Video games: addictive learning?
Spokes: Are video games becoming more accepted in the cultural and e-learning fields?

Video games are now 50 years old. Like all new forms of culture, novels, cinema and comic books in their time, video games have been heavily criticised in mainstream society. This is no longer the case. They are gaining public recognition and cultural legitimacy. Let us not forget that most forms of culture are first and foremost a matter of technology. We pick up a technical object, such as a book or a film, to reach a specific mental state. In the same way, we take pleasure in our relationship with a machine (the computer), as it immerses us in a simulated universe, allowing us to create avatars and interact with programmed imaginary worlds – the video game.

When exploring video games’ potential as learning tools, we must remember what makes them so successful: they appeal to players’ conviction and intuition. Educational video games development is in an experimental phase and research is in progress, particularly as far as formal education is concerned; although some arguments have been put forward using this research, we still do not have products that are perfectly aligned with the requirements of teachers and pupils.

What makes a video game a useful learning tool?

A serious game?
The pleasure of playing is a powerful motivation: games stimulate the mind and improve concentration. This is why learning specialists are so interested in games. In my view, there are three types of useful games: a game with a message, a game which helps you practice a skill, and a game that provides information. A game is a type of media: it conveys information, ideas, representations and models. Furthermore, the more we play, the more we practice and the better we become at playing. Once acquired skills can be transferred to the real world, the game becomes “useful” and a serious game. Its aim becomes more than simply to entertain.

Is there tangible evidence that video games improve certain human abilities?

Research laboratories specialising in cognitive science take great interest in the skills developed by players, especially their dexterity, concentration, anticipating skills and performances. All video games develop certain skills, e.g. finding your way around a three-dimensional environment, helping other people and communicating using graphic representations. On this basis, commercial games offer a treasure trove of tools for learning professionals. Acquired skills can be physical or kinaesthetic: very often games recreate movements or processes in a realistic way, and players can memorise combinations of movements and sequences that they are then able to reproduce outside of the game. These simulation games are inspired by professional training tools, such as flight or surgical simulators.

Some games challenge players to deal with complex situations and develop a thought and experimentation process close to a “real” scientific approach. Video games are a great incentive to get involved in sharing and exchanging knowledge. They generate networks that turn them into mass media with a large number of participants.
Could video games be a type of therapeutic agent? Or the opposite, do they generate damaging addiction?

Throughout human history, games in general have been offering a form of “compensation” for reality. Video games are no exception. Often, the more frustrating reality is the more we need games and make-believe to cope with it.

Most video games are by essence egalitarian and fair, two core values of contemporary Western political imagination. In a video game, everyone has a chance to succeed and can escape their social position over the course of the game. The gaming principle of progression reconnects players with the fantasy of social mobility and success. The machine supports and helps players, judging and rewarding their actions fairly.

Experts who sat on our Science advisory panel argue that problem of over-reliance on or addiction to video games is not caused by video games themselves, but by current social difficulties and their negative impact on citizens.

It seems that companies and other powerful stakeholders have fully understood the potential of games and are now using them to spread their own messages. Is there still room for the creativity of grass-roots player communities?

A well-designed, engaging game can encourage players to commit to an activity, a school of thought or a strategy. In certain business sectors, companies use games as a way to stimulate productivity or as a marketing tool. The gamification trend, which turns all sorts of activities into entertainment, raises a number of questions. For instance, can individuals learn if they are “forced” to play?

The history of computing is littered with contradictory movements. A tradition of free exchange between hobbyists coexists with a profitable industry, and players often divert or subvert games – diversions or subversions that are in turn re-used by the games production industry. The creativity of players extends beyond video games themselves in several ways. A mod, for example, is a game created by modifying an existing game, and a machinima is a film made using a game engine. There is a genuine, thriving video games culture, driven by numerous creative communities.

Gold mine

A database of 150 serious games rated by players:

www.cite-sciences.fr/inmediats/seriousgame/index.php (in French)

Thinkers

Three academics sat on the Jeu video, l’expo, Scientific Panel:

• Mathieu Triclot, philosopher, specialized in the epistemology of science and technology. Wrote Philosophie des jeux videos, available on line (in French):


• Thomas Gaon, psychologist. Studies pathologies associated with online gaming and video games addiction. Argues that violent video games do not make players violent and can be a tool to sublimate one’s violent urges (which other forms of fiction have done in the past). See www.omnsh.org/thomas.gaon.

• Olivier Mauco, politologist specialized in serious games. Writes on serious games as tools of political communication.

www.univ-paris1.academia.edu/OlivierMauco (papers in English).

