

## Virtual Visitors and Real Readers

### Evaluation research in contemporary free-learning environments – Virtual versus Reality.

How can we evaluate the power of experiential learning against a backdrop of an obsession with the virtual, push-button, touch-screen world. Methods of evaluation have been developed separating these two domains, and considering these as mutually exclusive environments, but are they? Are the methods used to research and evaluate the virtual world transferable to the experiential domain? Can an interactive exhibit be evaluated using methods designed for experiential learning environments?

The Visitor Studies Group (VSG) is delighted to announce the 2006 Visitor Research Summer School.

**21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2006 in At-Bristol Science Centre  
Harbourside, Bristol, BS1 5DB [www.at-bristol.org.uk](http://www.at-bristol.org.uk)**

Set in the award winning At-Bristol science centre, this event invites speakers and audience to examine and explore different approaches to a study of the learning experience.

This **two-day event** will consist of:

- **Speakers** from a cross section of museums, science centres and other attractions. They include leading consultants, as well as professionals from academic institutions, and national and international museums and attractions.
- The **presentation of practical case studies** which will give insightful and useful support to colleagues working in this field. The programme will include both short and detailed case studies presented by guest speakers including:
  - Emma Cooke and Ben Gammon on evaluating an interactive gallery in At-Bristol
  - Martin Bazley from SEMLAC on real learning from virtual environments
  - Andrew McIntyre on whether pushing buttons, pulling levers and pumping water can actually teach anything.
  - Rob Bowker on how teachers make the best use of learning environments outside the classroom.
  - The British Interactive Group – case studies in evaluating interactive interpretation
- **Provocative debate** based on issues and topics raised by the day's speakers. Hosted at one of the city's comfortable and friendly riverside bars, the evening debate will begin from the following points:
  - High-tech versus low-tech,
  - Real learning from real experiences, against learning from virtual experiences

To book a place for the Summer School 2006 please contact Mary Phelps, VSG Administration, 22 Church Avenue, London SW14 8NN [mary@mary-phelps.com](mailto:mary@mary-phelps.com) for a booking form or call 020 8392 2357.

**The event will cost £120 for non-members of the Visitor Studies Group, £90 for Individual and Group members, and £65 for Student members.**

The fee includes all speakers, events and the debate. It also includes refreshments and lunch on both days. Evening meals and accommodation are not included - accommodation close to the venues can be booked through the Bristol Tourist Information Centre ([visitbristol.co.uk](http://visitbristol.co.uk)).