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The politics of 'the politics of display': a nuclear energy gallery, a science museum in the 1980s, and a debate about patronage

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Abstract

This article examines a controversy over a nuclear energy gallery at the Science Museum, London, in the early 1980s. It uses this case to explore the wider politicisation of museums at this time, and thus the politicisation of the display of science and technology. It argues that cultural changes in train since the 1960s, coupled with a museological turn towards 'social history' as the proper vehicle for exhibiting science and technology, led to the museum becoming newly subject to widespread critical scrutiny. That scrutiny had contradictory effects. On the one hand, it reinforced the image of the museum as a bastion of official culture and knowledge. On the other, it undermined this image, by exposing the ideological nature of the museum's authority. This double movement laid the groundwork for the crisis of confidence that culminated in the 'new museology' of the later part of the decade. Attending to this controversy thus suggests a need to revise prevailing scholarship on the 'politics of display', which often takes for granted an overly straightforward connection between museums and power.

In December 1982, the Science Museum in London opened a new gallery devoted to nuclear physics. Occupying the full stretch of the recently-opened Gallery 44, the gallery was designed so that, in three separate sections, visitors could be offered a comprehensive introduction to the history of atomic research, the science underlying it, and its applications in nuclear energy production. In the first section, visitors could find a recap of some key scientific principles: atomic structure, radioactive decay, and nuclear fission. The second, running along the southern wall of the gallery, chronicled the history of nuclear research. Exhibits here ranged from early particle detectors to a scale mock-up of Enrico Fermi's 1942 Chicago Pile-1 reactor. The third and by far the largest section supplied an introduction to the brave new world of nuclear energy. Here, visitors could stand inside a full-size, interactive model of a reactor core, could read displays detailing the latest research in fast breeder reactors and nuclear fusion, and could learn about differences between Magnox, Advanced Gas-Cooled, and Pressurised Water Reactors – the three kinds of reactors that made up Britain's stock. Soundtracking all of this was a series of instructional films offering stern reassurances about the efficiency of the fuel cycle and the safety of reactor design.[1]

Conventional enough though the gallery was, *Nuclear Physics and Nuclear Power* soon achieved a kind of notoriety. The curators, it quickly emerged, were unhappy at the way they had been treated by the gallery's main funder and sponsor, the UK Atomic Energy Authority (AEA), in the process of planning and making the gallery. Worse still for the museum, these complaints were given a very public airing, when the young STS scholars Robert Young and Les Levidow published them in a pamphlet written as part of the budding (and strongly anti-nuclear) 'radical science' movement. In it, Young and Levidow stitched first-hand tales of the censorial diktats imposed by the AEA on the museum's curatorial staff into a blistering critique of the omissions and biases of the gallery. Their broadside concluded that, owing to the influence of the gallery sponsor, the whole affair was little more than an ideological exercise

in acclimatising the public to the benign atom. Such a brazenly one-sided depiction of nuclear power mattered, they argued, because the museum was a vital organ of 'official culture' and thus had the power to shape prevailing perceptions.[2]

In this paper I revisit this controversy for what it can tell us about the changing constraints facing museums of science and technology in the later part of the twentieth century. The story of the gallery highlights two key features of this new landscape in particular: firstly, that museums were having to deal with more critical, less acquiescent publics, especially when it came to controversial subjects like nuclear energy; and secondly, that they were dealing with stakeholders that nevertheless considered museums to possess a significant degree of cultural power. In other words, people who interacted with museums were becoming both less and more deferential. Of the museum staff, patrons, and public that interacted with the gallery, almost no-one emerged persuaded by the gallery's presentation of nuclear energy. And yet, for the gallery to have even come into existence, all of them had to recognise the museum's power to convey truths and persuade audiences. This simultaneous pattern of deference and disavowal, already evident in Young and Levidow's challenge, is at the root of a basic rhetorical affectation with which any observer of today's culture wars will be familiar: commentators emphatically declare museums to be master manipulators of public opinion, and then (often in the same breath) equally emphatically declare them problematic and unconvincing.

Recognising both sides of the equation here is important, since there is a tendency in this scholarship to adopt this rhetorical pattern rather than pursue its implications. The discipline of Museum Studies, which has its origins in the mid-1980s period that this paper discusses, was after all practically founded on exposing the kinds of connections between museums and power – the 'politics of display' – that Young and Levidow highlighted.[3] And although the Gramscian and Foucauldian approaches that dominated the early phase of writing about museums have become less fashionable now, they have acquired something of a second

life in the history of science.[4] To take a recent example: a special journal issue from 2021 seeks to understand how exhibitions 'embody and seek to order the spectacle of modernity' and thus 'shape a new kind of citizen'.[5] Other writers investigate how exhibitions promoted 'fascist universalism' in 1930s Italy, or how the display of industrial heritage built an Catalan proto-nationalism.[6] Other examples – handily enough for my purposes – find fertile territory in exhibitions of nuclear technology, showing how nuclear displays variously rendered atomic science benign, 'spectacular', and even 'banal'.[7] In much of this work, the intention has been largely the same: to reveal how museums have upheld and promoted the ideological interests of the powerful.

The belief, then, that museums play an important role in shaping public narratives has been a pervasive one, both inside and outside the academy.[8] Rather than addressing it directly, in this article I take a step back and ask what happens in contexts where this belief has actually influenced the production and content of exhibition - in other words, where the discourse around the 'politics of display' has intervened in the processes it aims to describe. As we shall see in the case of the nuclear gallery, it was not only museum scholars and critics who possessed ideas about the truth-setting and audience-manipulating powers of museums. Curators, patrons, and publics all did too, and their understandable nervousness around this directly shaped what the gallery was able to convey. My contention is that if we want to reach a more fine-grained understanding of the 'politics of display', we would do well to remember that it, too, has a politics.

To be clear, by focusing my attention on *beliefs* and *ideas* about the authority of museums, I am not suggesting that museums are not powerful, or that they are somehow ideologically neutral. I am instead suggesting, firstly, that these beliefs and ideas have their own history that is worthy of study, irrespective of whether they are 'true' or not (historians of science would surely agree). In the particular case that follows, I will argue that these ideas

emerged most clearly in the midst of cultural changes taking place since the end of the 1960s, when organisations like the Science Museum began actively courting wider audiences. Secondly, I am suggesting that, from the late-twentieth century especially, these beliefs and ideas have exerted a recursive effect on what museums do and how they do it. As such, taking account of this process is necessary if we want to better understand the kinds of scientific knowledge that museums communicate, and how.

