



# DO TOUCH

The story of Boston's Children's Museum.

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**THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM**  
The Jamaicaway  
Boston, Massachusetts 02130  
(617) 522-4800

or

**THE WHARF PROJECT**  
316 Congress Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02110  
(617) 426-6500



Let's be direct. The phrase "Children's Museum" usually conjures up all sorts of vivid, but inaccurate images of what we are all about. The Children's Museum is not a cultural mausoleum with rows of glass cases, grumpy guards, stuffed birds, doll houses, and "do not touch" signs.

Contrary to what our name suggests — or what you may have experienced in the past — **THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM HAS BECOME A UNIQUE CULTURAL RESOURCE SERVING THE REAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.**

We are a place for children to learn through direct participation in provocative exhibits and programs.

We are a source of workable educational materials and ideas for use in classrooms, neighborhood centers and homes.

We are a training and consultative service for teachers, group leaders, parents and others committed to the education of children.

We are a national research and development center experimenting with non-traditional forms of education and a more dynamic role for museums.

This booklet briefly describes the Children's Museum's goals, methods, programs, finances, and our exciting plans for the future.

What makes the Children's Museum different is a commitment we have to **HELPING EVERYONE LEARN FROM AN INCREASINGLY TOUGH AND DEMANDING WORLD THROUGH DIRECT EXPERIENCES WITH REAL MATERIALS.**

We believe in learning by doing.

And whether it is a six-year-old exploring issues of scale in a **Giant's Desktop** exhibit where telephone, ruler, paper clips, eyeglasses are all 12 times life size, or a teacher constructing a math game out of industrial scrap in a **Recycle Workshop**, everyone becomes actively involved in the learning process.

Staff, spaces, programs, are kept deliberately informal and accessible.

Insights come naturally from simple activities with interesting things.

But this easygoing atmosphere belies the careful methods we use in developing the Museum's unusual resources. From the first spark of an idea to a finished exhibit, kit, publication, or program, everything is tried out and revised, tried out and revised again until it really works — or is discarded for something better.

Over the years this approach has generated an extraordinarily broad range of effective activities and materials that are in daily use here and in other museums and educational centers throughout the world.

**“I hear and I forget.  
I see and I remember.  
I do and I understand.”**

*Chinese Proverb*

Started in 1913 by an energetic group of teachers committed to the notion that museums have an important role to play in the education of elementary school aged children, we have grown to the point where

**THE MUSEUM'S DIRECT, MULTIPLIER AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS NOW SERVE 500,000 CHILDREN AND ADULTS EACH YEAR.**

The Children's Museum is organized into two operating divisions, each serving a different public need.

The **Visitor Center** offers interesting experiences with a variety of participative exhibits and programs to 200,000 visiting kids and grownups in school, community and family groups. Here you can make your own movie, play games with our computer, rummage through Grand-mother's Attic, learn how to make rolled paper beads, grind corn in an Algonquin wigwam, hold a live snake, play Go on the floor of our Japanese home, or operate a television camera.

In addition to its regular public hours, the Visitor Center organizes morning school visits, afternoon clubs and a summer day camp, a Junior Curator and Museum Helpers program for neighborhood kids, field work experiences for junior high through college level students, and a formal internship for 60 beginning museum professionals and educators. And every Wednesday morning is set aside for children with special needs who receive one-on-one attention from the staff.

Operating as a complement to the Visitor Center, the Resource Center helps 10,000 adults (parents, community workers, teachers) work with kids at sites away from the Museum.



The **Resource Center** staff develops imaginative educational activities and materials, runs workshops and courses, provides consultative services to neighborhood organizations and schools, organizes special events and exhibits on such topics as special education, ethnic awareness, urban and natural environments, child development, and conducts in-depth educational programs with children in schools and community centers.



Resource Center collections of catalogued educational kits, games, books, periodicals, films, recordings, cultural artifacts and natural history specimens are made available through heavily used reference and circulating services. Children and Teacher Shops sell selected toys, games, how-to-do-it books, simple tools, useful parts (ice cream sticks, golf tees, dice); while Recycle collects industrial rejects and scrap (lenses, rubber rings, foam sheets, cardboard tubes) that are the raw materials for arts and crafts projects and low-cost math kits, word games, and science equipment.

This active program of visitor and outreach services and ongoing resource development is carried on by a staff of 80 working with a budget of \$750,000 a year.