THE JEU VIDEO EXHIBITION

Summative evaluation carried out one month after opening established a typology of visitors and their reactions to the exhibition:

• Delighted children – enjoyed playing the games
• Worried parents – took their children because they wanted to raise awareness about the “dangers” of video gaming – went away disappointed
• Satisfied parents – attended because they wanted their children to have fun, consider video games an important part of popular culture
• Passionate teenagers – often attended in groups of peers, satisfied to see an exhibition showcasing the gaming culture in a ‘mainstream’ institution
• Mixed feelings couples – one partner a gamer, the other one a non-gamer who had a go at playing in the ‘beginners workshop’ but wanted to know more about “dangers”.

Produced by universcience

Open at Cité des sciences (Paris)

22 October 2013 – 24 August 2014

www.universcience.fr

Curator: Pierre Duconseille, Exhibitions Division

Coordinator: Étienne Saint Narcisse, Publishing & Innovative Media Content Division
We want to give young people a place in the story of science.” That is how Bart Van de Laar, Head of Science LinX, describes the mission his university-based science center has developed over the past eight years. “We don’t just want them to learn some theory thought up by very clever scientists”, he explains, “but rather to participate in science, interacting with real scientists and real questions. And take up that challenge in education and work.” This is not only the essence of Science LinX, a department of the University of Groningen (Netherlands), but also of the Science Gallery, linked to Trinity College Dublin (Ireland). For its part, Universum Bremen (Germany) is aware of having drifted away from its founding university but wants to reinstate those links.

It’s a bit like football; there is only one Lionel Messi, but there are millions of amateurs who enjoy kicking a ball around. In the view of Van de Laar, the role of a science centre is to coach people to start kicking the ball, “And we’re the junior league, trying to inspire kids in school to choose a science career. This way we could contribute to a massive increase of science students in Groningen.” Science LinX organizes training programmes for science teachers, runs science trucks, welcomes school classes at the university and sets up serious encounters with science through exhibitions and events. But Science LinX also reaches out to the city and beyond, by participating in the local science café, the annual Night of Arts and Science and national events.

According to Van de Laar, this capacity to bring the public inside a working research organization but also to take science out to the public is the biggest asset of university-based science centres. A strategic position at a time when policy makers, in particular at EU level, are urging universities, science centres and local science stakeholders at large to forge stronger ties. Science LinX participated in the Ecsite coordinated PLACES project on scientific culture and currently coordinates a €2.5 million EU project called ‘IRRESISTIBLE’, aiming to link formal (at school) with informal (at a science museum or festival) teaching to familiarize pupils with science.

Science LinX invites scientists to explain and discuss research with teachers and pupils. “We can only do that because we know who’s who in the science faculty. That is one big advantage of being part of a University,” But is it possible to both promote science and represent just one university? “A very good question. Being part of a science faculty, like authors need a publisher. When it is about reaching out to teenagers and young adults a press release is not enough. Not even when you’re on the front page of Nature.”

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Science centres and museums come in all shapes and sizes. Some target the very young, aiming to instill a sense of wonder, with colorful and spectacular exhibits. Others focus on history, showing collections sometimes built over centuries. Still others invite the public to be part of science itself, which science centres based at, run by or born from universities like Science LinX, the Science Gallery and Universum seem particularly well placed to do. Are they shaping the future of science centres at large?

Visions for universities and science centres: going back to the roots

For OSCILLATOR exhibition, the Science Gallery opened the floor to a group of artists and researchers from outside Trinity College. “The Body is a Big Place” is the resulting artwork – here a heart is being reanimated at the gallery opening in 2012.

“We feel that science centres should be very closely connected to universities. Like a publisher who needs his authors, science centres need real scientists to involve visitors in science, which after all is a human endeavor”, says Van de laar. “But universities also need the networks and expertise of science centres, like authors need a publisher. When it is about reaching out to teenagers and young adults a press release is not enough. Not even when you’re on the front page of Nature.”

Science LinX invites scientists to explain and discuss research with teachers and pupils. “We can only do that because we know who’s who in the science faculty. That is one big advantage of being part of a University,” But is it possible to both promote science and represent just one university? “A very good question. Being part of a science faculty, as we are, we have lots of resources available, like lab space and over a thousand researchers on call. But there is the danger of just promoting local interests.” Van de laar argues that being at the university brings so many regional and international contacts that it keeps the balance. “So far, the
features

The university has never interfered in our projects. On the contrary, they’ve asked us to represent the university on several occasions. Interestingly, Universum Bremen feels like it lost some of its soul by growing too independent from its founding university. When it opened in 2000, it set the standards for a generation of German science centres. “But after a while the science centre and the university sort of drifted apart,” regrets current Director Herbert Münder.

