

SCIENCE
MUSEUM

Universal design studio

M A P

FOR PUBLICATION
JULY 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Raising visitor donations and creating an arrival point

In 2010 The Science Museum introduced a new initiative, 'Visitor Giving' This is where staff welcome each visitor and provide them with the opportunity to make a donation to the museum.

Universal Design Studio and MAP were commissioned in 2012 to review the entrance area to help create the best welcome to the Science Museum and increase donations from visitors.

We studied visitor movement in the museum entrance hall and used design thinking to identify two distinct requirements, which were met by the design of two bespoke furniture installations. The Visitor Fundraiser Desk creates an arrival point at the museum, which enables staff to personally welcome every visitor and has the functionality to process donations and guide book sales. The Information Desk enables staff to provide detailed information as needed by visitors. Both desks are clad in mirror-polished stainless steel to subtly reflect their iconic surroundings and arrival at the museum.

In six months after installation, the new entrance design increased visitor donations by 80% and contributed to a 67% increase in guide book sales.

(183 words)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

BRIEF

The project brief was written by Belinda Aird from Beehive projects in consultation with the Science Museum. The aim was to make modest changes to the Science Museum front concourse area to build existing improvements to the architecture and front windows.

There were two key objectives:

- > Improve the level of donations from visitors to the museum by proactively asking for donations
- > Raise the quality and design of the arrival experience for visitors reflecting the status of a national museum

The approach needed to accommodate a range of staff activities including 2-6 fundraiser staff who proactively ask all visitors for donations as well as the visitor experience team and guidebook sellers. The design needed to be flexible enough to cope with visitor numbers ranging from 200 to 2,500 people per hour.

A number of complex requirements needed to be taken into consideration:

- > Design of a secure donations box
- > Integration of credit card facilities
- > Storage for office equipment and medical pack
- > Improved signage
- > Guide book display
- > Appropriate access for wheelchair users
- > Phones, workstation, EPOS unit

SCIENCE MUSEUM FUNDRAISER DESK

9.0.2

CATEGORY:

MUSEUMS GALLERIES, EVENTS AND VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

CLIENT:

THE SCIENCE MUSEUM

CONSULTANCIES:

