

Boston Children's Museum



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

David H. Burnham, Chairman

Jeptha H. Wade, President

Kyra Montagu, Vice President

James A. Pitts, Treasurer

Robert P. Schechter, Assistant Treasurer

Phyllis D. O'Connell, Assistant Treasurer

Marcia Henderson, Secretary

Sanford D. Elsass, Assistant Secretary

John F. Bok, Trustee-at-Large

Hamilton Coolidge

Harriet Dragonas

Mark R. Goldweitz

Susan M. Jackson, Trustee-at-Large

Polly Kisiel

Jean McGuire

T. Michael Middleton

Yori Oda

Chester M. Pierce

Sue Pucker

Benjamin H. Schore

John K. Spring

Stokley P. Towles

Dorothy A. Wilson

Katherine B. Winter

DIRECTOR

Michael Spock

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Phyllis D. O'Connell

DIRECTOR OF THE EXHIBIT CENTER

Elaine Heumann Gurian

DIRECTOR OF THE RESOURCE CENTER

Patricia Cornu

Boston Children's Museum

by Kyra Montagu

© Children's Museum, Boston, 1981, 1984.

This catalog was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, and the International Paper Company Foundation. Printing is courtesy of Daniels Printing Company.

Special thanks to Jill Kneerim, Sing Hanson and Dan Spock.

Table of Contents

Exhibit Center

EXHIBIT CENTER	7
Exhibits	8
Educational Themes	14
Study Storage	20
Collections	21
Planning and Design of Exhibits	22
EXHIBIT CENTER PROGRAMS	27
Special Education	27
Group Visits	29
Preschool Program	30
Special Events	31
Professional Training Programs	32
Interpreters	32
Work Experience for Teenagers	34
Volunteers	35

Resource Center

RESOURCE CENTER	37
Resources	37
Studies	37
Kits	38
Recycle	39
RESOURCE CENTER PROGRAMS	40
Workshops and Courses	40
Community Outreach	41
Programs for Teenagers	41

History and Administration	42
Museum Shop	46

The Children's Museum has a commitment 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 on the Giant's Desk, where telephone, ruler, cup, paper clips, and sun glasses are all 12 times life size, or a teacher constructing a math game out of industrial scrap in a *Recycle* workshop, everyone is drawn into the learning process.

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

Insights come naturally from simple activities with interesting things, but this easygoing atmosphere belies the painstaking investment we make 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.

We hope this catalogue gives you a broad and helpful overview of the Children's Museum and how it works.

Michael Spock
Director



Richard Howard

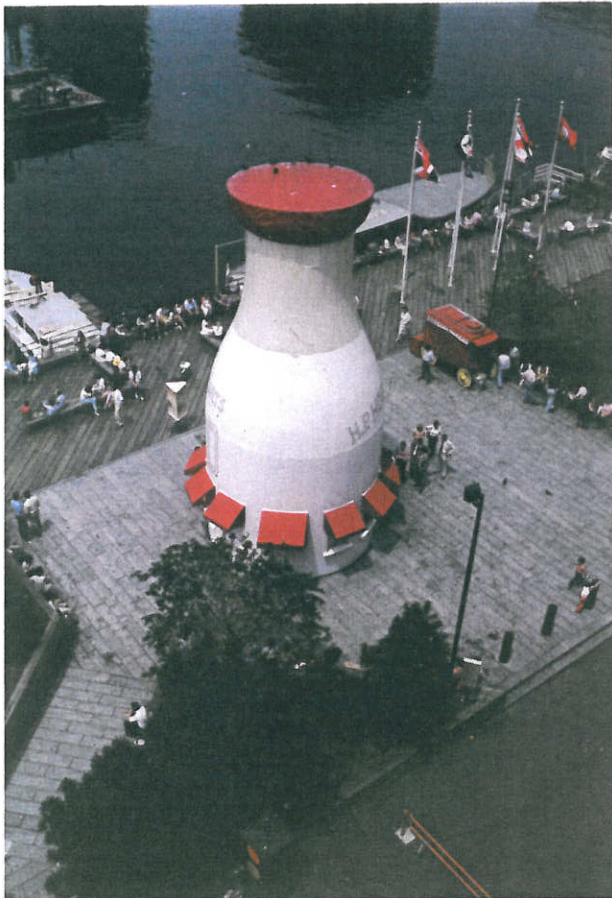
**I HEAR AND I FORGET.
I SEE AND I REMEMBER.
I DO AND I UNDERSTAND.**

Across the Fort Point Channel bridge in downtown Boston, a gigantic milk bottle signals that you have arrived at Museum Wharf, the recycled warehouse that is the home of the Children's Museum and the Computer Museum.

A relic of the early drive-in era, and a playful reminder that milk once came in glass bottles with cream floating at the top, this operating dairy stand anticipates the unusual approach to learning and fun that awaits your visit.

Plans are underway to develop a major outdoor exhibit and program area between the milk bottle and entrance. Just inside the door is the Computer Center, a facility used by the Children's and Computer Museums for interactive exhibits and such managerial functions as accounting, cataloging collections, monitoring security and climate control systems, and selling tickets.

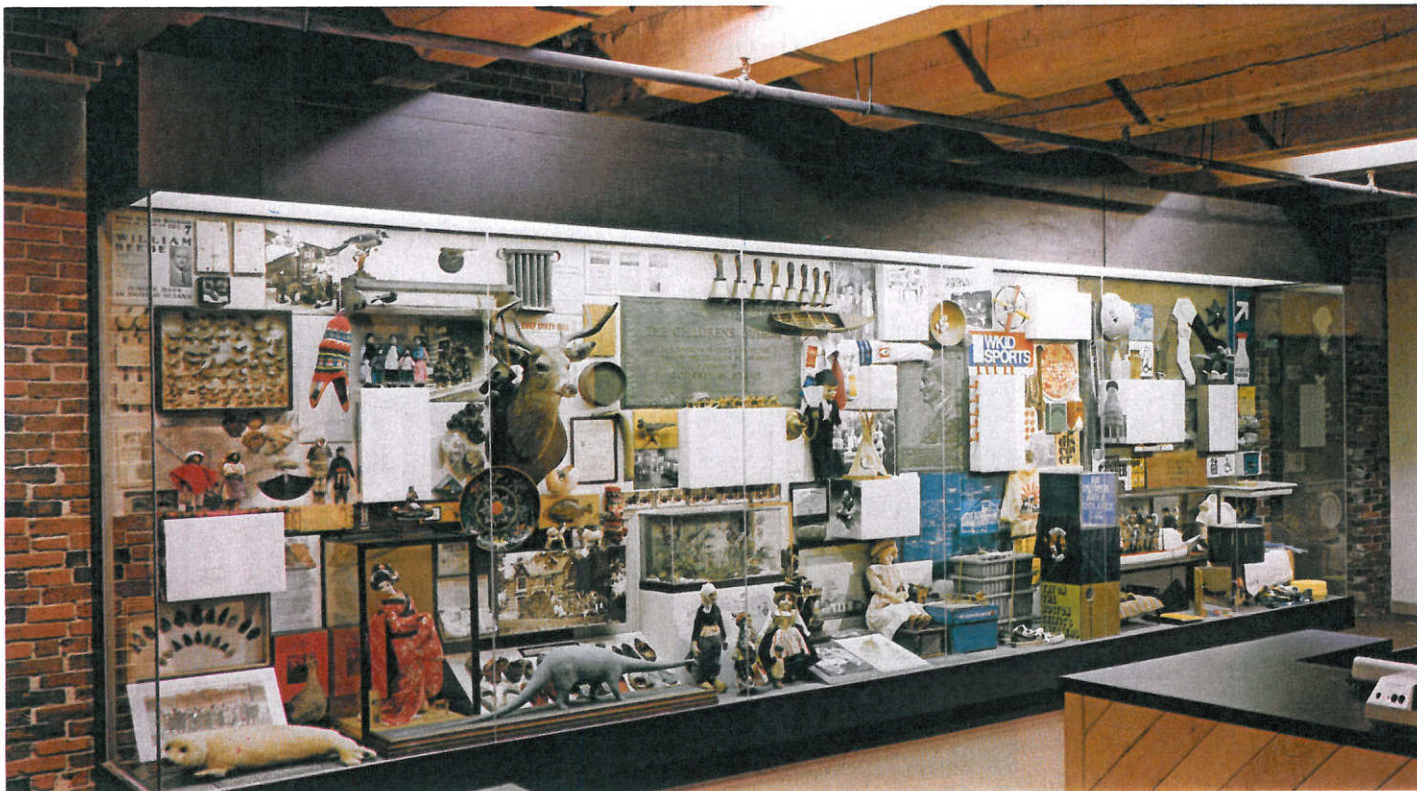
After buying your ticket you climb a flight of stairs to enter the Children's Museum. To the right is the *Resource Center* which we will explore later. To the left is the *Exhibit Center*, a good place to begin your visit.



