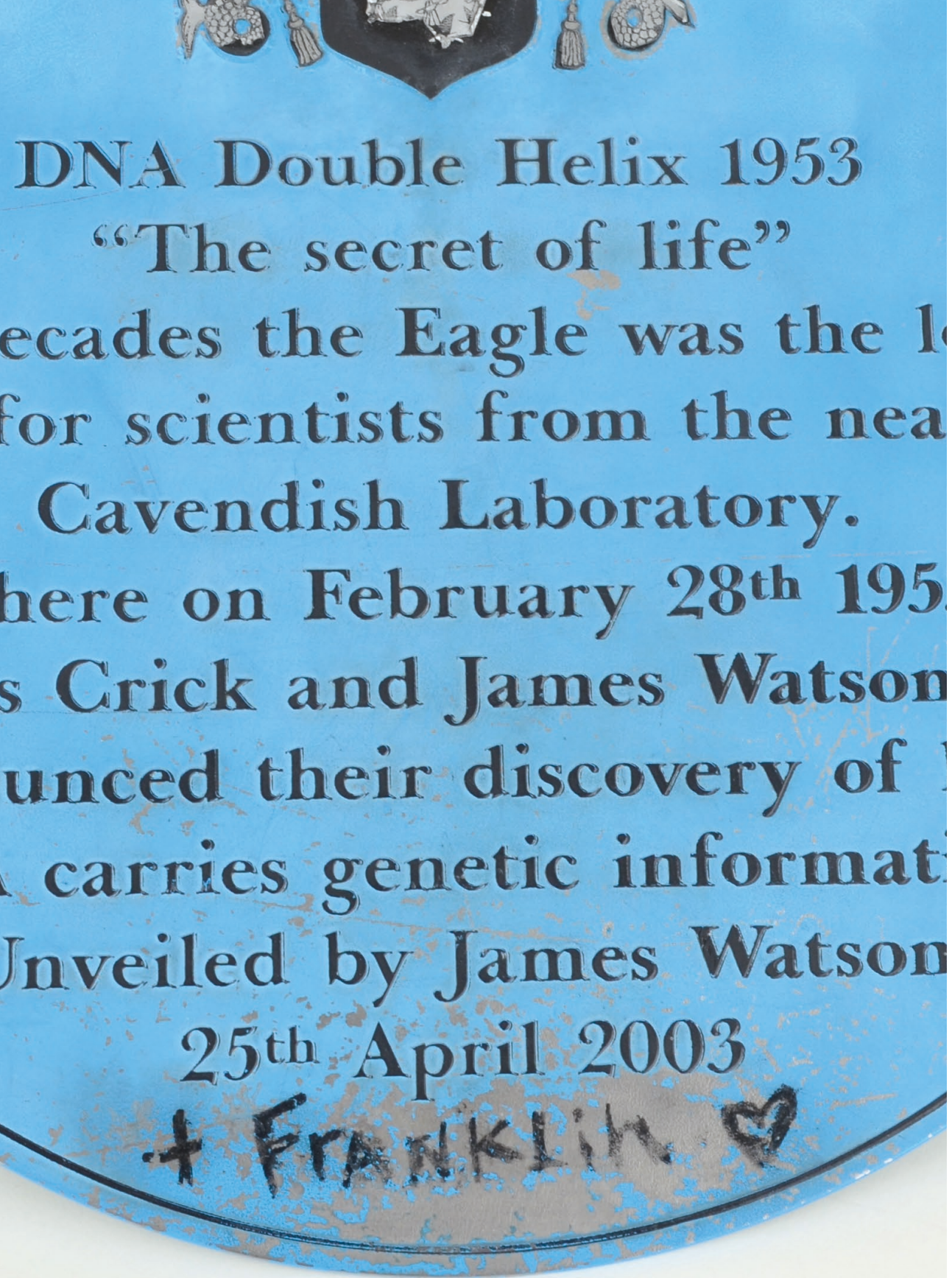


2024

AT THE

WHIPPLE MUSEUM

OF THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE



Wh. 6807: Graffitied blue plaque, from the wall of the Eagle pub, the focus of the exhibition “+ Franklin”



Foreword

Welcome to the Whipple Museum's new-look Annual Report, covering a truly record-breaking year. 2024 was our busiest year yet, and the start of a new era of regular weekend openings. Over 20,000 people, most of them first-time visitors, explored the Museum and gained a taste of the research and teaching happening in the collections and the wider Department of History & Philosophy of Science.