With around half its visitors under 18, the centre is an ideal spot to introduce potential students to science and technology. “That is necessary, as the number of students taking scientific subjects is predicted to go down over the next few years,” Münder and his staff are working on a new vision for Universum Bremen: “The science centre of the future should be a communication platform for science with an exhibition attached, not the other way round. To achieve this, we need to bring back scientists.” He points to the EU research agenda Horizon 2020 and its strong public engagement with science component. So scientists will be asked to sit on Universum’s advisory board, and ties with the university are intensifying. “However, we are not part of the public relations department, we want to stay neutral in the debates we will facilitate,” cautions Münder. This new vision will be implemented in the new permanent exhibition opening next year.

Brunswick’s vision for the future is to deepen the visitor engagement: “We currently run four exhibitions each year, which takes a lot of time to plan and build. So we’re building a network of Science Galleries across the world, which means we can swap exhibitions. That will free some time to work on the depth of engagement.” And it will not loosen ties with research, he assures: “Each Gallery will be linked to a local science institute. Exhibits need to be relevant to each local community.”

University-based science centers are in a privileged position to contribute to the evolution of science centres at large argues Van de laar: “To get people involved in education, research and innovation we need to explore which models work and which don’t. This is vital to the mission of science centres.”

The HAPP? exhibition at the Science Gallery explored the theme of happiness through real research experiments, designed ‘inhouse’ by the School of Psychology at Trinity College Dublin. Results collected in the exhibition were published in a book called ‘Happy Nation?’ written by Malcolm MacLachlan and Karen Hand.

The TeiChenzoo exhibition was developed by Universum Bremen in collaboration with the DESY particle physics organization in Hamburg – an example of successful collaboration outside of Universum’s original founding university.

The Science LinX Live project takes scientists and visitors out of campus, onto surprising locations such as canal boats or private kitchens.

© Universum

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As a first timer, what are your impressions of the Ecsite Annual Conference?

There is a real egalitarian spirit. You can really walk up to anyone and start a conversation.

I liked the fact that the whole Museon team were wearing the same ‘People, Planet, Peace’ t-shirts at the Nocturne, front-of-house staff and heads of departments alike.

As a graphic designer, how do you rate the range of sessions in the programme?

The Ecsite conference was an opportunity to widen my horizons: I wasn’t particularly looking for sessions on graphic design. I got what I wanted: get a feel for the ‘big issues’ in the field these days and pick and choose from a diversity of topics.

What was your best moment?

The end of the Nocturne at Museon was magical. The music stopped and the lights came back on but the crowd wanted more… Before we knew it, someone was sitting behind the drums, maracas and tambourines appeared, some of us were drumming on the counter… and there was one more hour of dancing to the sound of this spontaneous jam session!

And your worst?

Realising a few hours before my session that some of my presentation had gone missing in a Mac-Pc conversion gone wrong. I had to redo all my slides! On the upside, it allowed me to adapt them a little after having watched others’ sessions.

What messages or ideas do you take home with you?

I was very interested by the session on indoor visitor tracking. Many institutions have been trying it but so far everyone is still experimenting. I appreciated everyone’s openness in sharing mistakes and lessons learnt. We hope to meet again next year in Trento to share developments.

In another session on websites, someone mentioned that they could see a clear correlation between one day’s onsite attendance and the previous day’s amount of traffic on their website. If we can witness the same phenomenon at Heureka this could be turned into a great planning tool!

What do you hope for the next 25 years of Ecsite conferences?

A new generation of professionals is emerging. Knowledge transmission between newcomers and old-timers is crucial for the future.

One thing could make this handover easier: we often know names but not faces! It would be great to set up a ‘wall of fame’ to help newcomers identify ‘stars’ and ‘experts’.
Why did Bibliotheca Alexandrina decide to have a booth at the Business Bistro for the first time? Colleagues have been attending for many years but this year we felt that we needed a physical space to present some of our projects (our new Family park in Cairo, our first self-produced planetarium movie) and to act as a contact point for Ecsite’s sister organization NAMES (North Africa and Middle East Science Centres Network). How do you rate the success of your presence at the Business Bistro? It was definitely good for our image. We certainly have made many new contacts and have seen a lot of interest for our projects. Let’s see if this translates into business opportunities! I’m coming back with an open-source downloadable exhibition, an invitation to participate in a Spanish think tank and a proposition to join a Horizon 2020 proposal in my suitcase… We hear your 14-year-old son came along and interacted with people and then informally socialized with the same colleagues a few hours later. He was also rather impressed with the Queen’s appearance at the Opening ceremony. What would be your advice to next year’s Business Bistro first timers? Come prepared! I was impressed by the general quality of booths. If you’re coming from far away, give serious thought to what you want to present physically (e.g. interactivities, publications etc.) versus what you can show digitally.