chard Howard

Exhibit Center

Right behind the Admissions Desk, in a case that recognizes the key contributors to the Museum's founding and growth, is a collection of evocative memorabilia dating as far back as the early decades of this century. Membership forms, a floor plan describing the location of exhibits, and information on current and future programs are available at the desk.



Steve Rosenthal

EXHIBITS

Giant's Desk

Entering the exhibit areas, you are likely to encounter oversized objects on the *Giant's Desk*. Everything is twelve times life size: an inch on the Giant's ruler is a foot in our world. Children can climb over the Giant's telephone and tumble into his coffee mug. By looking through his sunglasses or making a huge paperclip chain, you may begin to understand why things are the sizes they are and what happens to function and weight when we enlarge or reduce the size of familiar objects.



Richard Howard



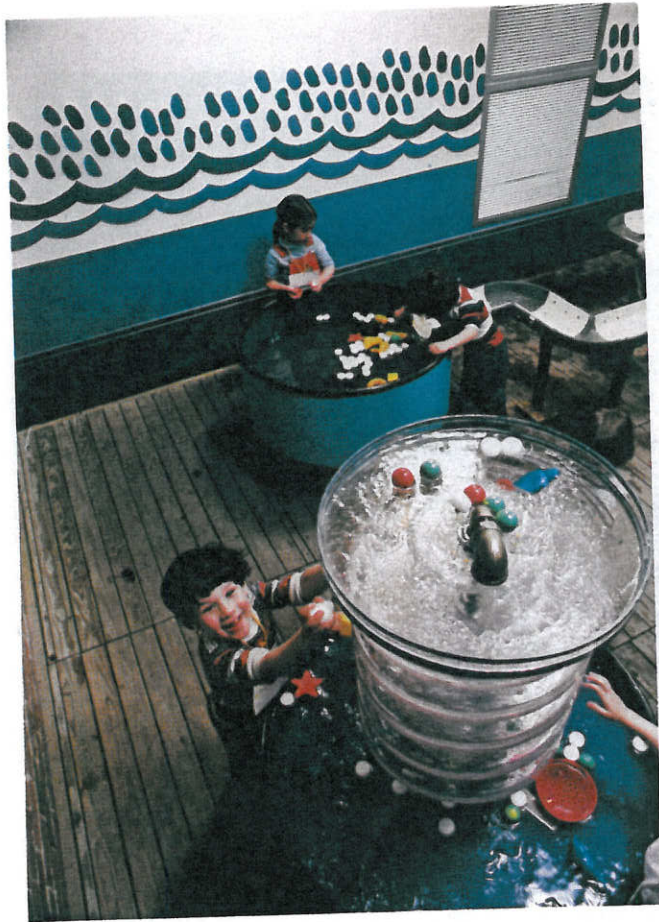
Richard Howard



Signe Hanson

Changing Exhibits

Although even “permanent” exhibits go through a gradual evolution, you can always find a succession of new and traveling exhibits to keep the museum fresh and encourage return visits. Among these changing exhibits are a Chinese marketplace, one million Lego pieces, Mirrors, What if You Couldn't . . . ? an exhibit on handicaps, the Art of the Muppets, an exhibit on death and loss, photographs from the UNICEF calendar, games from the Parker Brothers' archive.



Richard Howard



Richard Howard

Waterplay

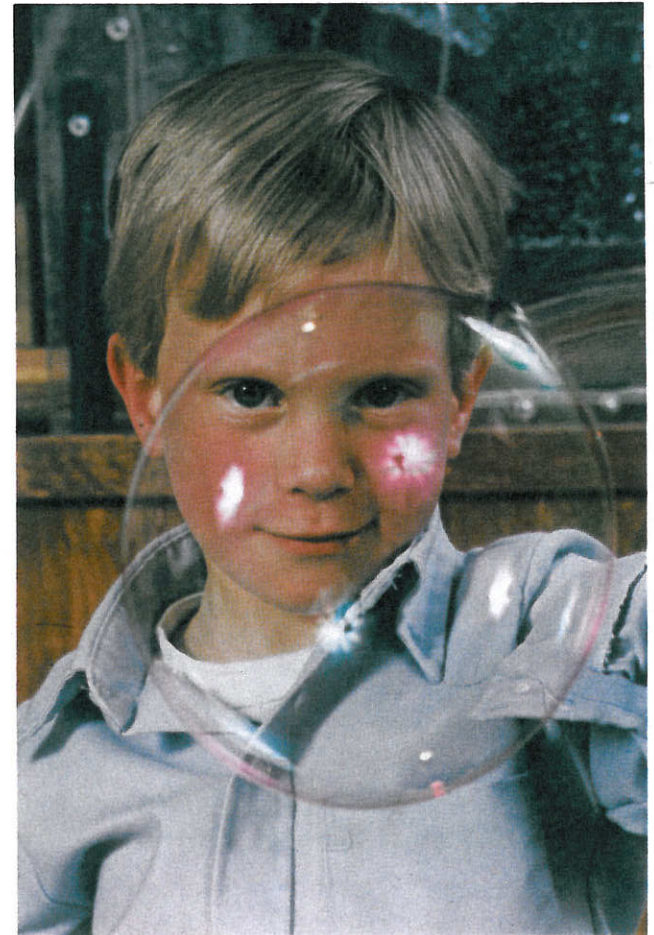
This exhibit is a good illustration of how a lot of what goes on in the Museum (and in real life) that looks like playful messing about has an underlying serious intent. In squirting water guns at targets or damming a stream to block the flow of colored balls between two water tanks, you can learn something about hydraulics and the conversion of energy into work. You can also lie on your back watching turtles swim lazily in a transparent tank above your head.