That puts us among the largest 10% of all professionally managed museums in the country.

Growing rapidly from a much smaller organization

## THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM HAS ACHIEVED FINANCIAL STABILITY

- through careful planning and tough evaluation of results (For example, in our search for a new home we conducted exhaustive marketing and economic analyses, fund raising feasibility, architectural, engineering and traffic studies and rejected a dozen sites before selecting the Congress Street Wharf);
- through timely and detailed financial information which we use in managing our limited resources (Department heads and the board rely on detailed computer printouts to keep track of income and expenditures in relation to our sophisticated program budget);
- through aggressive development of new sources of earned income (Admissions, fees, sales and royalties account for more than 50% of our revenues);
- through an unusually favorable response to our federal agency and national foundation proposals (More than \$1.5 million in 24 project grants have been received in the last dozen years);
- through the thoughtful guidance and generous support of the individuals, board members, local foundations and corporations who know us best (\$0.9 million in operating and \$1.6 million in capital gifts have been raised over the same period).

### RECENT HISTORY OF INCOME & EXPENDITURES

	1960	1965	FY 1970	FY 1971	FY 1972	FY 1973	FY 1974	FY 1975
User Fees & Other Earned Income	8 086	24 708	187 283	234 524	277 261	321 124	326 693	<b>360,211</b>
R&D Project Grants & Contracts	—	73 331	47 477	71 006	101 495	139 440	167 037	<b>238,678</b>
Unrestricted Gifts & Investment Income	74 508	99 323	87 393	98 935	119 880	145,414	142 900	<b>189,049</b>
Total Operating Income	82 594	197 362	322 153	404 465	498 636	605 978	636 630	<b>787,938</b>
Total Operating Expenses	85,348	206 600	518 951	500 324	492 679	596,247	630 213	<b>739,917</b>
Operating Surplus or (Deficit)	(2 754)	(9 238)	(196 798)	(95 859)	5 957	9,731	6,417	<b>48,021</b>



By late 1978 or early '79 the Children's Museum will share a spacious new headquarters facility with the Museum of Transportation. Transformed from a handsome old wool warehouse on the Fort Point Channel,

### **THE CONGRESS STREET WHARF WILL ACCOMMODATE A SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM.**

Clustering in-depth resources (collections, workshops, classrooms and staff) around public exhibits and programs, the Museum will focus on three major themes that will help us deal with who we are, where we come from, and how we relate to the man-made environment in which we live.

**Me** will help you become more familiar and comfortable with who you are: how you are put together, how your different parts perform specific tasks, function together as a unit; how you interact with and perceive the surrounding world; how you are conceived, formed, grow up, get sick, get well, grow old and die; how you are like and different from other kids and adults. You will be able to measure and record various physical dimensional and developmental skills. Through the use of special equipment, simulated environments and role playing activities you will be able to see yourself in new and revealing ways. It will even be possible to admit and quietly explore in a supportive setting many of the fantasies, fears and confusions that are a part of every child's private life.





**Meeting Ground** will offer a chance to explore details of Boston's rich cultural mosaic. In collaboration with members of Asian, Afro-American, Middle Eastern, Native American, Hispanic and European community groups, we plan to develop reconstructed household and work settings, collections of everyday objects, oral and photographic histories, special festivals and ceremonies, and curriculum guides through which we can get a better understanding of our culturally diverse society.

**The Man-Made World** will help give a sense of mastery over the city and the technological environment, communications, transportation and governmental systems that shape our

lives. A functional six story cross-section of a frame building, street and backyard will reveal how plumbing and sewage systems work, utility and transit tunnels are buried under the street, and the animal and plant life thriving in a vacant lot. Giant maps and aerial photographs will help you locate your own home, neighborhood landmarks (school, stores, parks) and regional networks that tie us together with the millions of other people living in metropolitan Boston. You will be invited to lay brick, print on paper, work a television camera, program a computer, operate a switchboard, ring up a cash register. And tours, guide books, games and maps will extend your experience to other instructive parts of the City.

Each of these three themes will be explored through a mix of participative exhibits, informal programs, and multi-session courses. Collections of cultural artifacts and natural history specimens will be a working resource available to everyone. Knowledgeable, friendly staff will be available to answer the questions of timid but curious learners. Workbooks, kits and computer generated study and reference lists will help extend these experiences beyond the Museum's walls.

From the moment it opens, the new Children's Museum will be a national model of an entirely new kind of educational institution.