'The social historical background'

A major impetus for the Science Museum to begin seriously building up its treatment of nuclear physics originated in a rather idiosyncratic series of policy documents authored in 1960 by the museum's incoming director, David Follett. A long-time curator who had organised a temporary exhibition about electrons in the 1930s, Follett was also one of a small pool of museum staff strongly oriented towards the emerging discipline of the history of science.[9] Under the tutelage of a previous director, Frank Sherwood-Taylor, Follett in the 1950s began the task of trying to reorganise the museum's displays to better reflect new views of science's history. In place of the chronologically-ordered sequences of instruments and machinery that had been *de rigeur* since the famous Bell Report of 1912, the new format would aim to show how different 'branches' of science, technology, and industry related to each other within distinct historical periods. Sherwood-Taylor had reckoned that this more contextual approach would better highlight what he called 'the growth of science as a method of thought and action'.[10] By the 1960s, however, Follett was using a different formulation to describe a similar approach. Contextualising objects, for Follett, now meant not only telling a story of intellectual processes, but also revealing the 'social historical background against which the developments of science and engineering took place'.[11]

Partly enabled by this turn to 'social history', the other major component of Follett's vision was to appeal to a new kind of visitor. Reprising a perennial complaint of Science Museum directors, Follett argued that the institution was still suffering too much from the 'stigma' of being regarded as a 'children's playground'.[12] The new audience Follett had in mind comprised what he called 'people of general education': the Penguin-reading, *Listener*-perusing, BBC Home Service classes formed within what Chris Hilliard has nicely deemed Britain's 'double helix of democratization and deference'.[13] Referencing C.P. Snow's influential 'Two Cultures' polemic, Follett claimed that the Science Museum might even have a role to play in correcting certain anti-scientific prejudices among this audience, the kind of prejudices that made the museum 'relate to the art museums in much the same way as technical colleges are related to universities'.[14] Moreover, an explicit focus on the history of science would help to bridge the gap between scientific and humanistic pedagogies. Gaining the approval of the common reader, Follett thought, would help the museum to assume a new mantle as 'part of the cultural background of the nation'.[15]

Neither the focus on social history nor the desire to make the Science Museum part of the 'cultural background of the nation' would seem overly conducive at first to a new gallery about atomic energy. But building up such a gallery was in fact one of Follett's main ambitions. Along with space technology, electronics, and computing, Follett posited nuclear power as one of the 'more outstanding features' of the 'modern scientific and technological scene'. Future audiences, he argued, would clearly want to understand this important slice of 'contemporary social history'.[16] Follett's concern, it seems, was just as much with historicity as with history. Devoting space to this important new development, and in the process reorganising the collections away from long-held distinctions between 'pure science' and 'engineering', would thus allow the museum to speak more effectively to the appetites of the educated postwar

public. All of this was bound up with what David Matless has called the 'confident […] technological optimism' of the postwar era.[17]

Follett's vision turned out to be strangely prescient. 'Social history', including the social history of science and technology, *did* come onto the agenda in the 1960s, as part of an extraordinary explosion of interest in the recent and industrial past that lasted well into the 1980s. The new discipline of 'industrial archaeology', the vogue for historical re-enactments, and the unprecedented expansion of local, independent museums, all quickly revealed how Britain's technological past was now being opened up and excavated in new and popular forms.[18] Crucially also, this was a kind of heritage-making that sought to place the experiences and desires of 'ordinary' Britons at the front and centre, most spectacularly exemplified by the new open-air museums at Ironbridge Gorge (established in 1968) and the Beamish (opened in 1972).[19] The Science Museum's own gestures in this direction – a gallery devoted to domestic appliances, and its eventual takeover of the highly popular Railway Museum (1979) – suggested that it was well-placed to take advantage of these new developments. That its visitor numbers continued to tick up all the way through this period suggested that it did so successfully.[20]

Yet Follett was also wide of the mark in another way. Britain's heritage boom, as it played out, relied on a kind of DIY energy that ostensibly found itself at odds with the establishment ethos of places like the Science Museum. As the erstwhile Director of the Ironbridge museum once noted, it was precisely during the 1960s, and because of museums like the one he ran, that words like 'musty' and 'old-fashioned' began to appear most frequently in the media to describe the national museums.[21] Even Jennie Lee's famous 1965 white paper, written while she was Britain's first Minister for the Arts, felt compelled to characterise them as 'retaining a cheerless unwelcoming air that alienates all but the specialist and the dedicated'.[22] Contrary to what Follett had predicted, even by the middle of the decade it had

become clear that what was once imagined as a homogenous public of common readers, ready to be educated about industry and technology, was fast transforming into something else entirely: an active body of participants, ready to assert their right to become the keepers of cultural memory.

The situation occupied by the major national museums amidst the 'heritage boom' was thus a contradictory one. On the one hand, these institutions profited enormously from the new interest in social history and the expansion of cultural provision in the period. The Science Museum was a particular beneficiary of this: by the mid-1960s it had become the most-visited museum in Britain, a position it retained well into the 1980s. On the other, the new and fast-innovating leisure culture of the period also saw the museum's authority being challenged, tallying with what several historians have observed as a 'decline of deference' in British society more widely during this period.[23] Yet whether they were being praised or criticised, one key upshot of all of this ferment was to sweep the museums into a discursive environment that seemed to grant them a heightened degree of power. In their efforts either to critique or to champion the new heritage movement, commentators on both sides of the notorious 'heritage wars' of the 1970s and 1980s turned their attention towards understanding what it was, exactly, that lent institutions like museums such great cultural weight.