We welcomed new colleagues to the team—Curator Hannah Price, Visitor Services Assistant Annie James and Archivist Victoria Brunton—and were proud to see Collections Assistant Louise McLaughlin progress to a new role in museum collections.

We're hugely grateful to everyone who supported the Museum this year: colleagues, students, volunteers, visitors, benefactors, and partners.

Overleaf you'll find our new Strategic Framework, which will guide our ambitions over the coming few years. Stay tuned for more in 2025.

—Joshua Nall
Director



Our Strategic Framework

Our mission is to use our collections to explore, challenge, and share stories from the history of science.

Our vision is for people to have a richer understanding of knowledge as a product of diverse cultures throughout history, inspiring a life-long engagement with science.

Priorities

Research

Be a world-leading centre for research into the material culture of the history of science.

Learning

Support people of all ages to explore science and history in new ways, challenging perceptions and inspiring discussion.

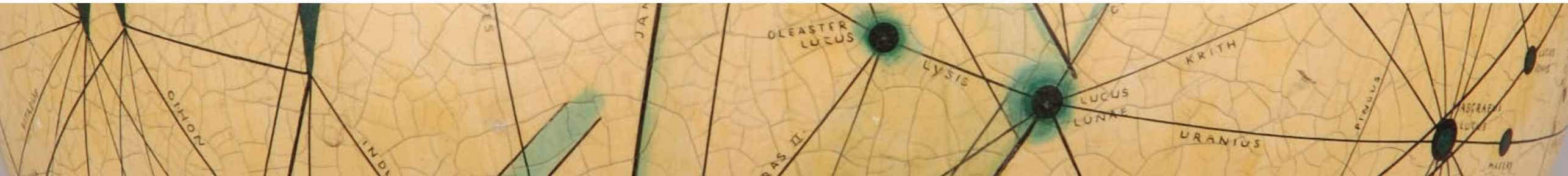
Visitor Experience

Develop an inspiring, accessible, and inclusive Whipple visitor experience.

Partnerships & Networks

Play a full and active role locally, nationally, and internationally.

Our overarching priority for 2024–2029 is **growth**, to achieve our full potential as a popular and vibrant public space.



Research & Collections

The Whipple collection is one of the most intensively researched of its kind in the world. It's investigated not only by an international community of historians of science, but by our own students, many of whom gain their first experience with material culture research at the Museum and benefit from object-focussed teaching.

Great research is only possible thanks to exemplary collections management and care. Our ability to support research was enhanced this year by a 30% uplift in our funding from Research England's Higher Education Museums & Galleries (HEMG) Fund.



*This page and overleaf:
Teaching with the collections*

2024 collections snapshot

2,555 objects audited to improve accessibility

43 visits from researchers

67 research enquiries answered

64 objects used in teaching

15 incoming loans and 8 outbound loans

1 new Archivist



Activating the Archives

In September, Team Whipple was thrilled to welcome our first Archivist in over a decade, Victoria Brunton.

Over the next two years, she'll be improving the documentation and storage of the Museum's archival materials, making them available on the online portal ArchiveSpace for researchers and the general public.



Calculators, Calculators!

This is how HPS graduate Clare Rogowski summed up her brilliant summer placement at the Whipple.

Working with Collections Manager Morgan Bell, Clare carefully repacked our 550-strong handheld pocket calculator collection, checking their condition, updating our records, and ensuring that they are now much more accessible to researchers, staff, and visitors.



Korean Screen on Tour

Whipple objects are loaned across the world for exhibitions and research. This year, our Korean Screen (Wh. 0935, right) travelled to Los Angeles for LACMA's exhibition *Mapping the Infinite: Cosmologies Across Cultures*.