Small Science

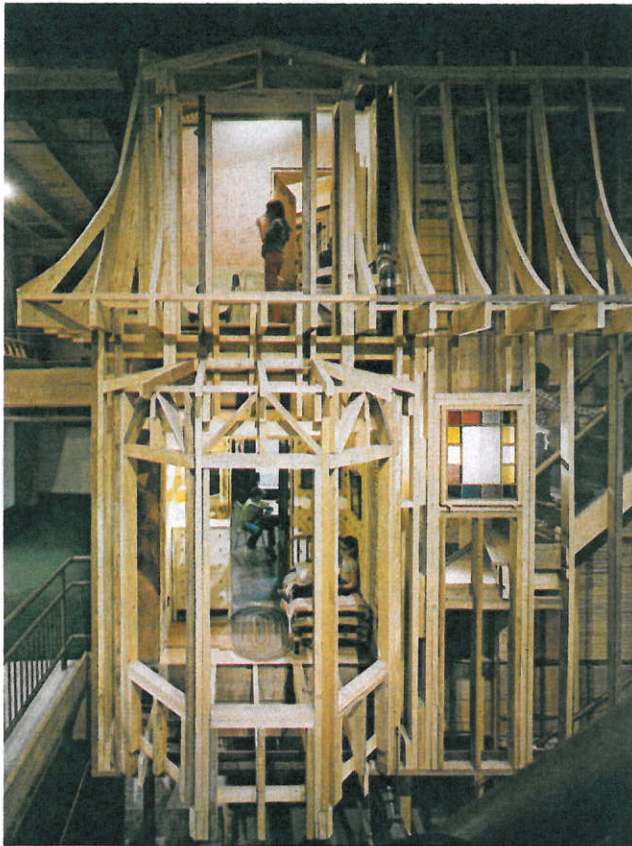
The “play” of scientists and artists can reveal fascinating things about our complex world. This series of changing exhibits uses simple, everyday technology to explore sophisticated issues. Staff may invite you to drill a hole with a bow drill made from a wooden coat hanger or build an arch with sand-filled milk carton blocks. You might observe the similarity between soap bubbles sandwiched between two sheets of plastic and the patterns of the veins in a dragonfly’s wing. These exhibits evolved out of curriculum development and staff training work in Boston neighborhood centers and universities. Six books by the staff developer, published by Little, Brown, are available in the Museum shop.

Living Things

In a nearby corner, you can learn something about anatomical structure by reconstructing a sheep’s skeleton with real bones, like a puzzle, or see how a snake’s skeletal structure is well adapted to its slithery locomotion by observing a live snake first hand. At the large window you can follow suggestions for comparing the behavior of people and pigeons in the park outside (eating, walking, courtship). Poking in drawers, you will discover mini collections of rocks and bugs (some living and some dead). Staff sometimes bring other live animals to this area for comparison and petting.



Richard Howard



City Slice

The ways our houses and cities are built, and how they work, are usually hidden behind plaster and under asphalt. A three-story cutaway facade reveals some of these mysteries, including where things go when you flush a toilet. Below the street level, you can see how all the house's electrical, water, gas, phone, and waste lines connect to the city systems. Future plans include an archaeological excavation of a backyard well (filled in when the house was hooked up to city water), exposed tree roots, soil profiles, and, someday, an MBTA subway tunnel. For now you can climb down a manhole, built for the Museum by the last brick manhole builder in Boston.

Steve Rosenthal

Grandparents' House

The contents of the Victorian house reflect the evolution of domestic life during the past hundred years. The house has been deliberately salted with interesting stuff from the 1890's, 1920's, 1950's, meant to stimulate dialogue across the generations.

Scrubbing laundry on a washboard in *Grandfather's Cellar* can give a sense of how the investment of time and energy in familiar tasks has changed over the years. Up a flight of stairs, the parlor and kitchen evoke more nostalgic memories. The wood/gas range or the wallpaper may feel so familiar you will suddenly recall places and people you want to describe to your child. In the kitchen you might bake cookies or make hand cranked ice cream. Sometimes artifacts have to be updated when grandparents or parents start to complain, "We're not that old!"

In *Grandmother's Attic*, children will want to plunge into the trunks full of old clothes and dress up. In the attic classroom, children can trace script in copy books at old-fashioned desks with real inkwells.



Richard Howard

EDUCATIONAL THEMES

Exhibits and programs in the Children's Museum cover a limited number of topics.

There is a permanent commitment to sustaining staff specialists, collections, and the development of exhibits, programs, and educational materials for the following themes:

- Early Childhood
- The Last 100 Years of American Life
- Native Americans
- Japan
- Boston's Multicultural Roots
- Science

Other subjects of current interest to the Museum may also be reflected in exhibits, collections, and programs, but not necessarily at all times.

These themes are:

- Dolls, Toys, and Games
- Living Things
- Special Needs
- Work
- Modern Technology

Playspace

This exhibit started with activity programs for mothers and tots. The Museum's specialist in Child Development observed that mothers of preschoolers often brought new babies along on museum visits and needed a place to leave them while they worked on projects with older children. She put a playpen in the space, and when it became the focus of great interest for mothers and fathers and toddlers as well as the babies who were left there, she had the first inkling of how to design an exhibit for toddlers and their parents. While parents sit—sometimes for hours—on the periphery of this space, they casually share their experience in child rearing with each other. It is easy then for Museum staff to make information about child development or community resources available and to show parents activities that would be fun to do with their children at home. With a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, staff are testing if what they have learned here will transfer successfully to other settings such as shopping malls, hospital waiting areas, and other museums.



Steve Rosenthal



Steve Rosenthal

Japanese House

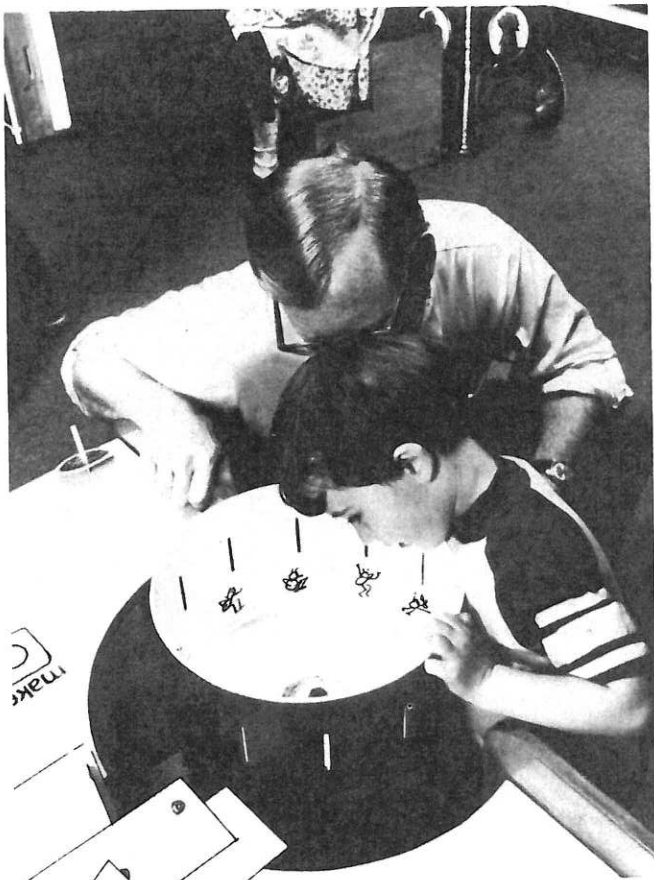
At the far end of the Museum is a real, two-story home from our sister city, Kyoto. It used to belong to a family that has been in the silk weaving business for fourteen generations. The front room downstairs was the store and showroom.

