

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

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Science and technology is regularly featured on radio, in newspapers, and on television, but most people only get firsthand exposure to 'cutting-edge' technologies in museums and other exhibitions. During this period, the Science Museum was the only permanent national presentation of science and technology. Thus, it is important to acknowledge the Museum's history and the socio-political framework in which it operated. Understanding the delays in the Museum's physical development is critical, as is understanding the gradual changes in the Museum's educational provision, audience, and purpose. While the Museum was the main national exhibition space, the Festival of Britain in 1951 also provided a platform for the presentation of science and technology and was a statement of Britain's place within the new post-War world. Specifically, within its narrative, the Festival addressed the relationship between the arts and the sciences and the influence of science and technology on daily life. Another example of the presentation of science was the quest for a planetarium in London - a story that involves the Science Museum, entrepreneurs, and Madame Tussauds. Comparing the Museum's efforts with successful planetarium schemes isolates several of the Museum's weaknesses - for example, the lack of consistent leadership and the lack of administrative and financial freedom - that are touched on throughout the work. Since most of this history is unknown, this work provides a fundamental basis for understanding the Museum's current position, for making connections and comparisons that can apply to similar problems at other institutions, and for learning lessons from the struggles that can, in turn, be applied to other institutions.

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