

Hands-on • Minds at Play



2012 Annual Report

THE  **Discovery Museums**



Dear Friend of The Museums,

This Annual Report marks the completion of the celebration of the 30th Anniversary of The Discovery Museums. Far too many people contributed to the success of Don Verger’s original vision to mention here. So instead we offer a simple, collective THANK YOU to the scores of individuals, families, community organizations, and businesses that have made it possible for us not only to still be here, but to be actively planning the next 30 years. Thank you all.

One of the joys of this celebration has been the opportunity to reconnect with old friends of the museums. From them we have learned many stories not only of the founding of this place but of the many great programs and exhibits over the years. In all of those stories we find the connective thread of a commitment to bringing the joy and wonders of discovery—of open, free play and learning—to the children of our community.

More than ever, children need to play. Why? Here is what Fred Rogers said about play:

“Some people talk about play as if it were a relief from serious learning or even worse: a waste of time. But for children, play is exceedingly serious...and important! In fact, play is a way for children to learn who they are, how the world works, solve problems, and to express feelings. Yes, play is the real work of childhood.”

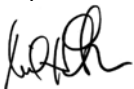
At The Discovery Museums we encourage children to think for themselves, to expand their problem-solving repertoire through creative exploration, and to exercise both their bodies and their minds. Indoor and outdoor exhibits, programs, and workshops are designed to engage children in simple and complex forms of play that result in foundational learning. And when they play, observable and quantifiable learning takes place. From simple cause and effect; to small motor skills; to informational, procedural learning; to conceptual cause and effect—these things take place while playing at The Discovery Museums.

Many of the traditional societal divides that exist in the broader world exist within the museum community as well. People in poor economic circumstances, members of minority groups, new immigrants, those with disabilities—all face obstacles in coming to museums. Those barriers include perspective in seeing museums as a valuable experience, economic concerns about the price of admission or membership, and apprehension about feeling welcome or understanding the norms of the institution. All of these factors add up to a sad statistic that 40% of all kids will never visit a museum of any kind in their lives. We are specifically committed to improving that statistic. We are very proud that, as we celebrate our 30th anniversary, an ever-growing share (22% in 2012) of those we serve have their visits supported either through financial aid or specific targeted programs that make us more accessible.

The next 30 years will continue to be about enriching and supporting the lives of children and families. Our plans are to grow, to reach more people, to greatly expand our outdoor exhibits, and to focus not just on science but on the intersections of the arts, sciences, and the social and emotional well-being of children. We will expand our partnerships with other individuals and organizations that connect us with the most vulnerable families in our communities. And in all of that work, we will continue to need you to be part of the fabric that connects us with our community.

Thank you again for 30 years of inspiring curiosity!

Sincerely,



Neil H. Gordon, CEO



Lees Stuntz, Chair, Board of Directors

“More than its economic benefit to our towns, the Children’s Discovery Museum stands proudly as a symbol of the imagination and cooperation of generous individuals, families, small businesses, large corporations, volunteers, civic organizations, children, parents, grandparents.”

*Daniel S. Cheever, Jr.
Founding Board Member
Dedication Speech
October 24, 1982*