We also loaned our portion of Babbage's Difference Engine (Wh. 2339) to EPFL Pavilions in Lausanne, and Hawking's gravity well models (Wh. 3769 & 3770) to the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave.

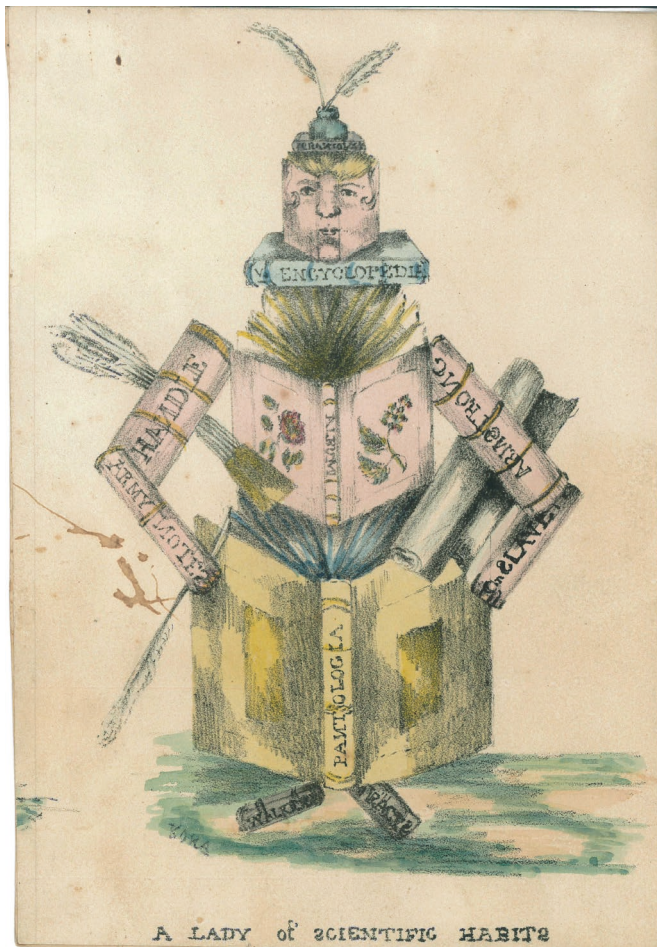


Acquisitions

The objects on this page were all accessioned into the collection in 2024, either purchased by the Museum or generously donated. Many have already been used in teaching and research or are on public display.



Wh. 6818 Letter opener, by the Brazilian Submarine Telegraph Company, British, 1894



Wh. 6808 Double horizontal dial, by Henry Sutton, English, 1659

Left: Wh. 6813 Hand-coloured print, *A Lady of Scientific Habits*, by KORA, English, 1830



Wh. 6809 Nautical quadrant calculator, by John Williamson, English, 1800



Wh. 6812 Microscope, formerly owned by Cambridge geologist Colin Forbes, by C. Reichert, Austrian, 1905



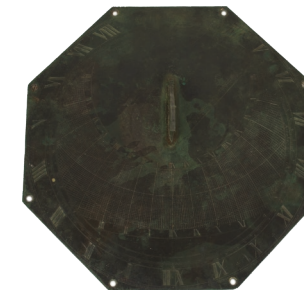
Wh. 6816 Stamp album, *Wonders of the World*, by Nestle & Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co., English, 1930



Wh. 6810 *Musci Britannici, or Pocket Herbarium of British Mosses*, complete with moss specimens, Scottish, 1836



Wh. 6814 Hand-coloured print, *A Lady Who has Sacrificed Everything to Her Bottle & Glass*, by KORA, English, 1830



Wh. 6817 Octagonal brass double-horizontal sundial, by Hilkieh Bedford, English, 1666



Wh. 6811 Medallion with horizontal sundial, inscribed with fake date (1707), probably English, late 19th century



Wh. 6815 Postcard, "Isn't That Awful", lampooning Charles Darwin's *Descent of Man*, by Max Bachmann, USA, 1912



Wh. 6819 Kiddy Computer Lo-7801 calculator, by Babingo, Hong Kong, late 20th century



*Twilight at the Museums,
a highlight of February half-term.
Photo by My Linh Le*

Visitor Experience

In 2024, we made big strides in our commitment to develop an inspiring, accessible, and inclusive Whipple visitor experience.