Japan and the United States are both modern industrial societies. Visitors to this traditional row house equipped with modern conveniences will discover how people in contemporary Japan live in a modern world and solve everyday problems similar to ours from the base of very different cultural traditions. In just a brief visit, visitors sense the flavor of the culture. You must remove your shoes before entering the house and sit on *tatami* mats which have a characteristic rice straw odor of their own. A Museum staff member will show you where furnishings are stored and how easily the rooms can be transformed for different purposes. Children will be intrigued by the bath and possibly relieved to note Japanese families watch TV too. If there is time you may learn how to fold an *origami* figure or try your hand at *hashi* or chopsticks.

The house has an interesting history. When the move downtown was planned, the developer of the Museum's Japanese programs worked with officials and friends in both cities to bring this house to Boston. Five Japanese craftsmen disassembled and repaired the basic structure and rebuilt it piece by piece, along with the facades of two other houses, to create the feeling of a narrow Kyoto street. Traditional ceremonies marked the public opening of the house in the spring of 1980.

Plum Pudding

The simplest way to set up and manage a museum and other learning environments is to put exhibits in galleries, classrooms in an education department, resources in a library and staff offices and collections hidden away behind the scenes. We have been experimenting with the radical notion that the public can understand and make better use of these resources for enjoyment and learning when they are arranged by subject matter in physically integrated units. This plum pudding model of organization is illustrated in the Japanese comprehensive area where we have housed the *Kyoto House*; an introductory exhibit; a multipurpose room for temporary exhibitions, craft demonstrations, workshops, meetings; a cozy reading room of interesting educational and popular materials including books, magazines and videotapes of traditional and contemporary Japanese life along with a bulletin board of Japanese related activities going on in Boston; a study storage of 1500 objects from our Japanese collections; offices for the East Asian program staff; and a small preparation room for storing and working on educational materials used in programs. Similarly integrated areas are planned or have been completed for the Early Childhood, Native American, Americana and Science programs.



Richard Howard

Computers

In the *Computers Exhibit* you can always find clusters of visitors huddled in front of terminals working with the computers. Relating to modern technology is often difficult. By encouraging visitors to play with this super toy, the Museum hopes everyone will become more familiar and comfortable with it as an everyday tool.

In the future we expect to program the computer to carry on a dialogue with visitors to find out what else they would like to know, and then suggest helpful resources inside and outside the Museum (books, kits, courses, exhibits, people) that will help bridge them to more in-depth learning.

WKID

Here, and at another site in the Museum, cameras and monitors allow you to see yourself on TV. By manipulating the camera yourself, you may also begin to appreciate that someone back at the studio is making choices about what you get to see on your set at home.

How Movies Move

Through animating a brief sequence of images on the zoetrope (a 19th century parlor toy), you can understand that movies are made from still images and not continuous motion.

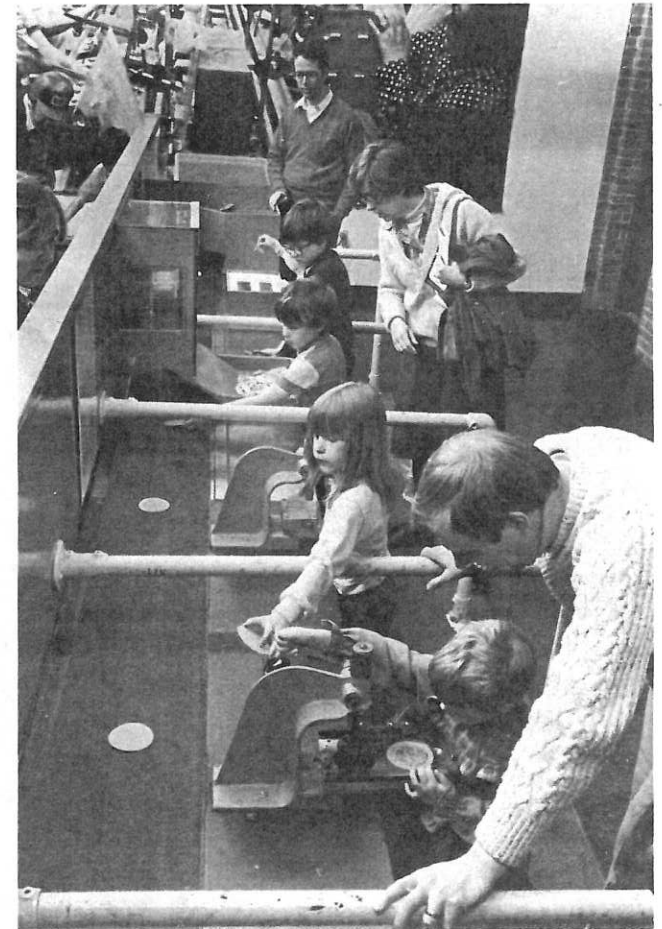
Work

Changing exhibits opposite *City Slice* let children explore grown-up jobs. For example, in the *Congress Street Superette*, you get a chance to be cashier and check the groceries out. In the *Fort Point Garage* you can inspect a car, remove and replace a wheel, crawl under to see how the power train drives the rear wheels, change the oil and negotiate with the service manager on what needs to be done.

Factory

What is it like to work in a factory? Specialization and cooperation are keys to working on an assembly line. You never get to make the same piece from beginning to end. To construct a spinning top, different people have to perform five separate tasks as the pieces move along a conveyor belt. If there is someone to do each job, a top rolls off the line. This is one of a series of exhibits that explores adult work experiences. The developer of the factory assembly line exhibit has written a book, *Factory Made*, illustrated with his own photographs, which describe how interesting things like fireplugs and buttons are made.

At some point the *Garage*, *Superette* and *Factory* may be removed and be replaced by an office, beauty parlor, or some other work place.



Richard Howard

STUDY STORAGE

We have begun to experiment with different storage models that allow some public access to the collections. A system of shelving with plastic trays that slide into simple racks was designed, along with a graphic code indicating which objects may or may not be handled.

An example of *Study Storage* can be seen at the back of the Native American exhibit, *We're Still Here*. Through glass, visitors can observe baskets and some of the forms on which they were made, and other Native American artifacts and clothing. A sign explains that this is *Study Storage* and that if you want to, you can ask permission from the curator to enter and study the collection and records more closely.