Financial Year in Review

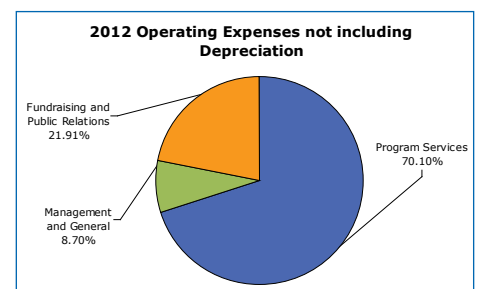
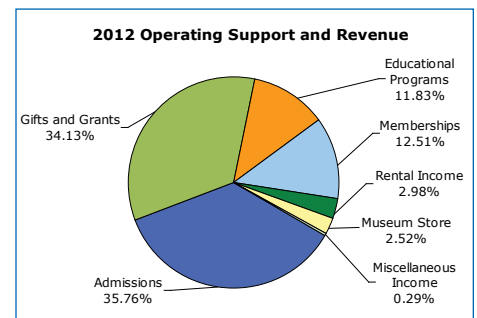
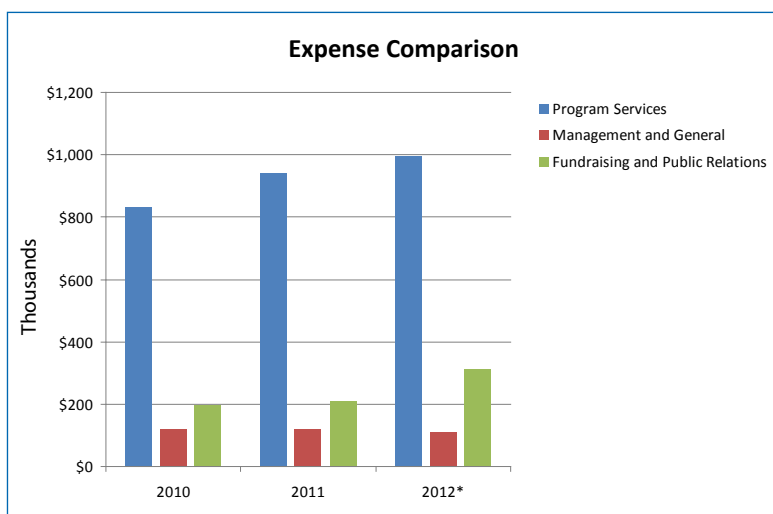
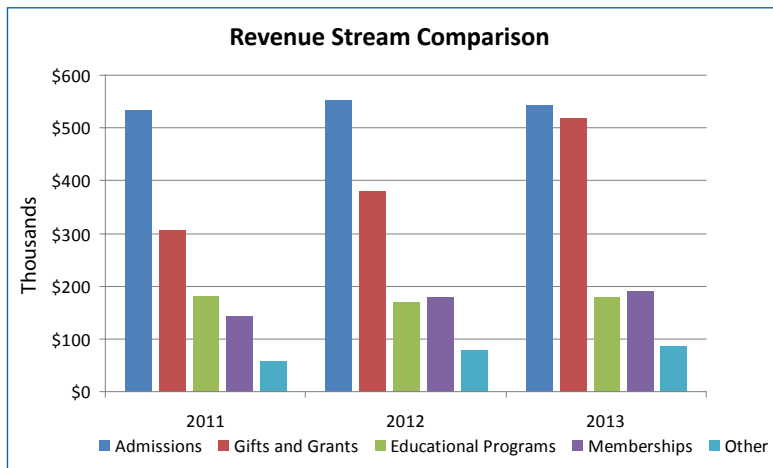
Operating Support and Revenue	2010	2011	2012*
Admissions	\$534,718	\$553,909	\$543,733
Gifts and Grants	\$307,934	\$381,280	\$518,945
Educational Programs	\$182,172	\$170,351	\$179,834
Memberships	\$143,217	\$181,543	\$190,167
Rental Income	\$30,160	\$33,087	\$45,306
Museum Store	\$24,652	\$30,513	\$38,350
Miscellaneous Income	\$2,305	\$15,900	\$4,339
Total	\$1,225,158	\$1,366,583	\$1,520,674
Operating Expenses not including Depreciation			
Program Services	\$833,929	\$943,679	\$998,310
Management and General	\$123,925	\$122,170	\$113,826
Fundraising and Public Relations	\$199,629	\$211,501	\$312,083
Total	\$1,157,483	\$1,277,350	\$1,424,218
Change in Net Assets from Operations Prior to Depreciation			
	\$67,675	\$89,233	\$96,456