That emphasis was most assuredly there, for instance, among the critics of the 'heritage industry' like Robert Hewison (though he was by no means the only one), who positioned the older museums as a kind of spiritual salvation, defenders of civilisational values against the ravages of commodification.[24] But it was also there, though less so, among the champions of the new heritage like Raphael Samuel, who lumped the traditional museums in with the professional historians as part of the hegemonic, elitist reaction to the new democratising tendencies.[25] And it was certainly there among the early adopters of the 'new museology', in whose hands the almost god-like meaning-making power of the modern museum became

newly open to examination.[26] Even a young Donna Haraway, writing in 1982 to critique the gendered and racialised exhibits of the American Museum of Natural History, felt sufficiently compelled to refer to museum-going as a kind of 'communion'.[27]

What did all this mean for the Science Museum's nuclear gallery? Needless to say, there is very little evidence that museum staff in the 1960s and 1970s saw themselves either as instruments of cultural hegemony or as laggards behind grassroots energies. For the most part, the museum carried on pushing its postwar social-democratic mission – educating the common citizen about the meaning and history of science and technology – while remaining largely oblivious to wider trends.[28] But between Follett's early pronouncements in the 1960s and the more intensive efforts to build up the nuclear gallery at the end of the 1970s, something had profoundly changed in the public sphere, in ways that would pose significant problems for the museum's attempt to get the project off the ground. Glibly, one might say that by 1982 Follett's wish to make the Science Museum 'part of the cultural background of the nation' had been granted. It was nothing to do with his own efforts.

Fusion

Although Follett was responsible for providing the impetus to build up the nuclear collections in the 1960s, a lack of space and resources meant that treating the subject with any serious attention faced significant constraints. It took until 1966 for the museum's existing display on the history of nuclear physics to be finally expanded to include a new display on 'applied atomic physics', mainly nuclear power and radioisotope applications.[29] Throughout this period, the museum's veteran Keeper of Physics, F. A. B. Ward, had been working steadily to obtain models of reactor piles illustrating the newest British research: TORUS, BEPO, ZETA (the latter of which had been exhibited as a great spectacle at the Brussels Expo 58).[30] In the process,

Ward had established an ongoing relationship with the UK Atomic Energy Authority, the only body with the sufficient expertise to build, supply, and interpret the artefacts.

It was on the basis of this longstanding relationship that the idea for a new gallery on nuclear energy began to be mooted. Although very little effort was devoted to the concept between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s, a chance visit to the museum from a member of the AEA's Public Relations department in 1975 set the ball rolling in earnest. On her visit, the PR manager had found the existing atomic physics display both hopelessly outdated (object labels referenced processes 'due to come onstream in 1966') and generally dishevelled (she had offered to 'come with a bucket and a bottle of detergent' and clean the exhibits personally).[31] The museum immediately wrote back with an offer of forming an 'advisory committee with reps from the AEA' to redesign the display.[32] Early negotiations began in 1977, and a final agreement was reached in 1978 for the AEA to provide £200,000 towards the construction of a new gallery. The process would be overseen by a Joint Working Group consisting of AEA scientists and museum curators.

By this point in time, forming partnerships with industrial patrons, especially nationalised ones, was standard practice for the Science Museum. Since the Second World War, similar procedures had been followed in several of the Science Museum's new offerings, beginning with a 1954 gallery on Gas Manufacture and Distribution installed at the behest of Britain's Gas Council. Other nationalised industries, like coal, oil, and steel, would all also be given their 'own' space within the museum over the course of the 1960s.[33] As Alison Boyle has noted, these kinds of partnerships formed part of a broader postwar climate in which the museum, in cahoots with industry, operated as a window onto the 'benign' face of Britain's developmental state.[34]

Quickly, however, it soon became clear that this quintessentially postwar model of gallery development could not survive the changing context of the late 1970s. For a start, the

asymmetry between museum and patron was much starker in this period than in the 1950s and 1960s. A squeeze on museum funding from the mid-1970s (as a condition of Britain's IMF loan) had made the Science Museum evermore reliant on external sources of revenue. This feature would become a permanent fact of existence just a few years later, when the National Heritage Act 1983 removed the museum from direct ministerial oversight and encouraged it to act 'entrepreneurially' in search of income. And although the AEA would eventually be set on its own path to Thatcherite privatisation, by the 1970s it still possessed a virtual monopoly on both the artefacts that might find their way into the gallery and the expertise needed to interpret them for the public. Indeed, from the 1950s onwards, the AEA already possessed its own more-or-less developed programme of touring exhibitions.[35] Unlike gas, coal, or steel, there was little sense that Britain's nuclear industry actually needed the exhibition opportunities offered to it by the Science Museum.

That the AEA pursued the opportunity anyway owed less to its sense of duty towards a national collecting institution and more to its sense of anxiety to control the public narrative around nuclear energy. The mood in the AEA at the end of the 1970s was both highly expansionist and extremely defensive. Global anti-nuclear campaigns had begun ramping up from around 1975, partly as a redirection of activist energies following the end of the Vietnam War, partly owing to a growing environmental movement, and partly a consequence of heightened nuclear fears with the onset of the so-called Second Cold War.[36] In Britain, the 1976 Flowers Report on *Nuclear Power and the Environment* had recommended that no further nuclear power stations should be built until the industry could prove it had a method for the safe containment of radioactive waste.[37] At the same time, only a year later, James Callaghan's Labour government greenlighted the construction of two further Advanced Gas-Cooled Reactors (AGR). The incoming Thatcher administration followed this up in 1979 by approving

plans for an American-style Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR), subject to a public enquiry that would begin in 1983.[38]

Internal memos from the AEA's Public Relations department from 1975 onwards reveal a lively debate about the best way to get ahead of anti-nuclear sentiment in the context of its upcoming expansion. The previous policy of deliberately restricting publicity would have to be replaced by a more active, interventionist approach.[39] And although the programme of touring exhibitions appeared initially as one potential solution – it would allow the AEA to meet 'opponents of nuclear power on occasions of our own choosing' – by the end of the decade it was becoming increasingly understood that a different approach was needed.[40] Rather than making 'emotive' appeals or delivering arguments too forcefully, the AEA would aim to present itself as a provider of 'independent information' and 'facts' to as wide a public as possible.[41] (That, at least, was its response to a parliamentary question about why there had been such a sharp increase in the AEA's PR budget).[42] As the new Public Relations director, Peter Vey, wrote in an internal memo, the Science Museum might form a welcome site for such activities, if nothing else because it received such a large yearly influx of visitors.[43]