For the first time, the Museum is regularly open at weekends throughout the year. Together with a busy programme of events and exhibitions and new communication channels, this made 2024 a record-breaking year for visitor engagement.



A record-breaking year

20,122 visitors: a Whipple record

81% were visiting for the first time

91% rated their experience as good or excellent

7 new exhibitions, displays and trails

1 new full-time Visitor Services Assistant



Spectacular Saturdays

The Museum launched regular weekend openings in June, having long been open only on weekdays. Initially just on the third Saturday of the month, we see this as the first step towards full weekend opening.

Saturdays have proved popular with visitors, with special activities including guided tours, talks, and family fun.

"This place is amazing and it needs to be more widely publicised. Thank you so much for being open a Saturday otherwise I would have missed this which would have been a shame. Awesome collection."

New Trails

New trails have opened up under-explored stories in the collections this year. Our LGBTQ+ Whipple Trail and Women in Science trails are free to pick up at the front desk.

Our valued partnership with Uncomfortable Cambridge tours continues, with the Whipple hosting Uncomfortable Science tours led by Uncomfortable Cambridge's guides.



News

You can now get piping-hot Whipple news in your email inboxes, as the Museum launched its first regular newsletter this year.

2024 saw a focus on communications, with the launch of an e-newsletter and Instagram account produced by Visitor Services Assistant Annie James. Over 6,500 people now follow us on our digital platforms and social media.

"Wonderful museum! I'm glad museums like this exist so people can learn more about history of science :)"

- Visitor

Exhibitions

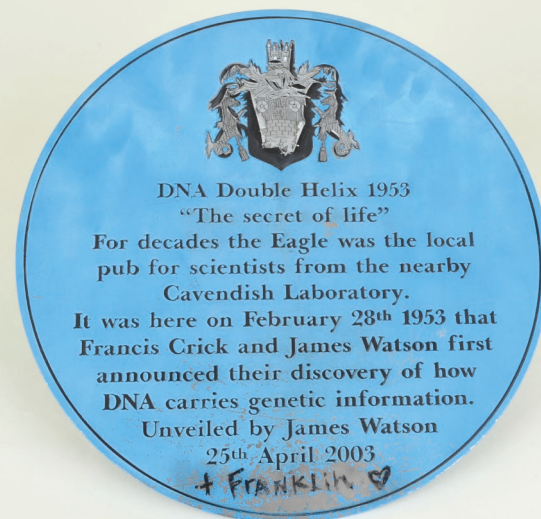
Two new exhibitions exploring the legacies of Cambridge science transformed the Main Gallery this year.

+ *Franklin* (September) brought together one of Rosalind Franklin's original DNA notebooks with a recent Whipple acquisition, the blue plaque commemorating the discovery of the structure of DNA (above, right). Originally on the wall of the Eagle pub, the plaque was repeatedly graffitied, and has since been replaced with a new plaque that acknowledges Franklin's contribution.

The Cavendish Laboratory & the Birth of the Atomic Age (December) marked 150 years since Experimental Physics first came to Free School Lane, with a major loan of original apparatus from the Cavendish collection, including one of the cathode ray tubes used by J.J. Thomson in the experiments that led to the discovery of the electron (below, right).

"The display looks fantastic – I particularly like the way you brought the Cavendish community alive."

– Exhibition partner



"As a physicist, I'm really impressed by the instruments here. They should be more highlighted in Cambridge due to their impact in our history and science."