*Preliminary unaudited results

2012 Notable Achievements

- Served 179,635 children, parents, grandparents, students and caregivers: 7% more than in 2011, 42% more than in 2009.
- Served 22% of total visitors at free or deeply reduced cost, including families with children with hearing loss, families with children on the autism spectrum, and immigrant families and their childcare providers.
- Opened our newest exhibit, *Nano*, in collaboration with the Nanoscale Informal Science Education (NISE) Network and with support from the National Science Foundation.
- Served 24,000 students and their teachers in classrooms with our hands-on Traveling Science Workshops.
- Delivered close to 900lbs of food to the Acton Food Pantry, donated by visitors during Free Friday Night Fun.
- 2012 Family Favorite, Best of the Best award, *Boston Parents Paper*
- Silver, Best Museum, 2012 Wicked Local Readers' Choice Awards
- Bronze, Best Place for Family Entertainment, 2012 Wicked Local Readers' Choice Awards
- 2012 Certificate of Excellence, 4.5 Stars, Trip Advisor

2012 at a glance



Empowering Young People to Explore their Passions



Over the years, young participants in Denise’s science and engineering programs have gone on to a variety of pursuits: meteorology, biochemistry, environmental engineering, the Peace Corps, nuclear engineering, chemistry, botany, geology, mechanical engineering—and many are science educators. “There are kids who sort of grow up with us, and many come back and stay involved, delivering programs in their field of specialty that can excite the next generation about science.”

Denise began working at The Discovery Museums as an Explainer (the original name for today’s Explorers) in 1988, one year after the Science Discovery Museum opened. “I was intrigued when I realized the staff was incorporating many different science disciplines and layering in perspectives on art, history, music, education, patterns in nature, and early learning. It was and still is an interdisciplinary approach that brings science to life.”

Perhaps what is most meaningful to her is helping young people to explore what is of interest to them. “We engage kids in the process of doing science, giving

them interesting materials to explore with. They design experiments based on their interests, natural curiosity, and observations, not a set of defined procedures. This lets them make discoveries and find things out on their own! In the process they learn new skills, and appreciate those skills all the more because they are self-discovered. It’s very powerful.”

What’s the goal? “We want the kids to leave with a positive attitude about science and their abilities to do science, and with their sense of wonder ignited,” says LeBlanc.

If you visited The Discovery Museums in the mid-1990s, you could have taken an origami class taught by a 10 year old. “It was a great way for her to build skills and confidence by sharing her passion. It can be a very empowering experience for a young person,” says Denise LeBlanc, Director of Learning Experiences. That young person recently received her Master’s degree in Environmental Engineering.



Opening Day



Science Discovery Museum Groundbreaking

A Founder’s Perspective



Founding Board member Dr. Daniel S. Cheever, Jr., tells his story of the founding of The Discovery Museums this way:

“While I was superintendent of schools in Lincoln, a gifted math and science teacher came to me one day and said, ‘I quit.’ ‘Why?’ I asked. ‘I want to start a children’s museum,’ he said, ‘one that will be child-scaled, with exhibits that will engage kids. There is nothing like that around here. Will you help me?’”

And so began an eventful but surprisingly short (15-month) odyssey to bring to life Don Verger’s vision of what a children’s museum should be. They raised funds and public support; built a board of directors; found a location; researched, built and

prototyped exhibits (often in Cheever's kitchen and later, his financial company's board room); overhauled an 1880s Victorian house; and opened The Children's Discovery Museum to a waiting public in 1982.

Dan Cheever was one of many in the community who rallied around this dream—including friends, small businesses, corporations, parents, teachers, children, grandparents, community groups, and civic organizations—many of whom are still connected in some way today, 30 years later.

In his dedication speech, Cheever said, "I know no other person who could have accomplished what Don Verger has done. Don's exhibits are imaginatively conceived and skillfully executed, and he has handled fundraising remarkably well. Good education must be joyful, fascinating, stimulating, and based on what we find in life around us. Don's exhibits remind us that a place for learning need not be opulent and can be crafted from simple surroundings by our own hands. The opening of this Museum inspires and gives confidence to each of us who has a dream."



Founder Don Verger

Sparking AHA! Moments in Classrooms for 20 years



And that's exactly what kids in classrooms throughout New England have been doing for 20 years, through the museums' Traveling Science Workshops.

"We make science accessible to kids," says Foster. "They come to realize that they can 'do' science, that it's not something that only happens in a sterile lab by a really smart person in a white coat. By exploring with everyday materials, they discover that science is all around them. They didn't know that there is a world of sound in that paper cup they drink from—but now they do. They won't look at things the same way again."

