13-20.] Since most of Friday's time will be devoted to the invited address, we will also be meeting Thursday evening where we will have an informal time to talk as a group to prepare for next year, to network, and to discuss issues of mutual importance over wine and cheese. For more details about this and our other SIG sessions, see page 3.
See you in Montréal!

ILER WEBSITE

<http://darwin.sesp.nwu.edu/informal/>

ILER LISTSERV

ILER_SIG is a forum for discussing topics of relevance to our members. To subscribe, send an e-mail to lists@mail.sesp.nwu.edu with the phrase **subscribe sig-iler [your first name and last name here]** in the body of the message.

ILER STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To further educational research in informal learning environments such as science centers, museums, zoos, aquariums, and nature centers, and to promote a community of practice interested in establishing and maintaining informal learning environments conducive to better understanding of teaching and learning.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS

Learning Symposium

Part of Museum Alberta's Campaign for Learning in Museums, offered in partnership with the Institute for Professional Development, University of Alberta
April 9-10, 1999, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Who can learn in the museum? How can the museum learn? It is the goal of this symposium to hear from the many voices of Canada's Learning Society towards establishing a report on learning in our museums. This symposium will illuminate the variety and means of learning that takes place in our society, specifically sectors such as business, education, culture, health, and leisure.

Contact: Tali Laurenson, Learning Coordinator at Museums Alberta, (780) 424-2657 ext. 226. Email: tali.laurenson@museumsalberta.ab.ca

1999 American Association of Museums Annual Meeting

Reinventing the Museum: Relevance & Renewal
April 25-29, 1999, Cleveland, Ohio

As the 20th century draws to a close, museums are witnessing extraordinary transformation and change. Technology advances in the blink of an eye. Fierce competition with other leisure activities stretches the public's time, attention, and money. Changing demographic patterns create new audiences and a multitude of voices. Traditional sources of funding are vanishing. Expanding public service roles mean greater accountability. How will museums stay relevant in this rapidly evolving world?

Contact: AAM, 1575 Eye Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005. Phone: (202) 289-9113. <http://www.aam-us.org/>

THANK YOU

Thanks to all of our referees who reviewed this year's conference proposals. Your thoughtful work is greatly appreciated.

Association of Youth Museums:

InterActivity 1999

Coming of Age in the 21st Century: Building a Better World for Children
May 21-23, 1999

Co-sponsored by New York University School of Education. Hosted by The Brooklyn Children's Museum, Children's Museum of Manhattan, and Staten Island Children's Museum. InterActivity 1999 offers tremendous potential for synergy among children's museum professionals, educators, students, and world-renowned experts in the areas of teaching and learning. As we come together in New York City to celebrate the 100th anniversary of children's museums, we will join collaborators with worldwide perspectives, expertise, and commitment to children and learning.

Contact: AYM, 1775 K Street, NW Suite 595, Washington, DC 20006. Phone: (202) 466-4144. Email: aymdc@aol.com.

1999 Visitor Studies Conference

August 3-7, 1999, Chicago, Illinois

The goal of the Visitor Studies Association is to encourage and facilitate information exchange and studies that enhance the experience of visitors in a wide variety of settings from museums and galleries to parks and zoos. Members have a diverse set of interests with the common objective of providing the optimal experience for the visitor. The conference will be hosted by the Adler Planetarium, The Field Museum, and Shedd Aquarium, which form Chicago's Museum Campus, right on the shore of Lake Michigan.

Contact: For registration, Conference Solutions Inc. at sjacobso89@aol.com or (847) 550-9351. For general information about VSA: Brenda Ward, VSA. Dept. of Psychology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523-1876. Phone: (970) 491-4352. Email: Loomisr@juno

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***AERA 1998 ANNUAL MEETING April 19-23, 1999, Montréal, Canada
On the Threshold of the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities***

For those of you planning to attend the AERA Annual Meeting,
here is a list of our SIG's sessions. We hope to see you there!

Structured Poster Session Wednesday,
April 21, 1999, 2:15 - 3:45 p.m., #29.44
Sheraton Hotel, Level B, Salon B

Learning About Engaging in Field-Based Science
Activities in Informal Settings: Stories and
Enculturation Into Field Research.
G. Michael Bowen, University of Victoria

Lessons from the Hollers and the Streets: What
Appalachian Girls, Families, and Communities Have
Taught Us About Implementing Informal Science and
Mathematics Programs.
Carolyn S. Carter, Pat Kusimop, Marian Keyes, AEL

Parent-Child Conversations in a Natural History
Museum.
Steven R. Guberman, Kenneth Emo, Stacey
Simmons, Justine Taylor, University of Colorado

Analogical Thinking in a Children's Museum
Context.
John Nolan Siegler, University of Wisconsin

Validation of the Perceived Benefits of Competitive
Livestock Exhibition.
Kevin Williams, Lance Kieth, Texas Tech University

A Question of Truth: Critiquing the Culture and
Practice of Science Through Science Centres and
Schools.
Erminia Pedretti, Jane Forbes, E.C. Drury Secondary
School, Milton, Ontario

Chair: Christine Klein, St. Louis Science Center
Discussants: Joseph L. Polman, Washington
University; Doris Ash, Exploratorium

ILER SIG Collaborators Meeting

Thursday, April 22, 1999,
6:45-8:45 p.m.
Sheraton, Level 3, Salon 6.