UNIVERSAL DESIGN STUDIO & MAP

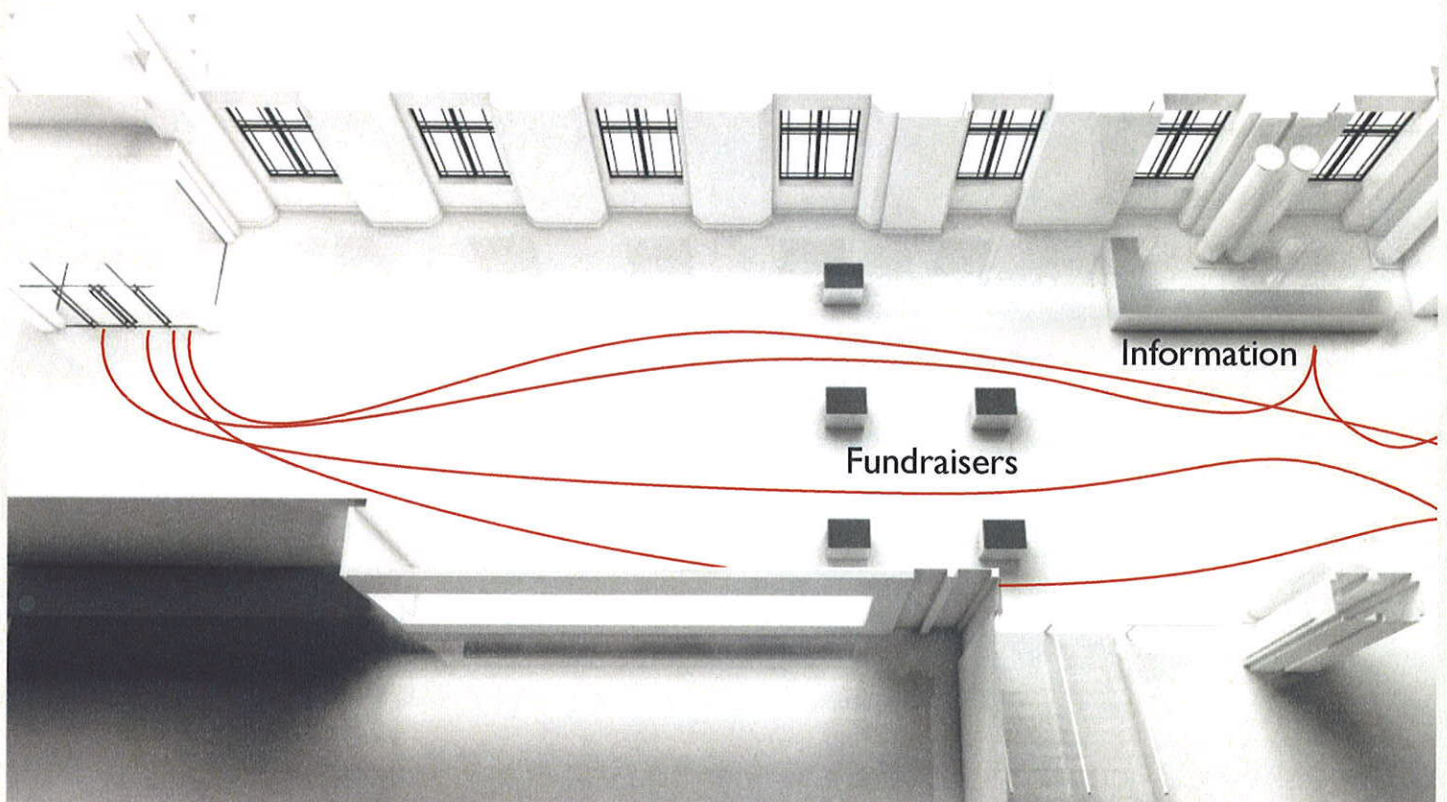


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PROJECT OVERVIEW

OBSERVATION BASED RESEARCH

We studied the visitor flow coming in to the museum at busy periods and also quieter ones. We noticed that although there were a number of existing donation points, the layout meant that visitors pass through the area rapidly without stopping. Staff did not have time to engage the visitors, and the entrance area in general did not feel welcoming. The existing information desk was tucked away to one side and not in the line of sight of visitors arriving at the museum, therefore visitors were tending to leave the area and seek help in other parts of the museum or to ask the fundraiser staff for information and directions.