What changes have you seen in the past 20-25 years? In recent years we are more aware than ever with the business aspects of running a science centre. There is also a greater awareness among science centres of the large number of stakeholders with whom we work, so the palette of sessions has widened accordingly. Twenty-five years ago we were more looking inwards, focussed on the offer (e.g. interactive exhibitions) and justifying that we had a role as educational agents and visitor attractions. Now we look more outwards, at the demand side of the business (e.g. “hard to reach” audiences) and more broadly at the whole question of our impact. Perhaps we sometimes worry too much about trying to demonstrate our impact among the outcomes of a visit, while not taking enough notice of the impact of the process that visitors undergo while enjoying their time at a science centre.

What did you wish Ecsite for the next 25 years? The key thing is financial stability, so that Ecsite can continue to build its range of services to members. Then I wish that Ecsite, which has been so good at building bridges, will work more fully with academics from the “science communication and engagement” field. I would like to see one day of the conference devoted to peer-reviewed presentations, available in advance, where researchers and practitioners would bring their separate perspectives to one of the challenges we face.

What changes have you seen in the past 20-25 years? What are your take-home ideas or messages from this conference? The Conference has many functions for its attendees, but mainly it offers professional development – not only for beginners but right through to established leaders. This year, at my roundtable session for people planning to start a new science centre, a very senior member of the expert panel fed back that he had “learned quite a bit from the questions that people asked him”.

So the take-home message is that we never stop learning.

How did you make it happen? Getting the gaming space organised was a great collaborative experience: a bunch of people who had never met before managed to get everything going, gathering equipment and software, recruiting volunteers… in true Ecsite spirit. The same collaborative spirit prevailed in the surgery-type session that took place in the space. Colleagues could bring a “true challenge from a current gaming project and ask a group of peers to help solve it. That session surely saved participants hours of consulting!

What kind of games are the Ecsite crowd? We have welcomed a very diverse audience to the Gaming space: total beginners, rusty players – and some serious experts too! It looked like many participants really appreciated the opportunity to escape the conference’s hectic pace for a few minutes and enjoy some peace and silence – as silent and peaceful as raising dodos on an island subjected to severe selective pressure or sneakingly making your way through a dark crowded termite nest can be.

How do you think Ecsite conferences will look like in 25 years? I’m not a fortune teller! I hope for audiences to get broader with people from more diverse professional backgrounds. I would personally like to meet more colleagues from academia in the same way very few of us have time to sit down and play, very few of us have time to sit down and think about the big picture! It’s invigorating to be taken away from daily emergencies and question one’s practice in the light of ‘big ideas’.

The spirit of the Gaming space was to give busy people the time they never take in their normal lives to sit down and give it a go. This would have been very useful to me a couple of years ago when I agreed to develop a first person shooter termite game, not having spent enough serious time engrossed in a video game for many years!

How did the idea of having a Gaming space arise? Sessions relating to gaming attracted a lot of interest in the last annual conference editions, including from colleagues who don’t know the gaming culture very well but were considering serious games projects. There is only so much you can say about games to non-gamers – they need to play! What do you wish Ecsite conferences will look like in 25 years?!
What was your best moment?
Pr. Ian Goldin’s keynote speech. He’s a great speaker, able to deliver inspirational top-level content with carefully chosen illustrations. The phrase “the past is a very poor guide to the future” stays with me. My team were also amazed at the energy coming from the Maker space – we’ve come back from the conference with carefully chosen illustrations.

What do you want for the next 25 years of Ecsite conferences?
I personally think that we shouldn’t be afraid of bridging the gap between profit and non-profit.

Interestingly, our colleagues from academia have embarked on such a trend, with more frequent public-private research projects. In practice, a share of our community comes around the world who are committed to putting their heads together and solving common issues.

As next year’s Ecsite Annual Conference Host, you must have been attentively listening to conversations…
I asked numerous participants about their future expectations and co-organized a session entitled “What it Visions for the next 25 years of Ecsite conferences” that generated a wealth of ideas. I heard a lot of voices calling for more participation and openness: a broader audience with more attendees from other fields and continents, more young professionals and face-to-face staff, an even bolder approach to sharing experiences (including failures), a more participatory process in the making of the programme...