Symbols on the trays or hangers indicate whether objects can be handled. Those which cannot be touched are protected with plastic covering or affixed to bases which can be held instead.

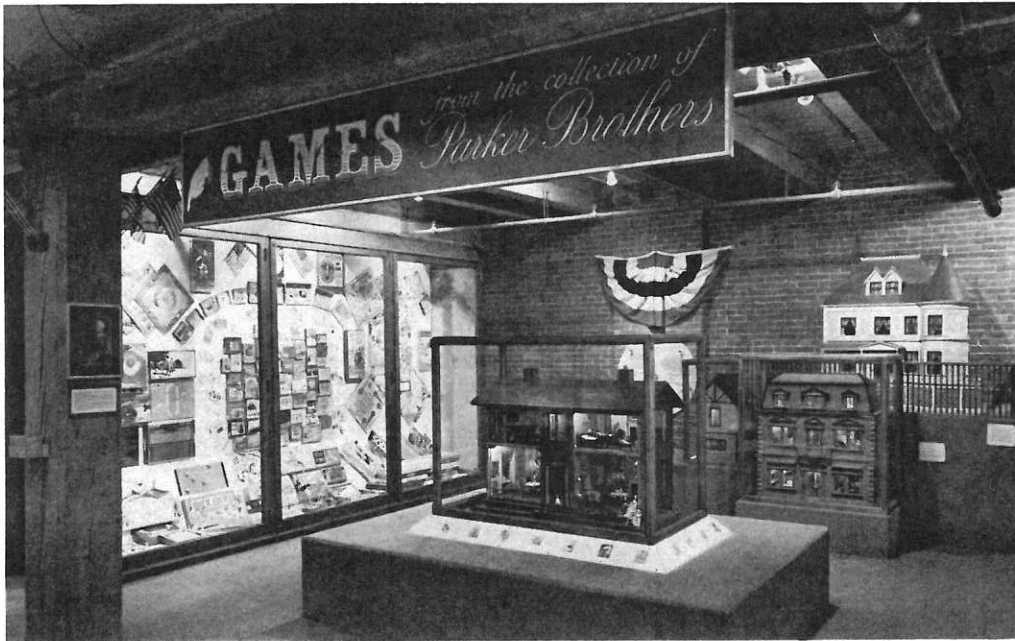
In the future there will be similar *Study Storage* areas adjacent to other exhibits.



Steve Rosenthal

We're Still Here

The Museum has worked with members of the Northeast Native American community over the years to make the emphatic point that the Indians who met the pilgrims are still here: teaching music at a high school on Cape Cod, running a museum in Rhode Island, and living their lives firmly rooted in traditional values. The exhibit contrasts old and contemporary traditions in dress, housing, and crafts. Political issues are raised about the compromises that had to be made to survive the influx of European settlers.



Steve Rosenthal

Dolls, Toys, Games

The collections of dolls, dollhouses, toys, and games reflect changing styles and social attitudes toward the play things we have offered our children over the years.

Exhibits in the cases change yearly and the collections are expanding all the time. You can spend hours looking at them and never absorb all the details or secret jokes and stories in one visit. Benjamin Bear and his elaborate travelling wardrobe, made by a Cambridge woman nearly 70 years ago, now shares the shelf with a plastic baby who gets diaper rash! Both make occasional appearances in exhibits and, someday will be permanently on view in an adjacent *Study Storage*.

COLLECTIONS

The Museum is responsible for 30,000 cultural artifacts and 20,000 natural history specimens, with outstanding collections of Native American artifacts from the Northeast and Southwest, dolls and dollhouses, toys and games, Japanese domestic objects, and ephemera of American culture of the past 100 years.

The entire cultural collection is catalogued on the Museum computer. Stored according to culture, all objects for preparing food are grouped together, whatever their age, material, or design. With the help of the computer, they can be retrieved according to any of these sub-categories.

The Children's Museum has developed a reputation as a "hands on" place. Yet most museum objects would eventually be consumed with steady use. Thus a fragile sled is hung out of reach, and antique clothing is displayed behind plastic in the dresser drawer in Grandparents' House. We also use replicas where the object has to be used to be understood.

Like all museums, we take our obligation seriously to see that our collections will be around to please and inform future generations. With the move to Museum Wharf, the Museum invested in sophisticated climate control and security systems to protect this important resource.

PLANNING AND DESIGN OF EXHIBITS

Because the Museum works so well, it inspires a number of questions from museum professionals, educators, and other visitors.

WHAT AGES ARE THE MUSEUM'S EXHIBITS AND MATERIALS DESIGNED FOR?

Different ages.

Some activities and spaces are intended to stimulate very small children, and these anticipate that parents need to be nearby.

Others are for older children and include details and processes that they can explore alone. These exhibits usually include materials and ideas for parents or adults to interpret for the child as well. Multicultural exhibits present concepts that older children can appreciate, but they simultaneously offer simple ideas and dramatic environments that younger children will remember.

Adults also gain new insights and have interesting experiences in the *Exhibit Center*, and staff advice and more information are available in the *Resource Center* to help visitors explore each subject further.



Richard Howard

What If You Couldn't...?

After struggling to get across gravel, or up an incline, or attempting to use the inaccessible phone booth from a wheelchair, everyone will empathize with people who face these problems daily. You can try on a prosthetic arm or listen to a tape designed to simulate hearing impairments. You can put on a blindfold and use a cane to pick your way through a maze, and then try a telephone device for the deaf or operate a braille. Puppet play with a script reveals emotional feelings that become problematic and ways that trained adults can help. Children and their parents can also try exercises to unravel the distortions people with perceptual difficulties experience, and read statements by children who have intellectual impairments or stories by siblings which explain how disabled family members make them feel.

Aspects of the What If You Couldn't . . . ? exhibit are incorporated into kits the Museum rents for use at home or in schools and other institutions. A book, *What If You Couldn't . . . ?*, written by the program developer and published by Charles Scribner's Sons is available through the Museum Shop. Another version of the same exhibit was built for the Smithsonian Institution Travelling Exhibition Service (SITES) to send around the country.



Richard Howard

WHAT IS THE SECRET OF THE MUSEUM'S EXHIBITS? WHY DO THEY WORK?

The exhibits and programs don't all work at first, and some work fine but not as originally intended.

An exhibit does not need to appeal to every Museum visitor, but it must appeal to some. That group needs to be identified and its experience understood before the exhibit can be improved. It takes a long time to analyze the proper traffic patterns for a space, to provide brief but adequate instructions, and to create designs capable of withstanding wear and tear.

One goal in designing exhibitions is to make it possible for a child or visitor of any age to have fun and make something satisfying happen by understanding simple concepts and following simple procedures. Good exhibits have scope for visitors to perceive more complex possibilities and relationships when they are ready.

CAN YOU TOUCH EVERYTHING AT THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM?

Because the Children's Museum has a reputation for pioneering hands-on learning, many people, including other museum professionals, believe everything can be touched. However, the Museum relies on a much wider variety of techniques to involve visitors and transmit information. They include:

- physical manipulation,
- role playing,
- staff guided activities with interpretation,
- visual examination and quiet guessing games.