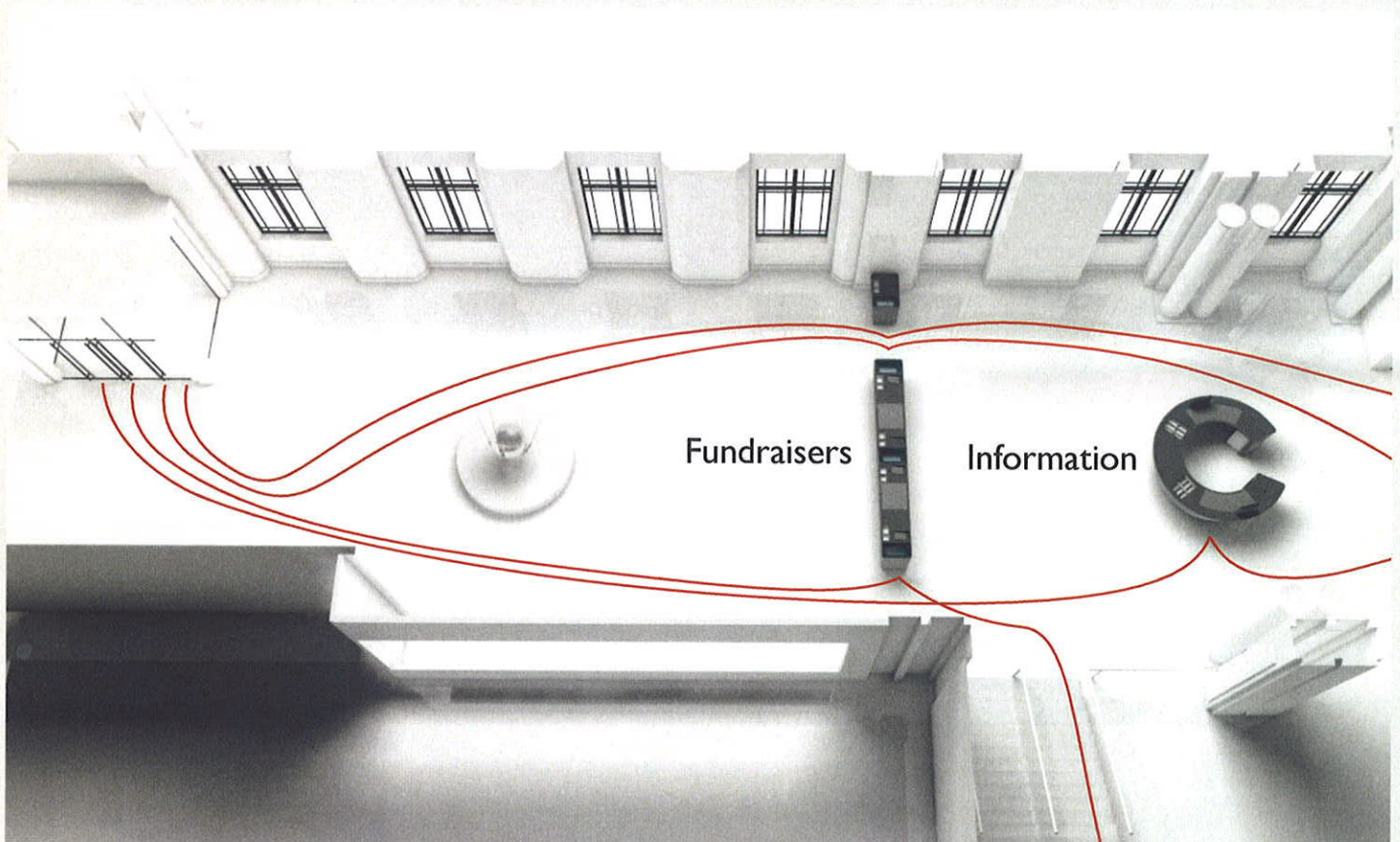


Existing visitor flow

PROJECT OVERVIEW

PLANNING

Our proposal was to create a 'beautiful barrier' which would act as a welcome desk and funnel visitors through two narrow entrances staffed by fundraisers. We proposed adding a plinth with an interesting museum exhibit ahead of the desk to help build excitement on entry to the museum and also to direct visitors towards the fundraiser staff. We proposed creating a new circular information desk in the centre of the space addressing visitors from all directions and adding overhead signage to make it more prominent. This meant the staff at the fundraiser desk were able to refer questions easily to their colleagues to reduce queuing and enable them to get the most out of their visit.



Visitor flow for new entrance planning

PROJECT OVERVIEW

DESIGN SOLUTION / FUNDRAISER DESK

We designed the bespoke fundraiser desk as a single element traversing the museum entrance area. Visitors are funneled into two openings, where they are greeted by fundraiser staff. This allows staff to welcome each visitor and ask for a donation even at very busy times. We created simple, secure collection boxes integrated into the desk surface with glass viewing panels to encourage visitors to donate. We provided EPOS units and credit card facilities neatly integrated into the top surface of the desk for donations and guide book sales. The desk surface is made from Corian and has integrated display areas for guidebooks to encourage visitors to purchase them.