Unsurprisingly, this echoes current trends in our sector at large. It seems that the field’s commitment to social relevance and imperatives born from the current economic crisis have converged to firmly root social inclusion at the top of this year’s agenda.

What messages or ideas did you take home with you?
The idea that we are not alone! There is a community of peers dealing with the same questions as us. We’re particularly interested in Fab. labs and their operational challenges. My colleagues now have tighter links with peers all around the world who are committed to putting their heads together and solving common issues.

From companies and that business-oriented colleagues can question our practice in constructive ways – while of course retaining our thinking on food, understood both literally and metaphorically.

Five good reasons to be in Trento (Italy) on 11 - 13 June 2015 and taste “Food for curious minds”:
• attend the largest science engagement event in Europe, its platform for exchange, training and discussion and unraveled networking scene
• pay a visit to our host MUSE, the brand new science museum designed by Renzo Piano
• visit EXPO 2015 in Milan and its “Feeding the Planet, Energy for life” theme
• quench your thirst for nature and science, modern arts and ancient history by visiting the UNESCO heritage Dolomites mountains, MART, Bucinocasio Castle, mountain trails and lake shores
• taste simplicity and authenticity: good wine and traditional food accompany our thinking on food, understood both literally and metaphorically.

As the new chair of the ACF, what are the general directions in which you would like to see the conference evolve?
The conference is the most visible and for many the most important activity of Ecsite. It should, on one hand, mirror membership. What are our ideas, problems and visions? At the conference, people from pretty different professional and institutional backgrounds can share and advocate their views on the same platform, on an equal footing. On the other hand, the conference can be an open window. It is an opportunity for fresh winds to blow – to hear voices from outside our field, insights about societal change and the challenges of science literacy and science communication in general.

In all, the conference should be more participatory. I would like to involve fresh ideas on how to create more dialogue in the programme, both officially and informally.

That’s where all learning happens.

What were your best moments?
Many members of staff involved in face-to-face interaction with the public used to attend the Ecsite Annual Conference thanks to the EU Grundtvig grant. Unfortunately, its merge with the Erasmus+ programme makes it harder to use for that purpose – but many professionals remain convinced that the conference needs to welcome as many people as possible who are in direct contact with the audiences we work so hard to reach.

The Ecsite team would like to build a list of alternative grants, be they regional, national or international. Send any suggestion to Members Services Manager
lschweingruber@ecsite.eu.

A final word from the new chair of the Annual Conference Programme Committee
Practically, how will ideas generated in the “BeyondEcsite25” session for the future of the Ecsite Annual Conference be used?
The “BeyondEcsite25” ideas are an important source for our future work. Along with the overall evaluation of the conference, these ideas will be on our agenda in September when the Annual Conference Programme Committee meets. We must create ways for the entire community to be inspired by these ideas when they design and submit new and exciting programme proposals for the next conferences. Every year we should try out something new.

Some of the ideas can be introduced as they are; for some other ideas – e.g. how to increase participation of young staff – we have to think of ways to make this possible. We have to balance the need to take economic and human resources imperatives into account with the commitment to becoming more welcoming and inclusive.
features

EXHIBITIONS

Be Democracy
This dynamic exhibition developed by Explology debates democracy and the influence of social media on democratic participation. Contents are generated by visitors on site, via the exhibition website or on Twitter. Visitors can express their views and ‘like’ those of others on a series of topics related to democracy. In the exhibition, they do so by raising their thumb in front of a mosaic of projected sentences (a movement tracked by Kinect). The input is displayed in a giant sphere, whose final look will have been entirely shaped by visitors. 15 May – 23 November 2014, Nobel Peace Center (Oslo, Norway).

www.expology.com

Physics in Everyday Life / A Física no dia-a-dia
In this exhibition there are no elaborate laboratories or complex electronic gadgets, only household appliances and common materials. Experimentation is the key to knowledge and magic black boxes are not allowed – everything is on show. 16 June – 14 September 2014, Pavilion of Knowledge – Ciência Viva (Lisbon, Portugal).

www.pavconhecimento.pt

Sink or Sail? / Ujub või upub?
This exhibition is an exciting introduction to water physics as well as an adventure in the history of marine travel and maritime disasters. This collaboration between AHHAA and Seaplane Harbour is said to be “the largest and technically most complex exhibition that has ever been made in Estonia”. Visitors can expect to solve the great mystery of the Bermuda Triangle, try to escape from a sinking ship, find out what happens if you try to sail the sea in a rectangular boat… The exhibition opened in May and will be presented in AHHAA until 21 November 2015. In 2015, it will be at the Seaplane Harbour Museum in Tallinn. www.phpp.ee

