Science Museum oriented toward children

By David Searls

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most of their kids, on a fifty-fifty basis.

This is necessary because we don’t want to miss anything on this program. We have more money to do this now, but we really don’t have enough, we just want to get the kids through.

The kids are escorted throughout the museum by trainee guide — we have enough so that each volunteer works with just about one kid on each arm. This is a large staff, since we have something on the order of 1,300 kids in a morning.

The kids come in one day a week, Monday through Thursday, for two days a week in a special summer program. It is designed to increase the effectiveness of this, we have a person that visits them at school beforehand and then visits their trips for education, or orientation, or explanation. Etc.

One of the most important things this program is doing, in our opinion, is to get these kids out of their own community for a while, which they otherwise might never leave, and show them new things.

In addition the Museum has a program by which school children of all ages from public, private, and parochial schools in the State of Massachusetts (the program is sponsored by the Metropolitan District Commission and the State Department of Education) are exposed to free visits throughout the school year.

“We handle a tremendous number of school children with this program, giving them from six to eight in the run of the museum. Though it’s an advertisement, the Museum does as hour early each day, at 9 AM, to get them all in. When they go in, in essence, from students from nursery school to high school, we find that the bulk of them come from the second through eighth grades.”

This is by no means the exten-

tion of the Museum’s activities in the field of education. Also, offered are tuition-type pro-

grams, with fees of $517 to $522 and scholarships available. These range from the Discovery 1 class, for ages 4 and 5, to the Senior Explorers, for ages 7 through 10. Other programs include Sci-

ence Projects for Elementary Teachers, in “strengthen their ability to conduct natural his-

tory and physical science experi-

ments,” and Adult Education.

The Tech asked Dr. Washburn whether the museum attempts to deal with controversial issues, such as the A.B.M., that science could shed some light on, but which might not be of much interest to a family on a Sunday outing.

“There are several positions you can take on this. You can put in a big exhibit on the A.B.M. and then say this is terrible and let’s get rid of it, or you can put in the exhibit and try to show it to the public and say this is great. Or you can try — and this is the tough one — to assemble all the facts that you can on the situation and then just let the public decide. The latter, of course, is what I think we should do, because the min-

nute any scientific institution starts taking firm political posi-

tions it is bound to make mis-
takes soon and be discredited. I think we are much better off to try to present just the facts as objectively as you can, and then let the public decide.

One problem that one gets in is that the fact of getting money to put this kind of exhibit together in the first place that doesn’t take a position. Let’s be very specific. Take the drug exhibit — we simply can’t get anybody to give us money to put a drug exhibit in this place. We’ve gone to the Attorney General, we’ve gone all over the place — everybody’s in favor of the idea, everybody says its great, but the way we’ve had to put this to-

ergopher — is by taking $5 and $10 that have come in all over the place and put it all together — a $50 and $100 fund now to try to get one or more of the foundations that are interested in medical educa-

tion but here again the busi-

ness of raising money for ex-

hibits that don’t take a position is a tough one.

The A.B.M. at the Smithsonian, the Palace de la Decou-

ver, and the Great Museum of Science in South Kensington are all financed by the government, and the govern-

ment tapers with their operation at all. They get enormous sums of money from both the Federal and the City, with no strings attached at all, and this is not the situation United States. It is rarely that we get something that is a totally unpretentious gift.

“Sometimes the terms under which we get a gift are very reasonable, but sometimes they’re not. We’ve turned down some big gifts because they came under terms that we just didn’t approve of.”

Like science itself, the Mu-

seum of Science is growing. This fall, a new wing will be opened which will multiply the existing exhibit space by several times. While some columns, or dividers, the hall will facilitate the flexibility essential to a science museum, as well as permit the installation of such unusual exhibits as a full scale model of a Tyndall X-ray and a plant wave machine and tank.

The Museum is proud of its new acquisition for the adjoining Hayden Planetarium — a Zenod M 616, a model Y which will be on exhibit for the first time last year’s traditional Christmas presentation. A. B. M. and then say this is the newiest and most sophisticated of the major plan-

etarium instruments, the $252,000 machine is being used this winter and spring for shows that might be said to typify the Museum’s concern for past, pre-

sent, and future "Myths of the Universe," "Spacecraft Earth," and "Tomorrow: Mars."

Featnotes

* "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "I mean so many different things — neither more nor less.

' The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things."

* The question is, and finish Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be meant — that’s all."