



## Extending Children's Informal Learning through Interactive Design

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A case study of MetroParkland

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Informal learning institutions, i.e. museums, zoos, conservation parks, etc. often represent a valuable alternative for parents when searching for activities that foster both entertaining and educational outcomes among their children.

Usually, a family visit to one of these institutions occurs in a space of an hour to three hours on average, a time in which visitors inquire, explore, learn and have fun. And even though these visits are successful in the initiation of learning cycles, they are not by themselves completely successful in supporting community learning needs or inquiry-skill building; because the learning cycle tends to end once the visitor leaves.

In response to this situation, this study focuses on the development of a web-based interactive learning module as an alternative tool for parents and children, who have attended an informal learning institution and desire to extend their learning experience beyond the onsite visit.

A demonstration prototype targeted for children between ages 5 to 10 and adult caregivers was developed in conjunction with the Metro Parks in central Ohio. The project was based on the Educational Programs for Families offered at the parks throughout the year.

Based on this design process and research results, possible directions to take in order to improve the prototype that was created were discussed.

Additionally, lessons learned were presented, related to different factors affecting the development of educational-interactive applications targeted for children.