Picture: sinking directors of AHHAA and Seaplane Harbour. © Walter Schels

Mind Caught in the Act / umysł Przyłapany
Mind Caught in the Act, produced by Copernicus Science Centre, started a Polish tour in May 2014. This travelling exhibition questions visitors: “Is reality in fact really as we perceive it?”. The most important “exhibit” are visitors themselves, as they observe their own minds at work. The exhibition consists of 20 interactive exhibits. It has two levels of engagement, a playful one and another providing deeper understanding. The design engages visitors using a diversity of textures. www.kspemik.org.pl

EXHIBITIONS

War and technology / Krieg und Technik
Shortly before the Vienna Technical Museum opened its doors in the summer of 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia – effectively triggering World War I. To fulfill a patriotic mission and boost the population’s enthusiasm for the war, then Director Ludwig Erhard declared that the thematic focus of the museum’s exhibitions should be on “war and technology.” Today a special exhibition gives a succinct overview on the Austrian war effort, based on 100 objects that directly or indirectly relate to World War I. This year-long exhibition can be seen until 5 May 2015.

www.techmuseumwien.at

Technikmuseum Wien

EXHIBITIONS

What are you playing at? / A qué te juegos?
This unusual interactive exhibition on the digital side of our society makes use of vintage, innovative and diverted games. Visitors can play on wide screen, rediscover the icons of the history of video games, experiment new ways of playing “Pong”, command a robot to play “Simon”, pedal to power their game console, use Twitter on an old “minist” terminal, test their gaming profile... The exhibition is open until the end of 2014. Several events are organized alongside, such as a retro-gaming week-end, video game production workshops, and opportunities to reflect on and discuss a range of issues related to our digital society. www.1acasemate.fr

Strange Weather
This exhibition brings together meteorologists, artists, climate scientists, cloud enthusiasts and designers to explore how we model, predict, and even create weather at the Science Gallery in Dublin from 18 July to 2 October 2014. How has the human experience of weather changed over millennia, and how will it change in the next 50 years? What consequences and opportunities will arise from the changing weather of our planet? Curated by CoClimate, Strange Weather will challenge visitors with novel visions of a global culture adapting to extreme weather, and zooms in to explore how strange weather will affect daily commutes, the governance of our cities, and even our fashion choices. www.dublininsciencegallery.com

EXHIBITIONS

Brain Twisters / A vos cerveaux!
A striking scenerography takes visitors through darkness and light to unravel the mysteries of their brain, explore its anatomy in 3D, test its performance and subject it to optical illusions. Videos, games and interactive installations help them get the most out of this fascinating journey inside their skull. Brain Twisters also takes an unusual animal perspective to highlight that each animal perceives the world in a different way and that this subjective perception is directly linked to the organisation of its nervous system. This exhibition produced by Cap Sciences is presented at the Museum of Natural Sciences in Brussels, until 30 August 2015.

www.naturalsciences.be

Life before death / Livet før døden
Few experiences are likely to affect us as profoundly as an encounter with death. Yet death and dying are arguably our last taboos. A photographer and a journalist asked 26 terminally ill people if they could accompany them during their last weeks and days. This exhibition explores the experiences, hopes and fears of the dying. All of them agreed to be photographed shortly after being immediately after their death. The exhibition is presented at the Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology until 1st September 2014, in collaboration with the Norwegian Cancer Society. The Norwegian museum has also developed a programme for students of all ages to engage in discussions about death and dying. Almost 1,000 of them have already participated in discussions.

www.tekniskmuseum.no

EXHIBITIONS

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Downloadable space exhibition and kit of activities on ESA’s Rosetta mission:

The Rosetta mission brought Ecsite Space Group members together to develop collaborative events and resources related to key events and knowledge about Rosetta’s journey, in partnership with ESA, the European Space Agency. An exhibition and educational activities are now available for free to Ecsite members and at a very affordable price to others. Join the campaign and make the most of these ready-made resources.

You can also follow the next steps of Rosetta’s journey and organize unique events in your own institution in relation with Space Group members and Space professionals. Find out more about resources available on Space Group’s webpage. www.ecsite.eu/activities_and_resources/thematic_groups/space-group

NEW BOARD AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Annual General Assembly held on 23 May 2014 saw the election of new Board and Executive Committee members, as well as a change of internal regulations (see www.ecsite.eu/about/governance).