Clearly, then, the AEA was beginning to buy into the discourse that suggested museums were sites where publics could be persuaded of a particular point of view. Specifically in the case of the Science Museum, this persuasive power seemed to derive from its status as a place where information could be presented in an ostensibly neutral way, however contentious the topic. Yet here another problem would soon present itself: museum and patron were increasingly beginning to diverge on the question of what a 'neutral' presentation of information might look like. In particular, the museum's turn to 'social history' I noted earlier contrasted directly with the AEA's wish to provide simple, technical explanations of its procedures. [44] A modest proposal put forward in the early stages of negotiation by the curator Kenneth Chew in 1977 involved covering the history of UK nuclear power from Calder Hall

to the present day. It was immediately turned down by the AEA, who insisted on providing their own display that would educate 'the public as to the true significance of nuclear energy in the economy of the UK'.[45] Chew countered by insisting that the AEA's plan for a 'textbook on the wall' style of display was 'anathema' to anything the Science Museum might consider.[46]

As the negotiations proceeded, it appeared it was not only the AEA who had grasped the possibilities that the museum's cultural authority afforded for smuggling in ideology under the guise of objectivity. An early warning sign came from Derek Robinson, the museum's Keeper of Museum Services, actively involved in the project throughout. Writing to the museum director Margaret Weston in 1980, Robinson expressed carefully-worded reservations about the appropriateness of the museum as a venue for a subject that 'must be more complex, globally interwoven (and economically) beset than any other of modern if not of all times':

> Does this necessarily make it a subject for extensive treatment in the Science Museum where I believe we would all want to pull off such a presentation, if we so elect, better than anywhere else in the world and appropriately to our recognised tradition and reputation as a museum in all the best interpretations of that word, rather than a science centre? […] How far can the questions and uncertainties be posed in museum terms in a way satisfactory to the recipient visitor - are these matters more appropriate to the book, the TV programme, the radio debate – or all they issues we cannot avoid without seeming biassed, superficial or naive?[47]

Detectable here is not only an anxiety about the suitability of the subject matter, but also about the very function and place of a museum in a fast-moving cultural landscape. The book, the TV programme, the radio debate, the science centre – with the exception of the last, none of

these were new competitors. But the dual context of shifting public expectations and a controversial topic seems to have supplied Robinson both with a renewed defence of the museum's 'recognised tradition and reputation' as well as an uncertainty about its exact nature.

A balder formulation of a similar sentiment came from the museum's newly-appointed curator of physics, Alan Morton. One of a new breed of professional historians of science entering the museum in the late 1970s, Morton approached the task of putting together the gallery with a more critical sense of the political and ethical stakes.[48] His cautious memo to the director addressed the subject of patronage head-on, warning that 'when the Gallery opens we will be accused of bias simply because some of the money for the display came from the UKAEA and that they were formally able to comment on our plans'. One solution, he suggested, would be to consult anti-nuclear campaigners. Another would be to firm up the museum's treatment of 'energy' more broadly, in order to 'meet criticisms that we were dealing with energy matters in a selective way'.[49]

Fission

Partly in an effort to smooth these concerns, Margaret Weston met with the AEA finance director Arnold Allen in July 1980. Over lunch, they sketched out the likely shape of a *modus operandi* between the two organisations.[50] The contract that resulted turned out to be a rather unhelpful document. On the one hand, the museum would be guaranteed its editorial freedom. On the other, the museum was sternly reminded that under section 2.2(f) of the Atomic Energy Act 1954, the AEA was required to ensure that 'public funds disbursed by them […] are used for purposes and under financial procedures which they consider justified'. A Joint Working Group consisting of AEA and museum representatives would be set up to reach consensus on gallery content. Help on 'technical points', as well as an overall view on the 'balance of the exhibition' would be supplied by a select committee of AEA experts. In the event of

disagreement, matters would be referred to a Steering Committee consisting of Margaret Weston, Arnold Allen and Lord Flowers, author of the 1976 environmental report. If agreement could still not be reached, then either the 'Museum's view would prevail', or the AEA would reserve its right to withdraw funds at any time.[51] The ultimate purpose of the contract, it seemed, was to refer matters back to the very gentlemen's agreement that produced it.[52]

That the contract was beset with ambiguities turned out to be relevant, since it proved largely incapable of resolving the manifold tensions that persisted throughout the period between January 1981, when the Joint Working Group first met, and December 1982, when the gallery opened. An early and obvious source of conflict arrived over the proposed treatment of the history of nuclear weapons. The general AEA line was that mentions of weapons research should be kept to a minimum, though within this there were a range of perspectives. Much initial discussion was focused on the proposed display of Fermi's CP-1 reactor, an object that, by virtue of its size, some AEA representatives felt would command too much attention in the gallery.[53] One representative even objected to any mention of the bomb at all, on the grounds that 'even without the Manhattan Project nuclear power would have been developed'.[54] Others acknowledged that 'references' to weapons were 'inevitable' but suggested foregrounding the 'British contribution' to atomic science over the American military-industrial complex, or else emphasising the commitment of the Manhattan Project scientists to developing 'peaceful nuclear energy'.[55] (Intriguingly, Alan Morton later recalled that one reason for the AEA's objections was that one of its representatives – it is difficult to tell who – had been in Nagasaki shortly after the war, and as such felt a moral duty to emphasise peaceful uses of the atom.[56] This fact alone probably cannot account for the full gamut of protestations. But it does at least suggest that wishing to play down the bomb could be an ethical commitment as well as a PR strategy.)

Another sore point in the discussions concerned a proposed section comparing reactor types. The curator, Alan Morton, was especially keen to provide such a comparison given that the newest addition to Britain's stock – the PWR – was about to become the subject of a public enquiry.[57] The Science Museum might, in his mind, have provided a forum for public debate. For the AEA, however, the 'choice' for the new reactor had already been made, 'and so there was little point in going over old ground in their view'.[58] The AEA especially disliked the idea of comparing its existing reactor stock with the new Canadian CANDU model, a design that was, in the wake of the Three Mile Island incident, arousing public attention as a potentially safer alternative to the PWR.[59] At the same time, AEA representatives tended to feel that the proposed display as it was contained significantly fewer reassurances about both safety and radiation than they would have liked.[60] Their preference, it seemed, was to present safety as a problem that had already been solved.

