

DESTINATIONS ON-LINE

Tryscience.org

TryScience (www.tryscience.org), the first worldwide science and technology centre, is a collaboration of IBM, the New York Hall of Science, and the more than 450 member institutions of the Association of Science-Technology Centers, together engaging over 150 million visitors annually in intriguing educational science activities and explorations.

Marcy Klein, Executive Producer of TryScience, introduces the multitude of possibilities offered by the website and discusses the project's wider aims.

The TryScience website offers a new way for people to gain access to and experience the fun of science through interactive exhibits, multimedia adventures, and live camera views and 'field trips' to museums around the world. TryScience also provides hands-on science activities that children, parents and teachers can do at home or in school.

The project is made possible by an unprecedented partnership between the world's leading science and technology centres and newly developed IBM technology. For example, the TryScience site features the use of Hot Media®, which allows for streaming video and interactive explorations without a plug-in.

TryScience not only connects science centres with the internet, but does so on a 'one-stop shop' approach for Web users. Through the website, a child in New York or Australia can have access to museum experiences in the United Kingdom, California and Canada. Rich, global museum resources are developed into engaging Web interactives, stimulating users to 'try science' both on- and off-line, as well as at the

physical museums. Among the science and technology museums linked to www.tryscience.org are the Deutsches Museum in Munich, and the newly opened Maloka Ciencia + Tecnologia Interactiva, the largest interactive science and technology centre in Latin America.

Museum benefits

The site is unique in that not only are over 400 science museums represented on www.tryscience.org, but all are encouraged to actively participate and contribute content. Museum resources are leveraged with the TryScience team and IBM, providing a valuable service to museums at no additional cost. TryScience highlights science centres and their content, expands publicity/exposure for the science centre and encourages visitation to the linked museums and their websites.

Like science itself, TryScience will not be static. The content of TryScience will change continually as new experiences and activities are created and added to the site on a regular basis. TryScience brings science to life through the following clusters of activity:

Adventure This highly interactive thematic section currently challenges visitors to 'Discover Extremes at Starfleet Academy.' Choose the identity of a Star Trek character, enroll in the academy as a Starfleet cadet, go on a series of missions to earn 'units' and accumulate discovery trading cards to move to higher levels of mastery. Cadets can work alone or in groups, and swap trading cards in special areas taken from the hit series *Star Trek: Voyager*.

Field Trips A featured field trip takes TryScience visitors to



Undertake experiments on-line



View activities at sites of scientific interest around the world

science centres worldwide. IBM technology permits visitors to experience the best virtual tours and interactive on-line exhibits and activities. The site also provides information on more than 450 science and technology centres to help you find a museum nearby.

Experiments Visitors can try science on-line through an interactive animation in the featured experiment, or choose a 'hands-on' version with common household items. Simple how-to instructions that can be printed out lead children, parents or teachers step-by-step to completing the projects and learning the science involved.

Curious? Visitors answer questions in short polls related to science topics in the news linked to media sources. They can then compare their answers with those of other visitors as they learn about the science.

Live Cams Visitors can see live views from webcams at science and technology centres worldwide, including penguins at the Montreal Biodome, the summit view from the Mt Washington Observatory in New Hampshire and views from the cams at the Deutsches Museum in Munich, Germany.

www.tryscience.org also contains tips for parents and teachers on ways to engage young people in the world of science. It includes an advanced search engine that will enable them to search the websites of science centres around the world.

Much of the value of TryScience is that it allows young people to get interested in science from school and at home. Although more students than ever are enrolled in rigorous science classes and there has been some improvement in test



scores, studies have found that US students' achievement in science overall has been stagnant. According to the National Center for Education statistics, less than 5% of all students take advanced placement biology, less than three in five (56%) take chemistry and only one in four (24 %) take physics. As a result, students graduating from US high schools trail behind their peers in other countries. TryScience is trying to help redress the balance.

What's next for TryScience? In addition to continually adding new features, look for content on the site translated into several languages in the upcoming year and additional partnerships with international museum organizations. The TryScience website has already received some very positive feedback:

Popular Science – '50 Best of the Web' (October 2000)

'TryScience is one of the hottest spots on the internet. Says who? The editors of *Popular Science*. Every year, *Popular Science* magazine scours the internet looking for the Best of the Web, the top 50 sites that exemplify the cutting edge medium of the digital age... Being added to this list means that www.tryscience.org exhibits a combination of technical innovation and savvy presentation that makes it among the internet's finest.'

What they said about us in The Best of the Web:

'Nothing quite captures a child's attention like a good science experiment. That's why more than 400 science learning institutions contributed experiments to this site. Children and adults alike can participate virtually on-line or use household items offline.'

Popular Science magazine – Editors' Pick (August 2000)

'Designed for children between the ages of 8 and 14, TryScience offers the best interactive learning material from more than 400 science museums around the world. This means you can find Ralf the porcupine, who lives at Science North in Sudbury, Ontario, sharing the same cyberaddress as a 72-foot blue whale skeleton at the Museum of Natural History in Santa Barbara, California. TryScience offers field trips, experiments and live webcams. Links allow you to explore individual science museums in more detail.'

Apple i-review (4 stars)

'Anyone who's stepped foot in a science centre knows that it's almost always a hands-on experience. Kids – and adults – poke things, get dizzy watching IMAX movies, smell a rainforest, feel replicas of dinosaur bones and maybe even get shocked by static electricity. TryScience provides similar virtual experiences, making science entertaining and easy to understand. A visitor has three main choices: go on an adventure, try an experiment or take a field trip.

The Adventure ...[is a] complex, visually intense *Star Trek* game that tests one's science smarts. The goal is to collect 'discovery cards' by answering questions about sea otters, weather patterns and so on. After the game, moving on to the Experiments section ... it's great for anyone frantically looking for a science fair project or an inexpensive, rainy day activity.

Science centres from around the world contribute content, so field trips 'transport' the visitor to actual exhibits. Visitors can watch salmon swim at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry or follow a tour through a rock tunnel in Ontario, Canada. There's also an interactive atlas to locate the world's finest science centres.

IBM, the New York Hall of Science and the Association of Science-Technology Centers run the site ... almost every part of the site contains audio to guide the visitor, making it easy for parents and kids – or teachers and students – to explore together.'

New York Times – Website of the day (August 14th, 2000)

'TryScience is a gateway to experience the excitement of contemporary science and technology through on-line and off-line interactivity with science and technology centres worldwide. New interactive content is added regularly to the areas of Adventure, Experiments, Field Trips, Curious? and Live Cams. TryScience is a partnership between IBM Corporation, the New York Hall of Science and the Association of Science-Technology Centers and science centres worldwide.'

TryScience Partners

The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) is a non-profit organization of more than 450 science centres and museums in 42 countries engaging more than 150 million visitors annually in intriguing educational science activities and explorations of scientific phenomena.

The New York Hall of Science features the largest collection of hands-on science in New York City. Ranked as one of the best science museums in the country, the New York Hall of Science is a leading innovator in exhibit technology and education programming.

IBM is the world's largest information technology company with 80 years of leadership in helping businesses innovate. Powered by IBM, the TryScience website utilises IBM's leading Web technologies.