Executive Committee

President: Céline Viva – Pavilion of Knowledge (Lisbon, Portugal) – Rosalia Vargas, President; Vice-President: Wolffe (Bergen, Norway) – Sven Anders Dahl, Chief Executive Officer (newly elected)

Treasurer: Cécile Ollier (Toulouse, France) – Jean-Baptiste Desbois, Executive Director (newly elected)

Past President: CopenHillScience (Warsaw, Poland) – Robert Rinfret, Director

Trustees

AHIIA Science Centre (Tartu, Estonia) – Pilti Kull, Member of the Management Board

Città della Scienza (Naples, Italy) – Vincenzo Lipardi, Chief Executive Officer

Experimentarium (Helsingør, Denmark) – Kim Gladstone Herlev, CEO (Staging for Ager Høeg, (newly re-elected)

MUSE, Museo delle Scienze (Trento, Italy) – Michele Lanzinger, Director

Parque de las Ciencias (Granada, Spain) – Ernesto Páramo Sureda, Director

LIFE OF ECSITE

Science Museum (London, United Kingdom) – Alexandra Burch, Director of Learning, Science Museum Group (newly elected)

Teknikens Hus (Luleå, Sweden) – Helena Lilja, Director of Programs and operations

Universum Bremen (Bremen, Germany) – Herbert Minder, Managing Director (newly elected)

Ustavona Hëla eksperimentov (Ljubljana, Slovenia) – Mila Kosi, Director (newly elected)

Vitensenteret, the Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology (Oslo, Norway) – Jan Alfred Andreasen, Manager

New ECSite Members

DuVerden – Sjøfartsmuseum og vitensenter, Porsgrunn (Norway)

Sweden Museum of Performing Arts, Stockholm (Sweden)

Upgraded to Full Member

Sissa Medialab – Trieste (Italy)

Sustaining Members

Callista Exhibition Group, Serris (France)

Exhibits Development Group – E06, Saint Paul (United States)

Associate Members

ANMS – Associazione Nazionale Musei Scientifici, (Italy)

Blue World Institute of Marine Research and Conservation, Wil Lossy (Croazia)

Center for Research and Analyses (CRA), Sofia (Bulgaria)

Centre Città della Scienza di Sintrà, Sintrà (Portugal)

Centre Città della Scienza di Alavila, Alacanén (Spain)

Institute of Psychiatry – Engaging Mental Health, London (United Kingdom)

Ontario Science Centre, Toronto, Ontario (Canada)

Science Village Scandinavia AB, Lund (Sweden)

XKElaboratorio della curiosità, Torino (Italy)

LIFE OF ECSITE 2013 ANNUAL REPORT OUT

Witness the collective power of Ecsite members. Together in 2013, we created the largest ever gathering of science engagement practitioners in Europe, collected 1,000 citizens’ views on urban waste management, delivered 9 pan-European projects, drank 2,750 coffees in three days of Annual Conference... The report includes a detachable world map of Ecsite members – send pictures of it up your office wall to communications@ecsite.eu

NEW ECSITE PROJECT MANAGER

Audrey Koczynska joined the Ecsite Executive Office in May. She is leading the Ecsite project, co-managing SYNERGENE with Luisa Marino and is now the liaison person for the Space Group at the Ecsite Office.

25 YEARS OF ECSITE GATHERINGS IN PICTURES

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of Ecsite’s Annual Conference, the Ecsite team launched a call for pictures of past conferences and events. More than 70 photos of the old days can now be browsed through on the Ecsite Executive Office flickr account. Featured here: first Ecsite meeting at Cité des sciences in Paris in January 1989 (®B Baudin / EPPDCSI). Contributions still welcome, particularly for events before 2010. www.flickr.com/photos/79586792@N02/set/3022442766/

REMEMBERING ALAN FRIEDMAN

Alan Friedman, former Director of the New York Hall of Science, passed away on 4 May 2014. A physicist by training, he took on the challenge of turning the then badly shaped New York Hall of Science into an internationally recognized institution. He had then set up a consultancy after retiring. Countless voices in the science centre community praise his legacy: his constant advocacy for science centres’ independence, his concern for staff development, his work for the Noyce Leadership… The New York Hall of Science created a page for friends and colleagues to share their thoughts at www.nysci.org/thinking-of-alan

THE SCENE

The Board of Experimentarium (Hellerup, Denmark) expressed its full confidence in previously Deputy CEO Kim Gladstone Herlev by making him CEO from July on. Kim Gladstone Herlev “Experimentarium is in the midst of an extremely exciting period in its history. We have moved our exhibition from Hellerup to Christianshavn island just opposite the Royal Danish Playhouse. We will be located here until early 2016, when an extended and refurbished Experimentarium will be completed. My goal is to get everyone who lives or stays in Copenhagen to pay us a visit on the island. This place is simply outstanding!” Previous CEO Ager Høeg “will continue working at Experimentarium, managing the final stages of the science centre’s extension project.

