

The Museum of Science & Industry

The Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) is a relatively young museum, dating back only to the mid-1960s. Given Manchester's status as the world's first industrial city and a centre of scientific achievement, it may seem surprising that a museum of science and industry was not set up earlier. However, although the idea had been discussed previously, it was not until 1963 that any action was taken.

In that year, a joint committee consisting of representatives from the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST), the University of Manchester and Manchester City Council agreed to establish a museum of science and industry in Manchester. This would not conflict with existing local museums as none of them were systematically collecting and interpreting the area's scientific and industrial heritage. In 1965, the Department of the History of Science and Technology at UMIST began to collect historic artefacts to form the basis for the new museum. Within three years, 57 acquisitions had been made, including the Chapman camera collection, the Beyer Peacock collection of company records and a Whitworth lathe.

In April 1968, the committee decided that the Museum should be temporarily accommodated in the former Oddfellows Hall on Grosvenor Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock. This building, held by the University of Manchester on lease, was not regarded as suitable long-term premises but was conveniently part vacant. Half of the building was being used by the University Methodist Chaplaincy; the other half was allocated for the Manchester Museum of Science and Technology, as it was originally named. The Museum opened in October 1969 and received almost 5,000 visitors during the first nine months.



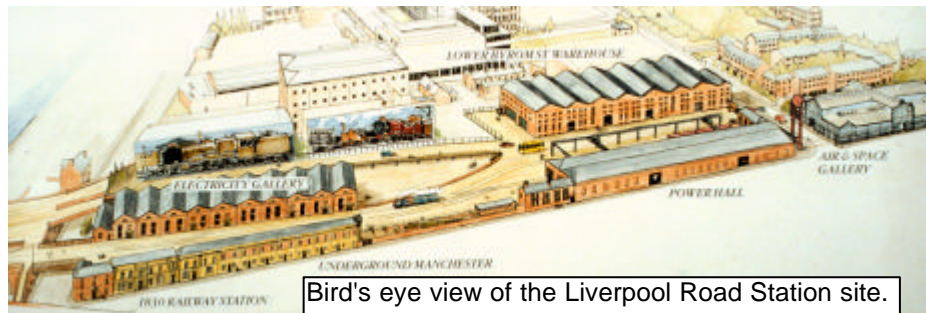
The Grosvenor Street premises showing the 1977 mural by Ken Billyard and Walter Kershaw.

From the beginning, the museum was committed to the restoration of machinery to working order. Various departments at UMIST, such as Mechanical Engineering and Textile Technology, provided technical assistance. One of the earliest projects was the construction of a one-third scale working model of a Newcomen atmospheric engine (which can now be seen in the Power Hall next to the Haydock beam engine). An education service was established in 1971 by the appointment of a Teacher-In-Charge, funded by Manchester Education Department. School parties accounted for about a third of total visitors during the 1970s.

In 1972, the Museum changed its name to the North Western Museum of Science and Industry in order to reflect the regional scope of its collections. A year later, the potential display space was doubled when the Methodist Chaplaincy vacated the other half of the

Oddfellows Hall. However, the collections were outgrowing the existing accommodation, both at Grosvenor Street and an off-site store in Newton Heath. The Museum's prospects improved in 1974 when the newly formed Greater Manchester County Council (GMC) decided to contribute to the Museum's funding. Under the new arrangement, GMC, UMIST, Manchester City Council and the University of Manchester each contributed 24% of the museum's revenue funding, and Salford University provided 4%. A year later, the funding base was again revised, making GMC the largest single contributor (42%).

British Rail's decision to close Liverpool Road Station in 1975 created a golden opportunity for the relocation of the Museum. Occupying a prime location on the south west fringe



of the city centre, this site offered ample space for gallery development together with the advantage of being a historic attraction in its own right. The main concern for GMC as chief funder was the neglected state of the site and the consequent high restoration costs. A deal was agreed in 1978 when British Rail offered the site to GMC at the token price of £1, with an endowment of £100,000 towards restoration. GMC took on sole funding responsibility for the relocated Museum.

Renamed the Greater Manchester Museum of Science of Industry, the Museum opened at Liverpool Road Station on 15 September 1983, the 153rd anniversary of the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway. Only two years later, another expansion opportunity arose when Manchester City Council asked the Museum to take over the Air and Space Museum, which the City Council had opened in May 1983. The Air and Space Museum was housed in the adjacent Lower Campfield Market Hall. An agreement was reached and the Museum thus acquired its Air and Space Hall.

In March 1986, the abolition of the metropolitan county councils, including GMC, meant that the Museum needed a new source of core funding. Fortunately, the Museum was able to make a case for receiving core funding from national government through the (then) Office of Arts and Libraries, and today continues to be nationally funded through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. In 1986, much of the Museum site remained unrestored and undeveloped, so, in order to generate funds for new developments, the Museum introduced admission charges. The ongoing development of the Museum has also depended heavily on raising money through grants (from sources such as the European Regional Development Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund) and commercial sponsorship. The Museum's success in fund-raising has been demonstrated through its continuing expansion, providing new galleries and other public facilities. Its reputation for excellence has been endorsed by the many awards that it has received, including the Museum of the Year award in 1990 (jointly with the Imperial War Museum). Public appreciation has been evident in the Museum's consistently healthy visitor numbers. The resumption of free admission in December 2001 boosted visitor numbers, which reached a record 492,000 in 2004-05. In 2007, the Museum was rebranded as MOSI.

For more information:

Consult Annual Reports and other publications in the Collections Centre Study Area.