

Comments by Sheila Grinell

Committee on Learning Science in Informal
Environments

National Research Council
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Point of View

- ▶ 30+ years as a practitioner, mostly in science centers
- ▶ Raise questions based on personal observation

Science in Informal Settings is Institutionally Based

- ▶ Huge variety
 - § Vast majority have websites
- ▶ Significant constraints:
 - § Dependence on funding sources
 - § Competition
 - § Established rules of engagement
- ▶ Raises methodological issues

Recent Evolution of Practice

- ▶ Changing sense of roles and goals reflected in language:
 - § Public Understanding of Science
 - § Informal Science Education
 - § Free-choice Learning
- ▶ Focus has shifted from p.o.v. of science to that of audience
- ▶ No institutionalized way for academic research to influence practice

Fit between Medium and Message

- ▶ Place-based (museums, zoos, etc.):

- § General agreement on interactive methods

- § Is it done? when does it work?

Distributed (TV, newspapers, Internet):

- § Mostly seat-of-the-pants

- § How does it work?

- ▶ Questions:

- § Strategies for matching media to messages?

- § Strategies for maximizing learning?

Relationship to Formal Settings

- ▶ Place-based interface with schools
 - § Some shared roots
 - § Moral authority
- ▶ NEW: assistance in meeting NCLB
 - § Demand from schools
 - § Is this appropriate role?