Compromises on most of the above points had been reached by the autumn of 1982, when the final preparations were in train. The historical section would address the bomb, but it would also emphasise the British contribution to nuclear power, and contain exhibits from the famous *Atom Train* exhibition organised by the Atomic Scientists' Association to show the commitment of scientists to developing peaceful nuclear energy.[61] Reactor designs would be displayed, but they would be shown only in relation to the existing UK power stations that employed them.[62] CANDU was flatly ruled out. And the AEA would produce a video display on safety that would be shown under the gallery mezzanine.[63] And yet, with only a month to go before opening, several further sticking points emerged. Two proved to be decisive. The first was a quibble over the wording of a panel containing data about the likely economic impact of the civil energy programme.[64] The second concerned a selection of newspaper cartoons published shortly after the war that Alan Morton had picked out for display in the historical section, supposedly without first clearing them with the AEA.[65] Not only did several AEA

representatives protest that they were ‘distasteful’, but one even felt that they ‘might cause unnecessary concern to visitors’. ‘CND supporters’, this representative went on, ‘would be pleased that the Museum had shown this’.[66]

A desperate last-minute attempt to patch up relations by Derek Robinson was of no avail.[67] For one thing, the Science Museum were in a weaker position than at the start of the project, since a budgetary overspend had forced the museum to ask for a further injection of £10,000 from the AEA, and a similar amount from British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL).[68] For another, neither side was prepared to give way on what they understood had been pre-agreed content. The matter was only resolved when, a matter of weeks before the exhibition opening, Margaret Weston unilaterally capitulated to all the AEA’s demands. A minute from an internal meeting summed up the attitude of the curatorial staff: the whole project had descended into ‘a very depressing and highly dismaying state of affairs’.[69]

Fallout

As ever, evidence of how audiences responded to the display after it went live is sorely lacking. What we do possess comes from a small cache of letters sent to the museum after the gallery opened, the vast majority of which (aside from the occasional schoolchild requesting help for a homework project) took the form of complaints about pro-nuclear ‘bias’ in the gallery. Clearly, it would be foolish to treat these letter-writers as representative of the exhibition-going public, but the letters are nevertheless revealing of some of the wider framings being used to discuss museums at the time. As might be expected, several of the letters focused on specific, contentious wordings in the displays. A handful of correspondents, for instance, strongly objected to a voiceover line in the AEA-supplied video exhibits which stated that ‘no member of the public has ever been killed in a reactor incident’.[70] This was a claim that, even at the time, required rather narrow definitions of ‘public’, ‘reactor’, and ‘incident’, though in any case

the line was doubly unfortunate since the gallery remained in place during and after Chernobyl. Most writers, however, tended to focus on what the gallery omitted over what it showed. The majority of complaints addressed the limited space given to issues ranging from the health effects of radiation poisoning, to the difficulty of long-term disposal of nuclear waste, to the moral hazard of sourcing uranium from apartheid Namibia.[71]

Perhaps more tellingly, almost all the writers thought fit to relate their specific critique of the gallery to larger concerns about the power and authority of the museum. Suspicions of the malign influence of the AEA abounded, as in one letter, which directly accused the museum of becoming 'a tool for what is really company advertising'; or in another, which felt it was a 'serious abuse of a great museum' if the AEA had indeed had 'editorial control'.[72] References to the museum's status as a public institution (one that spent 'public – *i.e. my* – money', as one correspondent wrote) and its 'duty to present information in a balanced manner' were common; as were comments about the potential for sacrificing the 'international reputation' and 'enormous authority and prestige' of the museum.[73] But the letters became most damning when they accused the museum of wielding the power to influence a largely impressionable public. One particularly strident correspondent expressed a deep concern over the '"don't knows" who have been influenced by your exhibition', while others worried about how 'in the long term political decisions on the appropriateness of [nuclear] technology will be determined by the votes of just the kind of young or undecided people as are now being influenced by your exhibition.'[74] 'Imagine', implored another writer, 'the number of children who pass through your hands every year who have been brainwashed by this publicity stunt.'[75]

Many of these complaints parallelled and echoed the more lengthy critique of the gallery that Robert Young and Les Levidow subsequently wrote up in a self-published pamphlet aimed at anti-nuclear activists.[76] In several instances, it appears that the link between Young and Levidow's article and the complaint letters was more than incidental: several

correspondents outwardly declared their involvement with the same kinds of anti-nuclear activist circles that the two authors were associated with. One correspondent, writing soon after the pamphlet was published, even admitted to not having seen the gallery herself, having only 'read a description of it'.[77] In any case, the thrust of Young and Levidow's piece followed many of the same lines of attack: that the gallery contained key omissions and distortions, that it was indisputably in hock to its sponsor, and that it dressed up a pro-nuclear stance in the guise of neutral objectivity.[78] What differentiated their article was a keener theoretical sophistication and a more explicit sense of the social and political stakes of putting the gallery together.

The 'radical science' movement of which Young and Levidow were part, and the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS) which gave the movement institutional form, had its origins in the leftist counterculture of the 1960s.[79] As James Secord has argued, a central motivation for Bob Young's brand of activist scholarship especially was exposing 'science' for its role in 'naturalising' what were in effect highly ideological views about the nature of reality.[80] That emphasis was most clearly there in his famous essay about Malthus and Darwin.[81] But it was also there across a whole oeuvre of writings about the presentation of science in culture, including some about museums.[82] Young even argued that museums occupy an especially privileged place in ideological reproduction, because 'until television came along […] museums were the main place where people consumed official scientific and technological culture'.[83] Citing his friend Donna Haraway, Young asserted that museums were places where 'constructs' can be portrayed as 'reality'.[84] From this perspective, it was easy to see how they might become vehicles for state power and corporate capitalism.

Both the letters and the article must have been a rather jarring experience for the curators involved with the gallery to read, not least because, as Young and Levidow appeared to suggest, many of their concerns were ones with which museum staff agreed. Indeed, the

Young and Levidow article had only been possible to publish because the two authors had been invited to attend a conference of science museum curators in which Alan Morton had given an unusually frank discussion of the issues surrounding the sponsorship of the gallery. Most of their knowledge of what they described as a 'scandalous' exhibit had come from things museum staff had told them, both formally and informally. In their efforts to play down the scandal, the curators suddenly found themselves in the strange position of having to defend themselves from their own critique.

This is why it is so interesting that the museum staff chose to respond in the way they did. Although we now know about their concerns over the politics of display – namely the possibility that the museum might be seen to be wielding its cultural power to influence a public debate about nuclear power – their primary form of response when faced with criticism was to revert to a more traditional understanding of what museums do. Rather than being vehicles for particular interests, they argued, museums were simply places that held collections of objects. As such, they were necessarily limited in what they could and could not say about nuclear physics. It was this explanation that Alan Morton offered to the AEA when they asked him why there was not more information about safety or waste in the gallery.[85] It was this explanation, too, that he offered to most of the letters of complaint.[86] And it was primarily this explanation that he focused on in his discussion of the tensions between museum and patron at the science curators' meeting.[87] But the very fact that the museum staff were having to make this justification at all suggested that they were no longer operating in a context where this rather innocuous understanding of museums had much purchase.