Foster has been running the program since 1995, three years after it began as studio-recorded training tutorials for teachers. She has developed a full set of 18 workshops, aligned for grades K-8 based on the state's core curriculum guidelines. More than 24,000 kids experience the program in their classrooms each school year.

"If you give kids a chance to explore and learn about the science in their world, they will observe, ask questions, and keep trying new things. They will learn, and they'll want to share their excitement about what they learn," says Foster.

What would inspire a third-grader to carry an oven rack to school to show his classmates?

If you ask Jill Foster, Director of School and Group Programs, she doesn't hesitate: "Science. Exploration. Discovery. An AHA! moment. He wanted to share a thrilling discovery!"

So, why did the boy bring the oven rack to school? Foster explains, "In our Sound program, kids learn that sound is vibration. They attach string to things like wrenches and wire hangers, and bang them against a table while holding the ends of the string near their ears. They are shocked to hear an incredible amount of sound through the string! He tried it at home, got incredible results from the oven rack, and wanted to share the thrill of his discovery with his classmates!"

"That's what it's all about," says Foster.





Our Supporters

We gratefully acknowledge the individuals, corporations, foundations, organizations, and government agencies whose generous financial contributions and in-kind giving provided critical support for The Discovery Museums throughout 2012. We are pleased to recognize our leading contributors and express our gratitude as well to our more than 2,000 member families. To all, our deepest thanks.

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Celebrating 30 Years

In November we celebrated at our 30th anniversary gala with a capacity crowd. Underneath a tent at the Museums, our friends and supporters were treated to an evening hosted by WBUR's Robin Young, with great food, music, prizes, and dancing, raising a record amount to support our Open Door Connections program. Special thanks to Gala Committee chair Cheryl Beaudoin for creating such a fun event, and to Premier sponsors Cisco Systems, Enterprise Bank, and Nuance Communications for making the event possible.





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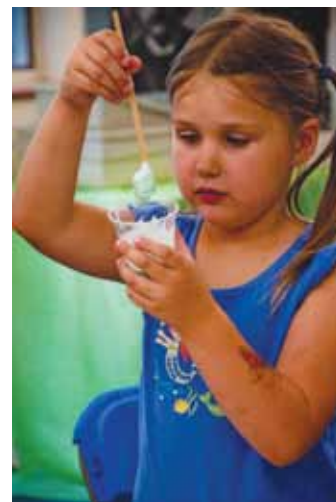
A Salute to Raytheon

Raytheon Company has been a critical partner to The Discovery Museums since 1985, when the company was the primary grantor of construction funds for the Science Discovery Museum. Raytheon staff also contributed many hours of engineering and construction support to the project, saving perhaps hundreds of thousands of dollars. Since then, Raytheon has made significant investments in educational programs and provided continuous annual financial support. In 2013, the Museums will be announcing a new partnership with Raytheon to provide free museum access and other benefits to military families, part of our Military Appreciation Program. In 1987, museum founder Don Verger said, "We really appreciate Raytheon's help...without it, the Science Discovery Museum would not have happened."

We continue to appreciate—and thank—Raytheon for their generous and consistent support.



Raytheon



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The following individuals made tribute gifts.

In Memory of Russell K. Layton, Sr.

Dan Beaudet

In Honor of Barbara and David Linnard

Owen Smith

In Memory of Carol Holley

Jean Sparks



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Looking Forward

Science and Technology Advisory Council

In late November we launched a new Science and Technology Advisory Council, a group of 16 (and counting) diverse and accomplished technology leaders. The STAC is led by Christina Lampe-Onnerud, high-tech innovator and former CEO of Boston Power. The group's objective is to help keep the Museums current on science and technology trends and support our efforts to create inspirational and fun experiences for kids in science, technology, and engineering. We are grateful for the opportunity to pick the brains of these successful science entrepreneurs as we continue to define our plans for the future.

