Long Abstract:
Science collection, exhibition, and display in public museums in Britain from World War Two through the 1960s

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Throughout the first half of the twentieth-century, the daily life of the average British citizen experienced great upheavals. The Second World War acted as a catalyst on many of the historical processes that had previously begun. From Britain's imperial involvement to scientific and technological advances, things had changed. Perhaps most importantly for the average British citizen, Britain's political power had drastically declined and it was left to find a new place for itself within the post-War world. To define its place within the new world order, Britain was forced to identify why it was still relevant. One of the main tactics used was to emphasize the British heritage of discovery and academic talent in science, industry, literature, and international affairs. Institutions, like the Science Museum, were key in connecting the past with contemporary developments and showing the British influence on those developments.

Many of the developments used to show Britain's place as the world's intellectual leader were scientific. During the War and immediately afterwards, science and technology experienced unprecedented changes. From computing to jets, major advances were made, and most people only got firsthand exposure to 'cutting-edge' technologies in museums and other exhibitions. Therefore, the presentation of modern technologies as integral to daily life was an important function for the institutions that claimed to present science and technology to the British public. During this period, science was regularly featured on radio, in newspapers, and on television, but their presentation was fleeting. It was only at the Science Museum where a permanent national presentation of science and technology could be found.

To understand the contemporary history of the Science Museum, it is critical to understand its earlier history. Many of the difficulties faced by the Museum are deeply rooted in its history, and an understanding of the basic chronology and the factors that led to its foundation is essential. This work will summarize the early history through the Bell Report in 1912 and its early implementations, which have been covered extensively by several other authors. Starting with the preparations for the Second World War, this work will explore the Museum's actions and developments in more detail because of the inadequacy of previous coverage. Post-War, this work will attempt to place the Museum within the socio-political

framework of cultural institutions in which it operated and how that framework constricted the Museum's physical and philosophical development.

After providing a potted history of the Museum, the work will examine two important aspects of the Museum's post-War history: its educational provision and its plans for the use of the Centre Block space. While the Museum has always been seen as an educational institution, the development of the related provisions have not always been given top priority. This work pulls together two separate narratives - the history of the Children's Gallery and Frank Sherwood Taylor's tenure as Director - concerning education at the Museum to show how they influenced the Museum's broader development. The Children's Gallery (and its successors) have always been a key feature of the Museum's educational provision since it opened in 1931 and therefore has shaped the Museum's view of its self as an educational institution. Under the guidance of Taylor, the Museum's facilities gradually improved and, because of his unique background, he was deeply involved with the development of a plan for the education of children within the Museum. Taylor's influence changed the Museum's relationship with visitors and moved it beyond the traditional roles as a place for preservation and specialist learning. This shift occurred contemporaneously with the Museum's turn away from technical and scientific education and towards a presentation of the social aspects of science and its history. Thus, this work uses the development of the educational provision as a microcosm for understanding the shift that was occurring throughout the whole institution. Interrupted by Taylor's death but completed under Follett, this move would make the Museum the science and technological equivalent to the V&A. Also at the same time, the Museum was constantly planning for the eventual opening of the long-awaited Centre Block, when it could reorganize and redisplay large portions of the Collections. Starting in the early 1950s, the first plans were implemented, but it would take the entire decade to gain approval and have the section constructed. Throughout the delay, the Museum continued to formulate new ideas for its development. The schemes developed show the struggles that the Museum was involved in about its place and purpose as a Government department and as a cultural institution. Beyond the grand questions about its ideal form, practical questions about modern display practices were constantly raised both internally and externally. Finally, questions about the Museum's guiding plan and the Western Block provide a point of reflection on the developments during the two decades immediately after the Second World War.

While the Science Museum was the main national exhibition of science and technology, the Festival of Britain in 1951 also presented science and technology to the wider British and international public. It was a major undertaking for the British government as a visible sign of Britain's post-War recovery and used science and technology to make an important statement about Britain's post-War position in the world. It constructed an alternative historical narrative based around Britain's history of discovery and technological development. This required the Festival's organizers to tackle two of the larger issues of contemporary life: the relationship of the arts and sciences and the influence of science on daily life. The Festival, while it left a very small physical legacy since the majority of its buildings were removed, did leave a very large artistic and cultural legacy that can be used to examine contemporary views of science and technology. Additionally, because of its unique and well-formed presentation of science, it provides a useful comparison for the presentations made at the Science Museum throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. Therefore, within this work, the Festival is useful because it provides an important contrast with the Science Museum, its organization, and its presentation of science and technology.

Another example of the presentation of science (and, to a lesser extent, technology) was the discussions surrounding plans to open a planetarium in London. This work cover the reasons why individuals wanted to build one, the lengths to which the Science Museum went, and why several other plans did succeed. The Science Museum wanted to install a planetarium from shortly after its invention until the late 1950s and by the time that it was removed from the Museum's plans, several other planetariums had opened in the United Kingdom. Additionally, this work will also examine the gradual questioning of the assumptions made about planetariums' educational and scientific credentials. The Museum's quest for a planetarium illustrates the lengths that the Museum went to acquire an instrument and many of the Museum's weaknesses. When compared to the variety of successfully opened planetariums, the difficulties faced by the Museum are easy to isolate and examine. While the planetarium saga was the Museum's 'perfect storm,' the weaknesses showcased by it are found throughout the Museum's history during this period.

Since most of this history is unknown, this work provides a general narrative of the presentation of science and technology in the UK after World War Two. While it provides a fundamental basis for understanding the Museum's current position, it also draws out many of

the contentious relationships - personal, professional, and institutional - that delayed the growth of the Museum throughout the period. This work's examination of the Museum's failures, as much as its successes, moves its history beyond a bland recitation of gallery openings and similar milestones. Especially by scrutinizing its failures, this work highlights the difficulties faced by the Museum, including the lack of financial independence, its position under civil service control, the lack of a strong and long-term Director, a failure to (re)plan for the future, problems with the consistent implementation of ideas, and, more generally, a sense of inertia and traditionalism from within portions of the institution. Furthermore, through comparisons with other institutions, this work shows how those issues were overcome and how the lessons learned from the Museum's struggles can, in turn, be applied to the Museum's current position and other institutions.

Finally, this work discusses the Museum's biggest problem, the lack of any guiding master plan. Without a unifying narrative, each new gallery in the Museum defined its own narrative, relying on their view of the knowledge of specialist visitors or on limited connections with other exhibitions. Since the Museum missed the opportunity to provide itself with a guiding narrative when it filled the Centre Block, it quickly became filled with short stories instead of a greater narrative and only much later did it try to enforce a narrative across its existing exhibitions. Throughout this work, it become clear that science requires more thought to organize into a narrative. Unlike art and natural history, science does not have a natural narrative. Science's narrative is therefore more speculative because it lacks a 'Grand Narrative'. Additionally, developing a narrative of science exposes the problem of its very essence; there is no one 'science' but there are many. Art narratives can be constructed along a stylistic continuum, with one style leading into another, and each style covering a variety of media - painting, sculpture, architecture, and design. Natural history narratives can also be constructed along easy to follow narratives based on evolution, taxonomy, or ecology. Science does not follow any such pattern of development - chemistry did not develop from physics and technologies mature before science can explain them - and the co-existence of different branches of science complicates any attempt at a coherent narrative. Yet, as this work shows, the creation of a narrative of science is possible, despite the continued failures at the Science Museum.