Conclusion

The discourse about the politics of display thus tended to have self-reinforcing effects. If, as I have suggested, the belief that museums were strongholds of official culture had become

culturally available from the 1960s onwards, then it was surely this belief that had led the AEA to approach the Science Museum in the mid-1970s. In turn, the AEA's desire to manage the museum's outputs only served to heighten the curatorial team's own sense of the political stakes of museum display. The resulting dismay with which some sections of the public greeted the gallery only further strengthened their sense of the museum's authority, however nefariously they felt it was being deployed. As a defence, all the curators could do was to revert back to a more naïve interpretation of the museum as simply a more or less innocent collection of objects – to argue, politically, that there was no such thing as a politics of display. But the museum's own earlier turn towards contextualising its objects via 'social history', coupled with the fact that much of the new generation of curators were recruited from the developing discipline of history of science, suggested that this interpretation was more borne out of convenience than conviction.[88]

Of course, a controversial subject matter like nuclear power was more likely than most to bring ideas about the museum's ideological authority into clear view. But similar stories to the one in this article could be told (and have been told) about other topics on which the museum exhibited in this period: stories in which the process of display-making was itself profoundly shaped by stakeholders' sense of, and worries about, the museum's status as a purveyor of official knowledge.[89] More tellingly, the Science Museum's later ventures into exhibiting nuclear power were even more overwhelmingly informed by these beliefs. In 2003, a team from the Science Museum worked on redeveloping the visitors centre at the Sellafield nuclear site operated by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL). Once again, it was precisely because of the museum's status as an ostensibly neutral site of scientific authority that BNFL pursued the arrangement.[90] For the museum's part – perhaps informed by its previous experience – it took great pains in its publicity to make clear that it had total editorial control over what was displayed there.[91] The resulting display, seemingly unusually for a visitors

centre at a working nuclear site, leant heavily into anti-nuclear arguments and themes.[92] The whole project was as much a performance of a particular construction of the museum as it was an informational exhibit about nuclear energy.

What should this all mean for how we should think about the 'politics of display'? Clearly much of the literature dealing with this topic has travelled in different directions ever since Young and Levidow's point-blank exposé of the museum's capture by capital. There is now at least more inclination to believe that museum displays do not only exhibit one kind of narrative, that museum meanings are fluid and plural, and that in any case they can be open to contest.[93] Yet the old idea of a museum deploying its status as a 'neutral site of expert discourse' to convey the narratives of the powerful to a largely impressionable public has died hard.[94] Whatever truth there may be in this description, revisiting projects like the Science Museum's nuclear gallery reminds us that the description is itself a historical artefact – one that arose in a particular historical context, one that has exerted effects on the display of science and technology, and one that, presumably, could disappear or change in the future. We may do well to bear this in mind if we want to understand our current culture wars without simply reproducing their battlelines.

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[1] Scripts for these films are kept in Science Museum Group Corporate Archive (subsequently SCM), 2001/44/18 part I.

[2] Les Levidow and Bob Young, 'Exhibiting nuclear power: the Science Museum cover-up', in Radical Science Collective (ed.), *No Clear Reason: Nuclear Power Politics*, London: Free Association, 1984, pp. 53–79.

[3] Randolph Starn, 'A historian's brief guide to new museum studies', *American Historical Review* (2005) 110(1), pp. 68–98; early examples of this kind of approach include Tony Bennett, 'The exhibitionary complex', *New Formations* (1988), 1988 (4), pp. 73-102; Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993; Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, London: Routledge, 1992; Itit Rogoff and Daniel J. Sherman (eds), *Museum/Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, London: Routledge, 1994.

[4] Much of it stemming from Sharon Macdonald, *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, London: Routledge, 1998.

[5] Andrée Bergeron and Charlotte Bigg, 'The spatial inscription of science in the twentieth century', *History of Science* (2021) 59(2), pp. 121-32, 124, 128.

[6] Respectively, Geert Somsen, 'Science, fascism, and foreign policy: the exhibition "scienza universale" at the 1942 Rome world's fair', *Isis* (2017) 108(4) , pp. 769–91; Jaume Valentines-Álvarez, 'The quest for the technological soul of a nation: the Catalan forge and the display of politics (1914-1949)', in Elena Canadelli et al. (eds), *Behind the Exhibit: Displaying Science and Technology at World's Fairs and Museums in the Twentieth Century* Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2019, pp. 32–50.

[7] Steven Conn has pointed out that this is often because nuclear displays, like nuclear technology more broadly, have generally been the sources of the most controversy in the twentieth century. Steven Conn, 'Science museums and the culture wars', in Sharon Macdonald (ed.), *A Companion to Museum Studies*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, pp. 494-508, 504; of course the most notorious of these was the Smithsonian's *Enola Gay* exhibition in the 1990s, for which see Thomas F. Gieryn, 'Balancing acts: science, Enola Gay and history wars

at the Smithsonian', in Sharon Macdonald (ed.), *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 197–228. Other analyses of nuclear technology in the museum include Alison Boyle, '"Banishing the atom pile bogy": exhibiting Britain's first nuclear reactor', *Centaurus* (2019*)* 61(1–2), pp. 14–32; Alison Fields, 'Narratives of peace and progress: atomic museums in Japan and new Mexico', *American Studies* (2015) 54(1), pp. 53–66; Sophie Forgan, 'Atoms in wonderland', *History and Technology* (2003) 19(3), pp. 177–96; Robin Christopher Gerster, 'The bomb in the museum: nuclear technology and the human element', *Museum & Society* (2013) 11(3), pp. 207–18; Jaume Sastre-Juan, '"If you tilt this game, will it explode?": the politics of nuclear display at the New York hall of science (1966–1973)', *Centaurus* (2019) 61(1–2) , pp. 33–50; Jaume Sastre-Juan and Jaume Valentines-Álvarez, 'Fun and fear: the banalization of nuclear technologies through display', *Centaurus* (2019) 61(1–2), pp. 2–13.

