



Aquarium Education – Quo vadis?

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While aquariums have been around since the mid-1800s, it was only in the mid-20th century that education became an essential component of the visitor experience. Early aquarium education focussed on formal education and the acquisition of facts. Over time, visitor interpretation and education programmes started to focus increasingly on animals and their ecosystems. In the last 20 years the focus of aquarium education shifted to include the broader environment and to highlight human impact on the oceans.

Now aquariums are being called to go beyond aquatic awareness, and into the realms of human environmental behaviour change, a challenge which is causing aquariums to rethink their educational programmes and to explore new techniques for visitor education. This paper will take a critical look at the current state of education in aquariums around the world, and will provide some suggestions as to possible directions for aquarium education in the future.