Some collections are too fragile to be touched and so they are displayed by:

- hanging the objects out of reach,
- placing them in plastic covered boxes and drawers that are fun to find and explore,
- using them only in programs under staff supervision,
- exhibiting them in traditional cases,
- making them available at special times or by appointment in *study storage*.

Meeting Ground

People come to Boston from all over the world bringing their distinctive names, foods, celebrations, household furnishings, music, costumes, games. At least some of these cultural artifacts persist into later generations and help inform us about our own roots, and how other people have solved common human problems in different and similar ways. Boston's cultural diversity presents both a problem and an opportunity for learning to live together in a climate of mutual and self respect. Working with members of various ethnic communities, staff develop theme days and months, festivals and other special events, resource collections, classroom materials, teacher workshops and temporary exhibitions where the Museum serves as a neutral meeting ground for the diverse people of our city.



Richard Howard

HOW MUCH INFORMATION DO YOU GIVE ABOUT AN OBJECT OR THE SUBJECT OF AN EXHIBIT?

Exhibit information on signs and labels is graded—from headlines to fine type—so the visitor can approach the subject from any level of knowledge. Exhibit interpreters convey some of the information or raise questions and demonstrate the use of objects. They also invite visitors to participate in games and activities that teach more about the subject. Supplementary literature is often available in an exhibit area, as well as in the Resource Center Studies, so that curious visitors can pursue any subject further.

In the future the Museum plans a major effort to experiment with the plum pudding arrangement of integrated exhibit, program, collection and resource spaces, along with our computer and interpreter staff to help an interested visitor bridge the gap from their initial enthusiasm or curiosity to more in-depth learning opportunities within and outside the Museum.

WHO THINKS UP YOUR IDEAS?

Exhibit, kit, and program ideas can come from many sources: children's questions, teachers' requests, advisory board suggestions, staff interests, collection strengths, good things discovered in other museums, books, and classrooms. The source of the idea, however, is less important than the development process that allows for gradual evolution of a theme over years, as staff find out what works and what doesn't, and what concepts and activities can be transformed from program into exhibits, from exhibits into kits, or from kits into books, from books back to programs.

Museum themes are developed by teams of staff designers, technicians, assistants, the Resource and Exhibit Center directors, and outside advisors, all under the leadership of a staff subject matter specialist called a developer. Developers are responsible for both curatorial and educational functions. They usually come to their jobs with some teaching experience.



Dorothy Merrill

EXHIBIT CENTER PROGRAMS

Special Education

One morning a week the Museum is reserved primarily for groups with special needs, although the general public is welcome. About 30 children or adults come each session. The regular Museum staff is augmented by volunteers and teachers who are participating in a special training program, which means staff are available on a one-to-one ratio to accompany visitors and help them with activities.

Over lunch the staff meet to discuss how the morning went and share their feelings and ideas about ways to handle situations that arose. It is disturbing at first for new staff and volunteers to meet severely disabled people or to try to handle serious behavior problems. The debriefing session helps them with their feelings and anxieties. When it became the law for all public programs and buildings to be accessible to people with disabilities and for schools to include disabled children in regular classrooms, the training provided through this program increased in popularity and demand.

After the staff lunch, anyone interested can have a lesson in sign language or learn teaching strategies, try activities, and look at materials that could be useful in the classroom.



Sing Hanson



Archival photo

Group Visits

Seventy thousand children and adults visit the Museum every year in school and community groups. This represents about a sixth of our total visiting public. These visits are sponsored by the state legislature. Each child receives a free pass from the Museum to return with his or her family.

In a typical school program in the Native American exhibit, the children might grind corn and discuss how it was cultivated and cooked. Staff might bring out weapons and traps from the collections and describe how Native Americans hunted and used the meat and skins of deer and rabbits, or the children might try basket weaving, or try on moccasins.

In *Grandparents' House* the children could make peanut butter or ice cream in the old-fashioned, hand-cranked way and try to guess how some of the implements around the house were used. The antique carpet beater and coffee grinder fool many people.



Richard Howard

Preschool Program

Different preschool groups, as well as individuals, use the *Playspace* exhibit area regularly. For example, a racially mixed group from a day care center and a group of deaf preschoolers met together for several months. The Museum became their school one day a week and their repeated interaction improved the communication skills of both groups.

Many parents use *Playspace* repeatedly and some of them have been recruited to work as volunteer staff, alternating with volunteer professional educators. Each person introduces a different dynamic to the setting and enlarges the capacity of the program to respond to the different needs of the adults who bring their toddlers.

Special Events

During the year the Museum schedules special events that draw on all the Museum's staff and resources and focus them on different themes. It could be "Toddlers Take Over Month," when activities and programs are planned for each exhibit area to suit the needs of preschool children and their families, or it could be a single event like "Great Pets Day."

For a special celebration or traditional festival such as Japanese New Year's, outside advisors work with the staff to enrich the Museum's program. Members of the Japanese community bring their own children and may wear kimonos, and teach traditional songs and dances, and you might find Japanese grandmothers preparing sushi, a Japanese delicacy, in the kitchen of the *Grandparents' House*.



Archival photo

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS

Professional training opportunities enlarge and enrich the Museum staff and spread the Museum's educational philosophy. Some training occurs informally, through normal contact and interaction; time is regularly set aside for staff members to bring each other up to date and share strategies for improving their work. More formally, the staff teaches under contract with different colleges in the area, training other teachers and pre-professionals in the special education and early childhood programs and in orientation sessions, workshops, and courses. There are also specific programs within the Museum in which individuals can enroll for training in museum work.

Interpreters

Interpreters explain the meaning of exhibits to the public and lead program activities. They train at the Museum to gain perspective on careers working with children, the public, or museums. They work full time for a minimum wage, and the training period varies from 3 to 10 months.

When they arrive, each new group of 10 to 20 interpreters is given an orientation to the Museum's philosophy and operating style and an introduction to the range of programs and materials related to each exhibit. Each person is assigned to work with a staff member on one or two exhibit spaces and is trained to teach about the subjects of those exhibits in ways that will be appropriate for the differing ages of school groups or the visiting public. Interpreters are also trained to work in the program for people with special needs, and, for many, this is the highlight of each week. Most interpreters work in the *Exhibit Center*, but each year there are one or two positions available in the *Resource Center* as well.

Once the initial training is complete, interpreters who are interested can eventually undertake independent research for developers and help prepare materials for workshops and classes outside the Museum. Their program and their performance are closely monitored by a supervisor who troubleshoots for them and schedules continuing training opportunities with the professional staff.

By the time interpreters finish the program, they usually know whether any aspect of working with children, museums, or the public still interests them and which career possibilities they might want to pursue within these fields.