[8] In particular, this literature's focus on the production and content of exhibitions over their reception has often tended to mean assuming, in Sharon Macdonald's words, 'too clear-cut a conscious manipulation by those involved in creating exhibitions and too passive and unitary a public'. Sharon Macdonald, 'Introduction', *Sociological Review* (1995) 43 (Special issue: Theorising Museums), pp. 1-18, 5.

[9] Alison Boyle, 'Modern physics in the museum: shaping a UK national collection in the twentieth century', *Journal of the History of Collections* (2019) 31(3), pp. 487-502, 494.

[10] See Tim Boon, '"Some years of cudgelling my brains about the nature and function of science museums": Frank Sherwood Taylor and the public role of the history of science', *British Journal for the History of Science* (2023) 56(3), pp.1-25, 8.

[11] D. H. Follett, 'The Presentation of the Museum's Collections', typescript memo, 9 June 1960, SCM Z-183/02, no. 1.

[12] Follett, 'Future Museum Policy', 9 June 1960. SCM Z-183/02, no. 1.

[13] Sophie Forgan also argues that this audience of 'common readers' formed the intended recipients of science exhibitions in the mid-twentieth century. Forgan, op. cit. (7); Christopher Hilliard, *English as a Vocation: The 'Scrutiny' Movement*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 250.

[14] Follett, op. cit. (11).

[15] Follett, op. cit. (11).

[16] Follett, 'Changes in Classification of Museum Collections', 9 January 1962. SCM Z-183/02, no. 1.

[17] David Matless, 'The agriculture gallery: displaying modern farming in the Science Museum', in Jon Agar and Jacob Ward (eds), *Histories of Environment, Technology, and Modern Britain*, London: University of London Press, 2018, pp. 101-22, 102.

[18] For the museum boom, see Fiona Candlin et al., 'The UK museum boom: continuity and change 1960–2019', *Cultural Trends* (2024) 33(5), pp. 1–20.

[19] For 'ordinary people's' history, see Laura Carter, *Histories of Everyday Life: The Making of Popular Social History in Britain, 1918-1979*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021, ch. 4 especially.

[20] Sara Selwood, 'Looking back: understanding visits to museums in the uk since the nineteenth century', *Cultural Trends* (2018) 27(4), pp. 225–31.

[21] Neil Cossons, 'The new museum movement in the United Kingdom', *Museum* (1983) 35(2), pp. 83-90, 83.

[22] Jennie Lee, *A Policy for the Arts: First Steps*, London: H.M.S.O., 1965, p. 5.

[23] Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference in England, 1968-2000*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

[24] Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, London: Methuen, 1987, pp. 84–5; see also Robert Lumley (ed.), *The Museum Time Machine*, London: Routledge, 1988.

[25] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, London: Verso, 1996, pt. IV especially.

[26] Peter Vergo (ed.), *New Museology*, London: Reaktion, 1989.

[27] Donna Haraway, 'Teddy bear patriarchy: taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936', *Social Text* (1984) 11, p. 20.

[28] What I take to be the thrust of Scott Anthony, 'Ambition and anxiety: The Science Museum, 1950-1983', in Peter J. T. Morris (ed.), *Science for the Nation: Perspectives on the History of the Science Museum*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 107–10.

[29] Boyle, op. cit. (9), p. 497.

[30] F. A. B. Ward to Cyril Darbey, 17 July 1958, SCM 8555/1-77.

[31] Memo to Aderji Sahiar, not dated (c. 1975); also Sonia Crowe to Aderji Sahiar, 25 March 1975, SCM 8555/66.

[32] Sahiar to Crowe, 7 October 1975, SCM 8555/66.

[33] Peter J. T. Morris, '"An effective organ of public enlightenment": the role of temporary exhibitions in the Science Museum', in Peter J. T. Morris (ed.), *Science for the Nation: Perspectives on the History of the Science Museum* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 233.

[34] Boyle, op. cit. (9), p. 497.

[35] Progress report on exhibitions policy, October 1955. TNA/AB 6/1636.

[36] Jon Agar, *Science Policy under Thatcher*, London: UCL Press, 2019, p. 142.

[37] Brian Hilton Flowers, *Sixth Report of Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution: Nuclear Power and the Environment*, London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1976.

[38] Agar, op. cit. (36), p. 141.

[39] 'Review of public information activities to date', 2 June 1976, TNA/AB 65/830.

[40] 'Notes on possible PR activities to combat the "environmentalists"', 17 December 1975, TNA/AB 65/830.

[41] 'Reactor group directors meeting: review of public information activities', 2 June 1976, TNA/AB 65/830.

[42] Memorandum on 'PQ from Mr Hooley on expenditure on "advertising and promotion of nuclear power"', 10 June 1980, TNA/AB 48/1743.

[43] Minutes of public relations meeting, January 1977, TNA/AB 1742.

[44] 'Atomic energy and the Science Museum: report of a meeting at the Science Museum on 28 June 1976', SCM 8555/66.

[45] 'Atomic energy and the Science Museum: report of a meeting at the Science Museum on 28 June 1976', SCM 8555/66.

[46] V. K. Chew to J. R. Thompson, 12 October 1977, SCM 2001/44/1 pt1.

[47] Derek Robinson to Margaret Weston, 10 October 1980, SCM 2001/44/1 pt1.

[48] For professional science in the museum at the end of the 1970s, see Robert Bud, 'History of science and the Science Museum', *British Journal for the History of Science* (1997) 30(1), pp. 47-50, 50.

[49] Alan Q. Morton to Margaret Weston, D. B. Thomas, D. A. Robinson, 5 January 1981, SCM 2001/44/1 pt1.

[50] A. M. Allen to Margaret Weston, 31 July 1980. SCM 2001/44/1 pt1.

[51] Nuclear Physics/Power Gallery Project: First Meeting of the Joint Working Group, 21 January 1981, SCM 2001/44/1 pt1.

[52] Alan Morton is quoted in Levidow and Young, op. cit. (2) as saying that 'the contract is only as good as the people making it'.

[53] Alan Morton, Memo to Director, 28 January 1981, SCM 2001/44/1 pt1.

[54] Minutes of First Meeting of the Joint Working Group, 26 January 1981, p. 4, SCM 2001/44/1 pt1.

[55] Minutes of Third Meeting of the Joint Working Group, 25 June 1981, p. 3. SCM 2001/44/18 pt2; R. S. Pease to A. M. Allen, 9 June 1981, TNA/AB 83/57.

