

The Human Genome: Science and the Social Consequences; Interactive Exhibits and Programs on Genetics and the Human Genome

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From April through September 1995, the Exploratorium mounted a special exhibition called *Diving into the Gene Pool* consisting of 26 interactive exhibits developed over the course of three years. The exhibits introduce the science of genetics and increase public awareness of the Human Genome Project and its implications for society. Founded in the success of exhibits developed for the 1992 genetics and biotechnology symposium "Winding Your Way Through DNA" (co-hosted with the University of California, San Francisco), the 1995 exhibition aimed to create an engaging and accessible presentation of specific information about genetic science and our understanding of the structure and function of the human genome, genetic technology, and ethical issues surrounding current genetic science.

In addition to creating a unique collection of exhibits, the project developed a range of supplemental public programming to provide public forum for discussion and interaction about genetics and bioethics. A lecture series entitled "Bioethics and the Human Genome Project," featured such key thinkers as Mary Claire King, Leroy Hood, David Martin, Troy Duster, Michael Yesley, William Atchley, and Joan Hamilton (among others). A weekend event program focused on biodiversity in animal and plant life with events such as "Seedy Science," "Blooming Genes," and "Dog Diversity." A Biotech Weekend offered access to new technologies through demonstrations by local biotech firms and genetic counselors. And a specially-commissioned theatre piece, "Dog Tails," provided a instructive and comic look for kids into the foundations of genetics and issues of diversity.

In the 5-month exhibition period, approximately 300,000 visitors had the opportunity to visit the exhibition, and well over 5,000 participated in the special programming. Following the exhibition's close, the new exhibits will become a permanent part of the Exploratorium's collection of over 650 interactive exhibits.

Additional funding for 1995-96 will support formal outside evaluation of the effectiveness of the exhibits, and support exhibit remediation based on the evaluation findings. This activity will both strengthen the Exploratorium's permanent collection of genetics exhibits and help to develop a feasibility study for a travelling version of the genetics exhibition for other museums around the country and the world.

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Documentary Series for Public Broadcasting

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Designed as a 4-hour documentary series for Public Broadcasting, *Genetics in Society* (working title) will explore the ethical, legal, and social implications of genetic technology. Currently funded and in production for a 90-minute special (*Testing Family Ties*), the first program profiles several individuals and families as they confront genetic tests and the information they generate. One high-risk cancer family struggles to make sense of their genetic legacy as it debates prophylactic surgery and whether or not to test for *BRCA1* and *BRCA2*. In a family without that family risk, news of the Ashkenazi *BRCA1* finding pushes an anxious Jewish woman to demand testing for herself and her young daughter. In another, a woman chooses to carry to term her prenatally diagnosed Cystic Fibrosis twins, despite social and personal pressures. In a third, a scientist researching the so-called "obesity gene" at a biotech company debates the proper "marketing" of his research and confronts the larger questions it raises about what should be considered "normal" and what constitutes therapy vs enhancement.

Testing Family Ties will explore not only what genetic technology does—in testing, drug development, and potential therapy—but what it means to our sense of self, family, and future and to our concepts of health and normality.

Depending on outstanding funding requests, *Genetics in Society* will be broadcast in the Fall of 1996 or the Winter of 1997 on PBS. Noel Schwerin is Producer/Director. Graham Chedd is Executive Producer.

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Human Genome Teacher Networking Project

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This project links over 150 middle and secondary teachers from throughout the United States with genetic and public policy professionals, as well as families who are knowledgeable about the ethical, legal, and social implications