The board of the Finnish Science Centre Foundation chose Dr. (T.) Tapio Koivu (50) as the new Director of the Finnish Science Centre Heureka. Koivu is currently CEO of Makery, a company that combines business development and food sector expertise and will take his new post in August 2014. He has a long experience in leading research organizations both public and private and an international background. He is following in the footsteps of Anneli Pauli, who is starting as the Rector of the Lappeenranta University of Technology beginning of July 2014.

THE SCENE

Mid June, Maurice Bitrian took over from Lesley Lewis who served 16 years as CEO of the Ontario Science Centre (Canada) and “leaves an indelible impression on a generation of Canadians of the importance of science in today’s society”. Bitrian has a background in physics and astronomy and solid experience in environmental, economic and science policy-making and international negotiations. He declared: “This is a unique opportunity to bring together my passion and experience in science, education, and public service to the furthering of science education and innovation. I look forward to working with the Board of Trustees and the Ontario Science Centre staff towards this goal.”
GrANTS AnD SuBScrIPtIONS

The Biogen Idec Foundation has awarded the Museum of Science, Boston a $2.5 million grant to support its ‘Hall of Human Life’ permanent exhibition. Among other things, the grant will support the face-to-face multimedia lab located at the centre of space, named the Biogen Idec Foundation Exploration Hub. Re-opened in 2013, the ‘Hall of Human Life’ is an interactive 950 sqm gallery, in which visitors embark on a personalised exploration of the human body thanks to a barcoded wristband.

THE SCENE

Superscience by Miraikan (national Museum of emerging Science and Technology, Tokyo) end of April. The exhibition’s highlight will be the display of a space rock fragment donated by US President Nixon in 1973.

AWARDS

Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia – ‘Leonardo da Vinci’ raised €15,000 of its €15,000 initial target: 235 backers donated over €7,000.

2013 grant from the Flemish government.

Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia - ‘Leonardo da Vinci’ raised €50,660 of public donations towards its future space gallery, opening later this year. The permanent exhibition’s highest will be the display of a lunar rock fragment donated by US President Nixon in 1973.

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It All Started on an Autumn Afternoon

Many people have already told this story: it all started in Boston at the Café of the Museum of Science, in the afternoon of 17 October 1989. Jöel de Rosnay, the Director of International Relations of La Cité de Sciences et de l’Industrie (Paris, France), met up with a handful of young Europeans to share their dreams about a European network of science centres – and what an afternoon it must have been!

Although we are no longer just a handful of Europeans, we are still young, and we still have dreams. Ecsite grew from the vision of “The Magnificent Seven”, as we affectionately call that group of founding fathers, to become a leading network of science centres and museums.

Now, twenty five years later, we owe it to take their vision further. For that we have to understand how we got here and where we are heading to, with a clear perception of today’s challenges and the new tools that we have at our disposal.

These tools would have been unthinkable for the founding fathers for whom the fax was the acme of communication technology: now we have the internet, the smartphone, low-cost distance communication, a world of new networking tools – and regarding these, we might have news for you soon.

Today’s challenges are not very different from those faced in the early days: what does Ecsite stand for? What does it mean to be a member? Where does Europe end, geographically? What do members expect and how do we deliver it? Using which financial means? How democratic is the Ecsite governance? Tough questions, indeed. We discussed some of these at the Ecsite Annual General Meeting in The Hague end of May. We intend to take this strategic thinking through the next year, leading up to the annual conference in Trento. The Directors Forum in Tartu in November will be an important step.

Formally, Ecsite was born on 28 November 1990. Informally, as usual, the story is not as clear, hence more exciting. I’ll get back to it over the next Spokes issues. Do not miss them, there is a lot to be shared.

Rosalía Vargas
President of Ecsite
and Ciência Viva - Pavilion of Knowledge
(Lisbon, Portugal)
Visual mapping of the #ecsite2014 Twitter feed top 100 contributors.
2,883 tweets were posted during the 2014 Ecsite Annual Conference.
Explore this map powered by the application Bluenod:
http://bluenod.com/map/ecsite14