[56] Alan Morton, 'Of physics and power: 50 years of nuclear exhibitions', *Annales historiques de l'électricité* (2011) 9(1), n. 44.

[57] Minutes of First Meeting of the Joint Working Group, 26 January 1981, p. 3, SCM 2001/44/1 pt1.

[58] Alan Morton, Memo to Director, 28 January 1981, SCM 2001/44/1 pt1.

[59] Levidow and Young, op. cit. (2).

[60] Minutes of second meeting of the Joint Working Group, 12 March 1981, SCM 2001/44/18 pt2.

[61] Minutes of fourteenth meeting of the Joint Working Group, 2 November 1982, SCM 2001/44/18 pt1.

[62] Minutes of third meeting of the Joint Working Group, 25 June 1981, SCM 2001/44/18 pt2.

[63] Minutes of fourteenth meeting of the Joint Working Group, 2 November 1982, SCM 2001/44/18 pt1.

[64] Frank Chadwick to Derek Robinson, 8 November 1982, SCM 2001/44/42.

[65] P. N. Vey to Derek Robinson, 1 November 1982, SCM 2001/44/1 pt2.

[66] Minutes of fourteenth meeting of the Joint Working Group, 2 November 1982, SCM 2001/44/18 pt1.

[67] Derek Robinson to Frank Chadwick, 15 November 1982, SCM 2001/44/42.

[68] Derek Robinson to Peter Vey, 9 April 1980, SCM 2001/44/1 pt1.

[69] Minutes of progress meeting, 8 November 1982, SCM 2001/44/18 pt1.

[70] E.g. Mick Braddick to Science Museum, 25 February 1984; G.C. Church to Science Museum, 12 March 1984, SCM 2001/44/54. The Museum's reply was to state that the (acknowledged) deaths due to cancers as a result of the fire at Windscale in 1957 couldn't be counted because Windscale was a 'plutonium production reactor' and not a power reactor. Morton to Braddick, 9 March 1984.

[71] S.R. Stentiford to Science Museum, 26 June 1983; Sally Greenhough to Science Museum, 24 October 1983; J. H. T Davies to Science Museum, 17 September 1987. SCM 2001/44/54.

[72] G. C. Church to Science Museum, 15 March 1984; Luke Mastin to Science Museum, 26 January 1987. SCM 2001/44/54

[73] King to Science Museum, 12 March 1984; Mick Braddick to Science Museum, 25 February 1984; J. H. T. Davies to Science Museum 17 September 1984. SCM 2001/44/54.

[74] Margaret King to Science Museum, 12 March 1984; Luke Mastin to Science Museum, 26 January, 1987. SCM 2001/44/54.

[75] John Roe to Science Museum, 30 April 1984. SCM 2001/44/54.

[76] Radical Science Collective (ed.), *No Clear Reason: Nuclear Power Politics*. London: Free Association, 1984.

[77] Margaret King to Science Museum, 12 March 1984. SCM 2001/44/54.

[78] Levidow and Young, op. cit. (2).

[79] See Alice Bell, 'The scientific revolution that wasn't: The British Society for Social Responsibility in science', *Radical History Review* (2017) 2017 (127), pp. 149–72; for Bob Young specifically, see Kurt Jacobsen (ed.), *Psychoanalysis, Science and Power: Essays in Honour of Robert Maxwell Young*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2023.

[80] James A. Secord, 'Revolutions in the head: Darwin, Malthus and Robert M. Young', *British Journal for the History of Science* (2021) 54(1), pp. 41-59, 47.

[81] Robert M. Young, 'Malthus and the evolutionists: the common context of biological and social theory', *Past & Present* (1969) 43(1), pp. 109–45.

[82] Bob Young in fact had form for criticising the Science Museum. A year earlier, he had written a critical review of its 'Challenge of the Chip' exhibition, where, once again, he pointed out how the exhibition's portrayal of microprocessors pointed out many of the technical achievements but few of the social consequences. See Bob Young, 'Closed Circuit', *Time Out*, 10 April 1980, p. 8.

[83] Levidow and Young, op. cit. (2).

[84] Levidow and Young, op. cit. (2).

[85] E.g., Morton's recorded comments in Minutes of Second Meeting of the Joint Working Group, 12 March 1981, SCM 2001/44/18 pt2.

[86] E.g., Alan Morton to Mrs R. P. Westgate, 27 July 1983, SCM 2001/44/54.

[87] Levidow and Young, op. cit. (2).

[88] Jim Bennett, 'Museums and the history of science: practitioner's postscript', *Isis* (2005) 96(4), pp. 602-08, 605; Bud, op. cit. (48), p. 50.

[89] Another Science Museum gallery about food has also been discussed in these terms. Emily Rees Koerner, '"The nature and art of patronage is subtle and delicate": the Sainsbury family as patrons in *Food for Thought: The Sainsbury Gallery* at the Science Museum, London' in Scott Anthony, Alice Byrne, and Harry Parker (eds.), *Museums and Patronage: The History, Ethics, and Funding of Museums of Science and Industry*, London: University of London Press, forthcoming; see also Sharon Macdonald, *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum*, Oxford: Berg, 2002.

[90] This was explicitly acknowledged in the PR strategy jointly agreed between the two organisations. Science Museum, Draft Marketing and Communications Strategy: BNFL Sellafield Visitors Centre, 19 August 2001, 10.1. SCM 2002/1332.

[91] Op. cit. (90); see also Suzanne Worthington, 'Sellafield visitors centre', BBC online, Autumn 2003, https://www.bbc.co.uk/cumbria/enjoy_cumbria/places/sellafield/sellafield_visitors_centre.shtml, [accessed 5 March 2026].

[92] That the display tilted towards the 'anti-nuclear' was something felt by both Science Museum and BNFL staff. Views of museum staff are recorded in 'Sellafield Visitor Centre Redevelopment Project: CDU staff survey', February 2002, SCM 2002/1318/002. Views of the BNFL staff are mentioned in an email written by Peter Trevitt to various recipients, 15 October 2002, SCM 2002/0413.

[93] e.g. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, p. 1.

[94] For example, Gertjan Plets and Marin Kuijt, 'Gas, oil and heritage: well-oiled histories and corporate sponsorship in Dutch museums (1990-2021)', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* (2022) 137(1), pp. 50-77, 53.