ILER SIG members and others interested in informal
learning research will meet to prepare for next year, to
network, and to discuss issues of mutual importance
over wine and cheese.

Roundtables Thursday April 22, 1999
4:05 - 4:45 p.m., # 42.35
Hilton Hotel, Level F, Fontaine B

Informal Learning in the Construction of Personal
Homepages on the World Wide Web.
Mindy Miron Basi, University of Illinois, Urbana
Champaign

Effective Learning in an Informal Context: Student
and Teacher Perceptions of a Technology-Based
Extended-Day Program for At-Risk Students.
Robert A. DeVillar, University of Texas, El Paso;
Binbin Jiang, UC, Davis

Project Math-Muse: Interactive Mathematics Exhibits
for Young Children.
Steven R. Guberman, Roberta J. Flexer, Abraham S.
Flexer, Carolyn L. Topping, University of Colorado

Evaluating Student Learning in the Challenger Space
Flight Simulator's Informal Learning Environment.
Steven M. McGee, NASA; Nancy Sturm, Challenger
Learning Center

The Pedagogical Text of Two Frequent Field Trip
Sites.
Philip Bailey, Michigan State University

The Value of 4-H Competitive Activities as
Perceived by the Parents of 4-H Members.
Lance Kieth, Paul Vaughn, Texas Tech University

Breakfast Meeting and Invited Address

Friday, April 23, 1999,
7:00 - 8:00 a.m., # 46.01
Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Convention Level,
St. Laurent Room

Reflecting on "Learning In School and Out": A
Decade Later.
Lauren B. Resnick, University of Pittsburgh

We Need Your Notes

Interested in writing a brief summary of
AERA Annual Meeting sessions you attended?
We'd like to share the Meeting proceedings with
fellow SIG members that did not attend. Contact the
editor (See page 1) for more information.

OTHER SESSIONS TO CONSIDER AT THE 1999 AERA MEETING

Symposium Tuesday, April 20, 1999

10:35 a.m.-12:05 p.m., #13.15

Queen Elizabeth, St. Laurent, Convention Level
The Postmodern Challenge to Historical Knowledge:
Implications for Teaching History, History Teacher
Education, and the Museum Display

- Can We Protect Our Children from Postmodernist History? (And Should We?).
Peter Seixas, University of British Columbia
- Postmodern History and Social Studies Teacher Education.
Avner Segall, University of British Columbia
- Postmodernism and Writing History for the Public.
Karen Knutson, University of British Columbia

Chair/Discussant: Terrie Epstein, Hunter College
Sponsored by Division B

Symposium Thursday, April 22, 1999

4:05-6:05 p.m., #19.51

Sheraton, Salon A, Level B
Explanatory Mediation in Museums, Microworlds,
and the Practice of Science

- Explanatory Layers in Museums.
Gaea Leinhardt, University of Pittsburgh
- The Role of Students' Explanations in Science Learning.
Elaine B. Coleman, SRI International
- Narratives in a Science Center.
Laura M. W. Martin, Arizona Science Center
- The Role of Hypothesis Formation in Psychological Research.
Takeshi Okada, Nagoya University
- Distributed Explanation and Development of Scientific Literacy in the Context of Family Activity.
Kevin Crowley, University of Pittsburgh

Chair: Kevin Crowley, University of Pittsburgh
Discussants: Leona Schauble, University of Wisconsin; Allan Collins, Northwestern University
Sponsored by Division C

Symposium Wednesday, April 21, 1999

10:35 a.m.-12:05 p.m., #25.43

Sheraton, Salon 7, Level 3
Curriculum By Design: Museum Exhibits and Issues
of Representation, Audience, Time, and Space

- The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum as a Scene of Pedagogical Address.
Elizabeth Ellsworth, University of Wisconsin, Madison
- Toying with Museums. Mimi Orner, University of Wisconsin, Madison
- Museums as Learning Environments: Drawing on the Tibetan Buddhist Concept of "Transmission" to Inform the Design of Exhibits in Real and Virtual Space.
Barb Tarockoff, University of Wisconsin, Madison
- Representation and Resisting Pedagogies.
Brenda Trofanenko, University of British Columbia

