

Marin

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By: Mimi Towle

In Marin / CURRENTS



8 QUESTIONS FOR

Dennis Bartels

America's Cup aside, the big news along the Embarcadero in San Francisco is the Exploratorium's expansion and relocation to Pier 15-17 from its familiar location in the Marina District.

Executive director of Exploratorium

NOVATO

The new space is starting to take shape as a state-of-the-art 330,000-square-foot research and exhibition space with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the bay. Want to take one last stroll through the domed museum we've all known and loved? You have until January 2013. Novato's Dennis Bartels is at the helm of this massive move; we caught up with him to learn more about the man behind the museum. **MIMI TOWLE**

1 Do you have a favorite exhibit?

Colored Shadows, which enables you to see your own shadow against the wall in color instead of gray.

2 How many visitors do you get each week?

We have 5,000 schoolkids per week on average and often triple that number on busy weeks. However, the majority of our visitors are adults.

3 What are you most excited about regarding your future new location?

Our accessibility via all major public transit systems, not to mention bike paths, will be great. For my fellow Marinites, I propose everybody ferry over, go to the farmers' market, visit the museum and so on, and then ferry home.

4 What is your favorite gift to buy in the Exploratorium gift store?

I personally love the Super Balls. Goes back to my childhood. They can bounce and not lose their momentum. Hours of fun.

5 What are your favorite geeky science websites?

Of course I'd have to say exploratorium.edu, given that we have over 40,000 pages of original science education content and have won five Webby Awards. Other sites I like: Wired, CNET and Boing Boing.

6 If you were an element, which one would you be?

I'd easily be any of the "noble" gases, but I'm actively working with neon as an artist, so neon would have to be at the top of the list. However, I'm also fascinated with mercury, because it's the only metal that is liquid, and it must be handled safely but is still mesmerizing by virtue of its physical properties.

7 How did you choose Marin?

Easy. The warm weather, great schools, easy drive to the city and the people. What's not to like?

8 What's your favorite drink and where do you like to drink it?

At the moment, I am into pisco and enjoy pisco sours. My favorite place to consume a pisco sour is at La Mar, just down the street from our future new Exploratorium home. **M**