Members

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Bill Brady
Craig Carlson
Julian Chang
Max Hall
Scott Harris

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Russ Layton
Doug Lawson
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Penny Noyce
Mike Phillips
Mitch Resnick
Scott Sarazen
Jim Shields



Christina Lampe-Onnerud, *Chair*

Launching The Discovery Museums Speaker Series in 2013

With the leadership of Board member Bob Ferrara, the museum planned a new speaker series to launch in the winter of 2013. This series is designed to bring together thought leaders and community members around important matters affecting children and families. We hope that each event will engage attendees in lively discussions and will include the opportunity for everyone to connect with each other and learn about the Museums. The initial programs will be co-sponsored by the MIT Club of Boston.

Planning Our Future

Under the leadership of Board chair Lees Stuntz, the Museums have developed a plan to expand and improve our campus to serve visitors well for the next 30 years. Board member Bill Ryan is leading our Building Committee to oversee those plans. The plan will require substantial investment from our community, and Board member Tom Beaudoin is leading the efforts to raise those funds. Our special thanks to The Manton Foundation for their gift to help begin this project.



“The joy of discovery that happens every day in the museums is only because of the support of our donors and members. Thank you again for 30 years of inspiring curiosity!”

— Neil H. Gordon, CEO



Our Board & Staff

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Staff

- Neil Gordon, *Chief Executive Officer*
- Ilse Allen, *Director of Visitor Experiences*
- Jill Foster, *Director of School & Group Programs*
- Elizabeth Garvin, *Interim Campaign Director*
- Sarah Hetherington, *Campaign Assistant/ Grants Manager*
- Elliot Isen, *Development Associate*
- Jill Jacques, *Museum Store Manager and Marketing Specialist*
- Kavita Katti, *Director of Finance & Business Administration*
- Shilpa Kulkarni, *Program Assistant*
- Denise LeBlanc, *Director of Learning Experiences*
- Elizabeth Leahey, *Public Program Assistant*
- Cara Lonardo-Roy, *Visitor Experiences & Admissions Manager*
- Erin Manning, *Membership Manager*
- Nicholas Malo, *Facilities Assistant*
- Judy Pecevich, *Development and Marketing Assistant, Operation A.B.L.E Program*
- Peggy Plant, *School Relations Manager*
- Alecia Primrose, *Program Assistant*
- Steve Roake, *Exhibit & Facilities Director*
- Ann Sgarzi, *Director of Marketing*
- Lucas Skorczeski, *Early Childhood Education & Parent Resources Director*
- Sowmya Suneel, *Operations Assistant*
- Claudia Bard Veitch, *Director of Development*
- Kathie Watt, *Scheduling Manager*

In Tribute

Maria Conley 1939 – 2013

“The nitrogen in our DNA, the calcium in our teeth, the iron in our blood, the carbon in our apple pies was made in the interiors of collapsing stars. We are made of starstuff.”

Carl Sagan, Cosmos



Maria Conley was a dear friend, dedicated colleague, and supportive mentor to many of us. Maria brought her artistic talents, a desire to share her sense of wonder about the world, and her ability to create environments that are welcoming, safe, creative, and unique to The Discovery Museums.

For nearly 20 years she inspired The Discovery Museums’ team of educators to work together to create special and memorable museum experiences for our visitors of all ages.

Maria welcomed staff and volunteers with diverse interests and abilities, and she discovered and nurtured each person’s hidden talents. She encouraged young adults in their first job experience and helped many of us grow and develop skills and take on new responsibilities.

Maria was woven into the fabric of the museums, bringing her special touch everywhere. She enhanced exhibit spaces with carefully selected quotes and images that added depth, reached diverse learners, and enriched the overall experience. She worked alongside staff to maintain a clean, functional and high-quality museum experience. She personally welcomed families and school groups, and joyfully helped kids discover the many wonders of the museums. She planted gardens that engage all the senses, and still bloom today. Maria was a force during the crucial growing years of the museum, putting in place many of the approaches and procedures that are an integral part of the culture today.

Maria delighted in creativity, clouds, color, rainbows. Thank you, Maria, for touching ours and so many lives.

Denise LeBlanc, Peggy Plant, Jill Foster



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