

Designing and enhancing interactive exhibits for a greater focus on science inquiry skills.

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With a traditional objective of demonstrating scientific concepts and principles, science centre exhibits can have a limited range of variables for visitors to influence, and may result in a narrow range of outcomes. This can be engaging and memorable – press the button and make the ring fly! – but only goes part way towards engaging the visitor in the process of science inquiry and experimentation. Designing open-ended interactive STEM exhibits, where the visitor has the ability to change multiple variables and influence the outcome significantly, is not an easy thing to do – particularly when considering the durability requirements and permanent nature of many science centre exhibits. In this presentation, I will share exhibit case studies from the development of SparkLab, and outline our approach to designing (or enhancing) exhibits to increase visitor-led inquiry and enable more open-ended experimentation.