

Introduction



In 1909, when the Science Museum had just been established, a report to the government on the purpose of this new institution recommended:

'So far as is possible by means of exhibited scientific instruments and apparatus, machines and other objects, the Collections of the Museum ought to afford illustration and exposition of the various branches of Science ... and of their applications in the Arts and Industries.'

One hundred years later, that echo from the past still rings true. Science and engineering remain key to the commercial strength of our nation as well as the future wellbeing of humanity.

Indeed they are seen by many as the key to UK 'plc' powering its way out of the recession. Britain remains the sixth largest manufacturing economy in the world, providing a firm foundation on which to build. But to do so requires a stream of young people enthused to become the scientists, engineers, designers and entrepreneurs of the future, and a public informed of the nature of science and supportive of its goals.

Given these opportunities and challenges, we have defined the role of the Museum as being 'to make sense of the science that shapes our lives', and our vision: 'to be the best place in the world for people to enjoy science'. We are committed to providing life-enhancing experiences which raise curiosity, release creativity and shape the future. To achieve this, learning is at the core of all we do, to underpin and enable the nation's knowledge economy and to do so by offering insight and inspiration to the innovators of tomorrow.

In our treatment of the great contemporary issues, such as decarbonising the world's energy system to address the threat of climate change, we see the Museum as an agent of social change, with the objective of not just engaging our visitors in an enjoyable day out, but inspiring them to change their private, professional and political lives in a way which shapes a better future.

The Science Museum may be one hundred years old, but it has never been more relevant.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chris Rapley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Professor Chris Rapley CBE
Director of the Science Museum