– Exhibition visitor



The Cavendish Laboratory & the Birth of the Atomic Age
Photo by Steve Kruse

Learning

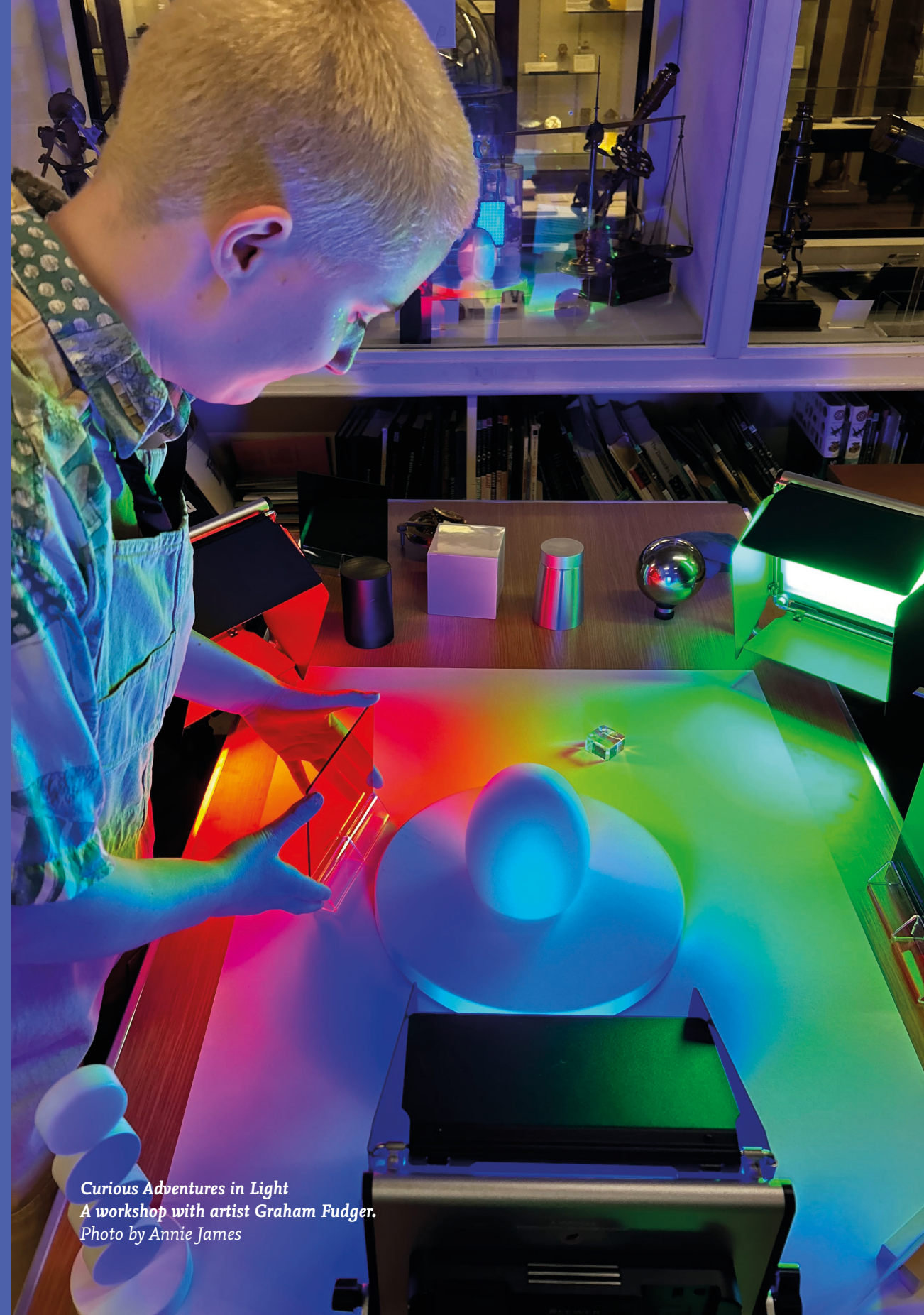
The Whipple Learning programme aims to support people of all ages to explore science and history in new ways, challenging preconceptions and inspiring discussion.

As well as working with nearly 4,000 young people in the Museum, Learning Coordinator Alison Giles travelled across the county to bring history of science to local schools and community settings.

And, in collaboration with our fellow University of Cambridge Museums, we delivered a range of inclusion and wellbeing programmes, from inclusive openings for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to an innovative dance programme for patients with Parkinson's.