Chair/Discussant: Renee Fountain, Universite Laval
Sponsored by Division B

Symposium Wednesday, April 21, 1999

12:25-1:55 p.m., #27.65

Hilton, LaChine Room, Banq Floor
Learning Across Classroom, Home, and Workplace Settings

- Immersive Educational Technology: Changing Families and Learning.
Roger Ehrich, Faith McCreary, VPI&SU
- Informal Learning in a Multilingual, Multiactivity Workplace.
Joanne Kleifgen, Columbia University
- Family, Culture, School, and Community: Reflections on Language and Literacy Development.
Judith Lapadat, University of Northern British Columbia
- Continuities and Discontinuities: Lessons from ESL Children's School and Home Literacy Experiences. Hong Xu, Texas Tech University

Chair/Discussant: Maria Franquiz, University of Colorado
Sponsored by Division C

TO REGISTER FOR AERA

See the AERA Website <http://aera.net> or call (202) 223 - 9485.

RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

Feel free to contribute reviews of your favorite publications, Websites, or other research resources.

Informal Mathematics and Science Education

ENC Focus Volume 5, Issue 2, 1998
Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for Mathematics and Science Education, The Ohio State University

The opportunities to enhance and support mathematics and science learning through informal means are enormous and should not be overlooked by any educator. In this new issue of Focus, the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse (ENC) highlights print, multimedia, and online resources and profiles educators from different informal and non-formal settings.

To illustrate the importance of informal mathematics and science education and the impact it can have on children's growth and learning, ENC interviewed a number of experts, including Jack Hanna from the Columbus Zoo and David Letterman fame; Richard Taylor, a Texas teacher who started bringing his physics classes to Six Flags before it was "the thing" to do; and Ellen Petrick-Underwood, Environmental Education Specialist for Yellowstone National Park.

Educators in the Mid-Atlantic region (DE, DC, MD, NJ, PA) can obtain a free copy of "ENC Focus: Informal Mathematics and Science Education" from the Mid-Atlantic Eisenhower Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education, Research for Better Schools, 444 North Third Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123-4107, (215) 574-9300, ext. 280, Fax (215) 574-0133, or e-mail: mathsci@rbs.org.

Educators in other states can obtain free copies from their regional Eisenhower Consortium [<http://www.enc.org/about/consort/index.htm>] or by contacting The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse, 1929 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1079, (800) 621-5785, Fax (614) 292-2066, or e-mail: info@enc.org.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS continued...

The Third Annual Northeast Informal Science Education (NISEN) Conference

September 13-14, 1999

Exact location in New England and additional details to be announced.

NISEN is an informal education network open to all in the Northeast Region (New England and New York), coordinated by the Eisenhower Regional Alliance at TERC, and the Museum Institute for Teaching Science (MITS, Inc.). NISEN Conferences address a broad range of issues that impact informal education. Particular focus is given to issues such as: designing effective teacher professional development, working with state and national standards, partnering with schools, and other topics related to informal education supporting education reform.

For more information, to read or subscribe to the NISEN listserv (RA-Infomal-Ed), and for links to many informal education resources, visit the Regional Alliance Informal Education Website at: <http://ra.terc.edu/informaled>

Learning in Museums Seminar

Sponsored by the American Association of Museums, with the cooperation of the Museum of the Rockies

September 25-27, 1999

Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, Montana

Learn more about learning in museums research being conducted at various sites around the U.S. and apply research findings to your practice.

Contact: Professional Education Programs, American Association of Museums, 1575 Eye St. N.W., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005.

Phone: (202) 289-9114 Email: seminars@aam-us.org

NOT A MEMBER OF AERA? JOIN US

American Education Research Association members receive the *Educational Researcher*, the *Review of Education Research* and other publications. Through publications, the annual meeting, and Special Interest Groups like our own ILER SIG, members share ideas and results of research. Each SIG is given a number of sessions at the annual meeting based on the number of members of AERA that belong to the SIG. **To have more sessions related to informal learning environments, we need more members of AERA to join our SIG and more SIG members to join AERA.** AERA membership is \$45, student memberships are available for \$20.

For more information about AERA see <http://aera.net> or call (202) 223 - 9485.

Informal Learning Environments Research
A Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association

TIME TO RENEW YOUR SIG MEMBERSHIP

New and renewing membership is due each April. Send your name, address, institution's name, phone number, fax number, and email address with a check for \$5 (payable to AERA SIG) to the membership chair at the address below. Please indicate whether or not you are an AERA member. You need not be a member of AERA to join this SIG or receive this newsletter. (Why join AERA? See page 5.) **Renewal will help the SIG in its goal to increase the number of informal learning environments research sessions at future AERA annual meetings — giving us a greater voice in the educational research community.** For additional information see our SIG Website at <http://darwin.sesp.nwu.edu/informal/>

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