Tad Goodale



Lynn Whitney

Work Experience for Teenagers

Throughout its history, the Children's Museum has offered volunteer and paid opportunities to youngsters and teenagers. The present program offers useful jobs to ten or twelve adolescents who enjoy the Museum environment, giving them a chance to master minimum employment skills such as reliability and accounting for their time. After receiving some of the same training as the interpreters, they have the opportunity to work with the public in the *Exhibit Center* and are asked to perform tasks for staff behind the scenes. Some of the youngsters join the program on the recommendation of school guidance counselors or social workers. The ages in the group vary from 10 to 18, and some children spend 30 hours a week at the Museum while others work as little as 8. An outside consulting counselor works with the staff in the program, and the youngsters report to a Museum staff supervisor who monitors their work and is available to them informally all the time. Typically they stay about three months, but they form warm relationships with the staff and keep returning to visit and occasionally become full-fledged museum professionals.

Volunteers

Volunteers are welcomed by the Museum as unpaid professional staff. A volunteer coordinator interviews potential volunteers to learn their interests and skills and orient them to the Museum's program and operations. Museum staff post job needs, and volunteers are assigned jobs as closely related to their interests as possible. Typical volunteer jobs are:

- assisting in the program for groups with special needs
- assisting with the preschool program
- library and collections work
- helping with special events and festivals
- giving tours to museum professionals from around the world.

Volunteers' ages vary from 10 to 80 and their work is supervised and evaluated.

Associates

Originally founded in 1915 as the Museum Aid, the Children's Museum Associates is a group of volunteer women committed to raising funds for the Museum. In the past they have helped organize and staff the *Haunted House*, and the *Art of the Muppets*. In addition to working on other special events, they are now running an annual pre-Christmas bazaar in collaboration with the Junior League.



Richard Howard



Steve Rosenthal

Resource Center

RESOURCES

The *Resource Center* entrance is across from the *Exhibit Center* Admissions Desk. Admission to this part of the Museum is free, and visitors can use it any time the Museum is open.

At first glance, the *Resource Center* appears to be a cheerful library with lots of useful materials, but its intent is much broader. An outgrowth of the Science Teachers Bureau, begun in 1909 to introduce natural sciences to Boston schools, the *Resource Center* has evolved into a division of the Museum which reaches out to a broad community. It directly and indirectly serves more than 300,000 people a year.

Assuming that provocative encounters with real objects do not have to happen only in Museum buildings but can provoke learning anywhere, the staff create materials and programs that adapt the Museum's educational themes and exhibit ideas for use in other settings by teachers, group workers, parents, and other adults interested in the education and growth of children.

In the future, resources from the Museum collections and educational loan materials, as well as Museum courses and related resources in the broader community, will be identified and linked to each exhibit.

STUDIES

Learning materials in the *Resource Center* are organized in eight separate activity and display units called *Studies*, which correspond to major subject themes in the *Exhibit Center*. There are studies with resource material about child development, Native Americans (*We're Still Here*), simple technologies for messing about with art and science (*Small Science*), science in the city, ethnic heritage, East Asia, and disabilities (*What If You Couldn't...?*).

In the Early Childhood Study, visitors find books and articles of interest to parents of young children or to professional educators. There are practical toys and kits containing literature on child development and suggested activities for young children with the appropriate materials included. Outside resources that could be helpful to local visitors are also collected in the study; these include lists of discount stores for clothes and toys, day care facilities, baby sitting pools, safety tips, and centers in the area, such as clinics or music schools that serve particular needs.

The other studies have a comparable variety of books and activity suggestions and materials and lists of local resources that could be useful to teachers or anyone curious about the subject.

TYPES OF KITS

Curriculum Units are intended to be integrated into the school curriculum. For example, the Japanese Family kit is organized so children can play specific roles in four different families. It includes family history records and role playing cards, household items, and Japanese clothing, all for use in daily activities described in a comprehensive teacher's guide. The kit on Musical Shapes and Sounds includes real instruments, recordings, and photographs, and teaches how to relate sounds to the shapes of the instruments.

Less elaborate *Study Kits* also include artifacts, books, and activity supplies, but working with these kits takes less time. After visiting the *What If You Couldn't...?* exhibit, a group could borrow one of the several kits about different disabilities. Inside the one about visual impairments, children will find lenses which alter their vision to different degrees, blindfolds, canes, ideas for things to do when blindfolded, and books that describe how blind children manage their activities.

Activity Kits have supplies for experimenting with magnets, papermaking, and Chinese games, to list just a few.

Exhibit Kits do not suggest activities, but provide artifacts, books, and pictures for the study of such diverse subjects as Puerto Rico, volcanoes, or insects.



Kits

The Museum staff create boxes full of learning materials that can be rented from the Kit Rental Department. They cover 90 subjects including the main educational themes in which the Museum specializes.

The content varies from simple collections of objects and pictures to comprehensive curriculum units with structured lesson plans. Most kits provide instructions and materials for simple activities. Many include replicas of collections objects or authentic contemporary folk objects. Some of the kits have been published and can be purchased for use in other parts of the country.

Recycle

Recycle is a store that sells inexpensive materials discarded by factories that are ideal for science, art, and craft projects. The exotic, but cheap, materials serve the needs of schools and institutions as well as adults and children in other settings.

Stimulated by a museum visit, parents and children can choose a bagful of *Recycle* materials and invent their own ideas for them or follow suggestions made by Museum staff in workshops, programs, and exhibits, or in *Recyclopaedia* and other books sold in the Museums' Shop downstairs.



Steve Rosenthal



Bob Field

RESOURCE CENTER PROGRAMS

Workshops and Courses

Another way to learn skills and things to do, or to find out more about subjects in which Museum staff are specialists, is to take a course or workshop. They are for all kinds of people, including single parents and older children, recreation counselors, community workers, teachers, senior citizens, social service and educational professionals, and families.

Each year in June, camp and playground counselors can discover ideas that will engage the children they lead. Workshops during the year teach specific craft techniques, such as the use of ordinary household materials for art and science projects, and activities parents can do with toddlers or older children. Museum staff also teach longer courses at the Museum and in Boston schools and universities. Local college students take one- or two-semester courses to study child development, special education, or how to teach science, Asian studies, or social studies to elementary school children.

Explorations is a program that combines classroom teaching by Museum staff in elementary and middle schools with visits to the Museum. Typical *Explorations* courses have focussed on animal adaptation to different environments, local social history, career planning, and the study of child development.