*“Unique!
So perfect for our topic.
It was pitched at a really
good level for the children.
Unique in that this kind
of topic is not covered by
other museums etc in the
area!”*

– Teacher, Key Stage 4



*Curious Adventures in Light
A workshop with artist Graham Fudger.
Photo by Annie James*

In 2024, the learning programme supported:

1741 primary age students

2082 secondary age students

129 learning sessions

400 volunteer hours

“Fantastic facts, engaging explanations, really interesting connections to our course.”

*– Teacher,
Parkside Community College*



A busy day in the Learning Gallery
Photo by My Linh Le



Health & Wellbeing

The Museum collection has been inspiring curiosity, joy, and conversation through the UCM Inclusion programmes, both in the galleries and in healthcare and sheltered housing settings.

In 2024, this included working with occupational therapists in the University of Cambridge Hospitals stroke rehabilitation unit to create a handling box for use with patients (left).

‘Patients highlighted how stimulating and restorative these sessions were, bringing interest to otherwise monotonous days in bed.’

*– Clinical Specialist
Occupational Therapist,
Cambridge University Hospitals*



Labcoat created by CSVPA student exploring the history of women in science.

Festival Fun

The Cambridge Festival is always a whole-Department effort. This year, we supported 7 academics to present their research to a public audience, while the Whipple Library shared some of the treasures of the rare books collection.

The Museum was transformed by students from Cambridge School of Visual & Performing Arts, who installed new works inspired by the collections.

Reimagining the Learning Gallery

This year we began a major project to refurbish the Learning Gallery. This hard-working space was originally part of the Old Library, and while it serves 3,000 young people and counting through our schools programme, we wanted to make it more inviting and welcoming for families as well. When completed, the Gallery will have been fully redecorated with new furniture, lighting and plinths, as well as a complete refresh of the displays to align them more closely with the Learning programme. Over Summer 2024, we asked families what they'd like to see. Some of their suggestions are featured below.



Fact-finding trip to Young V&A & the Grant Museum of Zoology



Removal of the old library ceiling = yikes!



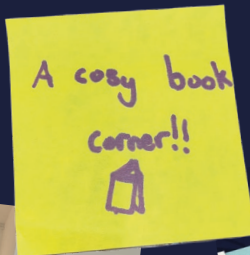
Light & Sound - the first test case for visitors to feed back on



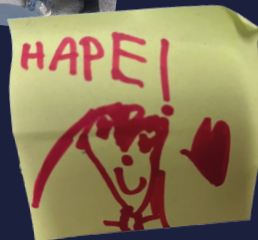
New furniture!



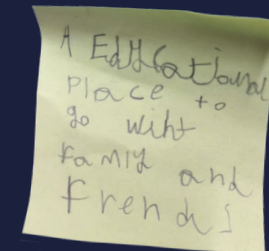
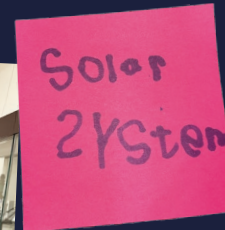
Furniture shopping



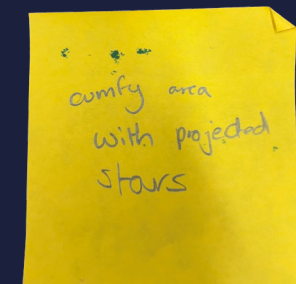
Summer at the Museums: Young people make their own Learning Galleries