Fundraiser desk

PROJECT OVERVIEW

DESIGN SOLUTION / FUNDRAISER DESK

A unique feature of the fundraiser desk is the addition of fold and slide doors to the rear of the desk. This allowed integration of the necessary storage and technical equipment while retaining a clean look from both directions. This improved the experience and working conditions for the fundraiser staff, providing them with all the tools needed to do their job and also personal storage for coats and bags. Security doors enable the cash donations to be left in the desk and collected after the museum is closed. For evening events the whole desk can also be secured so it can act as a reception area.



Fundraiser desk

PROJECT OVERVIEW

DESIGN SOLUTION / INFORMATION DESK

We designed a circular information desk to allow visitors to approach from the museum entrance and also once inside the museum after their visit. The circular format enabled the desk to be put in the centre of the space improving visitor flow and strengthening the relationship with the fundraiser desk.

Bespoke monitor housings and integrated lighting provides a high quality and professional work environment for the museum staff enhancing their ability to provide museum visitors with the best possible experience.



Information desk

PROJECT OVERVIEW

DESIGN SOLUTION / MANUFACTURE

Both desks are clad in mirror-polished stainless steel which subtly reflect the surroundings, whilst providing a sense of craftsmanship and gravitas appropriate for the welcome area of a national museum. The desks were made in the UK using cutting edge CNC processes combined with hand panel beating and polishing.

(333 words)



Installation of the information desk

PROJECT OVERVIEW

LAUNCH DATE

The briefing was issued on the 3rd May 2012 and the installation date was scheduled for mid July to have the desk operational before the London 2012 Olympics. This allowed 6 weeks for design and 6 weeks for manufacture. The desk was installed on the 20th July and was operational soon after.

BUDGET

The budget for the whole project was £175,000. This included £100,000 for manufacture and £23,600 for design fees. The remainder of the budget covered strip-out of the existing solution, making good, signage and project management.



Donation point

RESULTS

DONATIONS

The design solution met its financial objective.

Over a six month period compared to the previous year, donations were up by 80% and guide book sales by 67%

Donations

August 2011 – January 2012	£259,514.34p
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August 2012 – January 2013	£469,921.44p
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Increase of £210,407.10

Adult guide book and Children's Activity book sales

August 2011 – January 2012	£51,880.00p
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August 2012 – January 2013	£87,140.00p
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Increase of £35,260.00

Taking into consideration the project budget of £175,000, the increase in voluntary donations meant that the payback period for investment in design was approximately 5 months.

In six months after installation, the new entrance design increased visitor donations by 80% and contributed to a 67% increase in guide book sales.

Figures are from the Science Museum

RESULTS

EXPERIENCE

The project met its objective to improve visitor experience.

The new fundraiser desk and information desk have provided clarity to the entrance area and make visitors feel welcome. The fundraiser desk helps to slow down visitors in peak periods so they pass a member of staff and can be personally welcomed into the Museum. The design means that the area can be operated with a flexible staff team of 3 - 5 fundraisers. There are four fundraiser points, which can be staffed by two people during quiet periods. The staff who work at the fundraiser desk and information desk appreciate the investment made in the design, particularly the attention to detail in getting the desk surface heights correct and all equipment to hand so they don't need to bend down. The mirrored finish of the desk adds a certain wow factor, which is especially enjoyed by young children.

“Building the desk has helped to create an arrival point at the museum and guide visitors to our staff so that we can help them get the most out of their visit”

Emma Black

Head of individual giving, Science Museum Group

RESULTS

CLIENT FEEDBACK

“In 2012/13 'Visitor Giving' donations generated £1.57million, an average of 32p per visitor (across the Science Museum Group). 'Visitor Giving' donations combine with our GIA money to fund core activities at all sites in the Science Museum Group. Receiving regular visitor donations has helped us to reduce the funding gap caused by reductions in Government funding. Donations play an important role in running the museum.”

Emma Black, Head of individual giving, Science Museum Group



Fundraiser desk