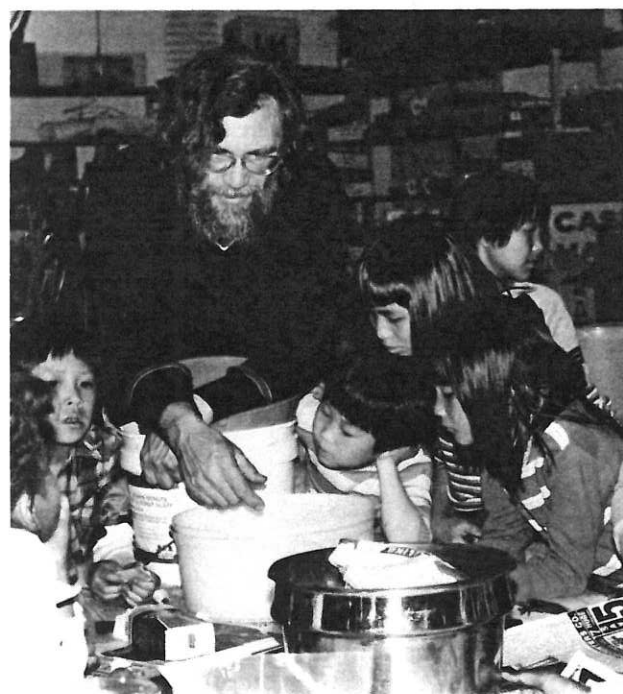
Frank Siteman

Community Outreach

The audience for most cultural institutions is too often drawn from the well-educated and well-to-do. The Children's Museum tries to compensate by reaching out to underserved, low-income communities through a variety of programs and mechanisms. With support from the state legislature, corporations, foundations and individuals we work with agencies and individuals from targeted communities on special events and exhibits, group visits, after-school programs, adult training, teen programs and work experience, free admissions, free Friday nights, library memberships, and having members of those communities represented on our staff and board. Nearly half our 400,000 visitors are fully or partially sponsored, and we estimate that the Museum reaches another 200,000-250,000 children and adults through the outreach services and materials of the *Resource Center*.

Programs for Teenagers

Resource Center staff have developed many programs and materials to help teenagers explore and understand the city and discover unusual resources beyond the Museum walls. Working with the City of Boston, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, and other agencies, staff have created guides, tours, and games which introduce the teenagers to places and people whose interests are related to different themes.



Leslie Swartz



Archival photo

History and Administration

People familiar with museums are always curious about the Museum's history and administrative structure. This section addresses questions that professional visitors often ask.

How did the Children's Museum start?

The Children's Museum began in 1913 in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston as an outgrowth of the Science Teachers' Bureau, which trained teachers in the natural sciences and distributed natural history specimens to Boston classrooms. The collections were displayed and attracted a general audience to the Museum. Kits were introduced in the 1930s as a way to make collections more useful to teachers. (It was the second children's museum in the country. The first one began in Brooklyn, New York, 14 years earlier.)

When did the “hands-on” approach begin?

In the 1960's the staff began to explore new kits and exhibits that emphasized learning by doing. By the late sixties a new *Visitor Center* was created in the auditorium of the Jamaica Plain property, and a *Resource Center* for teachers and adults was established in the old Museum building. Meanwhile, outreach programs designed to serve a broad community were developed by Museum staff all over town.

Why and when did the Museum move?

By the early 1970's, crowds coming to the Museum were straining the capacity of the building in Jamaica Plain. To have more flexible space, to earn more income, and to expand its audience, the trustees and staff decided to move the Museum to downtown Boston, where people from a much wider area could reach it by car or public transportation. It opened downtown in July, 1979.

The move increased the Museum's capacity from 180,000 to 500,000 visitors a year and made it accessible to the entire metropolitan area and New England. This new, more flexible space allowed for expansion of programs and exhibits and for safe storage for the collections.



Archival photo



Steve Rosenthal

How are the Children's Museum and the Computer Museum related?

The Children's Museum and Computer Museum are two distinct museums with separate audiences and boards of trustees. They jointly own and operate Museum Wharf. The Computer Museum occupies floors 5 & 6; the Children's Museum floors 2, 3 & 4. Street level is reserved for lobbies, retail and shared services. Museum Wharf was originally developed by the Children's and Transportation Museums between 1975 and 1982. When the Transportation Museum experienced financial difficulties, their place in the building and partnership was assumed by the Computer Museum.

How is the Museum governed?

The Children's Museum is a private, non-profit corporation. Its Board of Trustees has the ultimate responsibility for setting policy, keeping the Museum financially viable and hiring the Director, to whom it delegates day to day operating responsibility. The Board governs through an Executive Committee that meets monthly; in turn it is drawn from a larger Corporation that is broadly representative of the community and has a variety of talents and contacts helpful to the Museum.

How many staff are there and how are they organized?

Hundreds of people volunteer and many work part-time, but the Museum employs the equivalent of 85 full-time staff. They work within departments in one of four divisions, and on cross-divisional teams in a matrix form of management. The four divisions are: the Exhibit Center, the Resource Center, Support Services, and Director's Office. The last divisions provide essential management, computer services, collections management, membership services, fund raising, public relations, and liaison with Trustees. The division directors meet weekly to plan and oversee all operations.



Richard Howard



Richard Howard

How big is the Museum budget?

The Museum budget in 1984 was approximately \$2.3 million. Seventy-five percent of the Museum's income is earned from admission fees, memberships, sales in the *Shop* and *Recycle*, royalties, teaching contracts, course fees, and kit rentals. The remaining 25 percent is raised through grants and contributions from state and federal government agencies, local and national foundations, businesses and individuals, and a growing endowment fund. Contributions, grants and a line item voted into the state budget each year by the legislature directly support the outreach and low-cost services, and the research and development work needed to maintain the Museum's vitality.

Museum Shop

Materials sold in the *Museum Shop* embody the Museum's philosophy of learning by doing. Visitors can continue to pursue ideas and activities similar to those they encountered in the Museum after their visit. Books by staff members are for sale, and part of the store houses inexpensive items that many children can afford to buy.



Steve Rosenthal

What are your plans for the future?

Programmatically, the Museum will work on expanding and fine tuning its repertoire of experiences for visitors, including opportunities for bridging to more in-depth resources, while developing greater outreach services into the community. Facilities will include a new outdoor exhibit and program area; completing the remaining comprehensive program areas; use of video and computers in each exhibit; building the toy, game and doll collections; finishing behind-the-scenes support facilities; better visitor parking; and eventually, an auditorium shared with the Computer Museum.

Financially, the Museum needs to continue to develop new sources of earned income and increase the endowment to assure continuity of program and outreach efforts regardless of fluctuations in outside support.

How can I help the Museum?

We welcome new friends who are excited about the Museum and would like to contribute their skills or resources. If you can offer your time, why not call our Volunteer Coordinator? If you are ready to find a safe home for some valuable things that you think we might like to have, please contact our Curator of Collections. If you are interested in supporting us financially, the Development Office would love to hear from you. We can all be reached by calling (617) 426-6500.

The Children's Museum, Boston

Museum Wharf
300 Congress Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02210

All departments:
(617) 426-6500
voice and TTY-TDD: (617) 426-6501

What's Up Line:
(617) 426-8855 (complete listing of exhibits, special events, hours,
admission rates, and travel directions)

Group visits:
Advance reservation required; contact the Reservations Office

The Museum is easy to reach on Boston's waterfront. Follow Museum Wharf signs displaying our landmark milk bottle. *From North:* Expressway (Rte. 3) south to High St./Congress St. exit (#1), third left on Congress St. *From West:* Massachusetts Turnpike (Rte. 90) to Expressway (Rte. 3) north exit (#2). *From South:* Expressway (Rte. 3) north, Atlantic Ave./Northern Ave. exit (#3), immediate right over Northern Ave. bridge. Inexpensive *parking* on Northern Ave. and Sleeper St. Handicapped and preschool group parking in front of Museum off Congress St. *Public transportation:* MBTA Red Line to South Station plus a seven minute walk.