Formative evaluation - visitor tracking



A fresh lick of paint

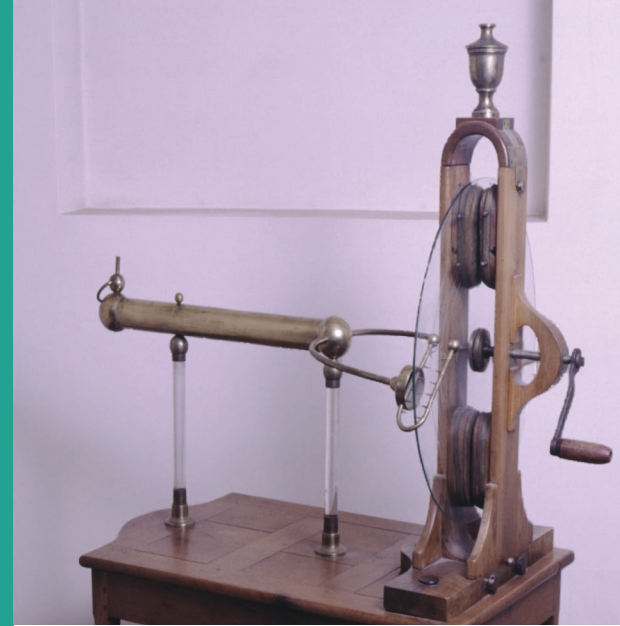


Partnerships & Networks

In 2024, the Museum's thriving partnerships enabled us to play a full and active role locally, nationally, and internationally in the museums sector and in the academic community.

Every member of the team made a contribution to a local or national network, including GEM (the national network for museum education) and Museums in Cambridgeshire (our county museums). Whipple staff also supported local independent museums as trustees and mentors.

We collaborated with an inspiring group of creative delivery partners, from Cambridge School of Visual & Performing Arts to Cambridgeshire Libraries—and, of course, our fellow University of Cambridge Museums and collections (UCM).



The Things They Carried

In August, Director Josh Nall travelled to Halifax, Nova Scotia, for the major international conference *Circulating Knowledge: 20 Years On*. As part of this project, Josh collaborated with colleagues in Canada's Ingenium group of science and innovation museums and the Max Planck Institute on a virtual exhibition, *The Things They Carried: Unveiling the Place of Objects in the Global Circulation of Knowledge* (<https://circex.ca>).



Berlin to Cambridge

The UCM have close ties with Germany's Leibniz-Geimeschaft association of research museums, a relationship nurtured by the Whipple's Director of Research, Liba Taub.

In December, the Museum hosted Dr Artemis Yagou (Deutsches Museum) for a month-long research fellowship focused on the circulation of scientific instruments in the Greek Enlightenment.



A Collections Trusteeship

There are many links between the Whipple Museum and Cambridge Museum of Technology—not least CMT trustee and Whipple Operations Manager Steve Kruse.

As Collections Trustee, Steve worked with the CMT Board to secure a substantial grant from the Foyle Foundation to support a Collections Officer post in 2025, safeguarding the future of CMT's important collections.

The Team

Morgan Bell
Victoria Brunton
Alison Giles
Catriona Higgins
Annie James
Steve Kruse
Louise McLaughlin
Joshua Nall
Hannah Price
Clare Rogowski
Liba Taub
Deborah Walton

Collections Manager
Archivist
Learning Coordinator
Durham University Student Placement (Summer)
Visitor Services Assistant
Operations Manager
Collections Assistant
Director
Curator
Whipple Summer Placement (Calculators Project)
Director of Research
Conservator (University of Cambridge Museums)

Museum Committee

Francesca Anthony
Hasok Chang
Zhiyu Chen
Jack Dixon
Staffan Müller-Wille
Charu Singh
Richard Staley

With many thanks to...

The Museum's incredible community of volunteers.

Colleagues in the Department of History & Philosophy of Science, and, in particular, from the Professional Services Team: Francesca Anthony, Toby Bryant, Adriana Dote, Lukasz Hernik, Niko Ovenden, and Louisa Russell; the Whipple Library: Laura Burgazzi and Jack Dixon; and the Departmental Assistants: Katy Duncan, Rhianna Smith, Cassandra Zie Yang & Oscar Westerblad.

The University of Cambridge Museums; the School of HSPS; and our funders and benefactors, whose generosity made much of our work possible.



*The Main Gallery
Photo by Steve Kruse*

Cover image:

***Cathode ray tube (1897) made by Ebenezer Everett
and used by J.J. Thomson in his experiments that
led to the discovery of the electron.***

*On loan from the Cavendish Laboratory,
Department of Physics, University of Cambridge,
for the exhibition*

*'The Cavendish Laboratory & the Birth of the
Atomic Age' (December 2024-April 2025).*

Photo by Steve Kruse.



**Whipple
Museum**
of the History of Science

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MUSEUMS
& BOTANIC GARDEN



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