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The American Association for the Advancement of Science was founded in 1848 and incorporated in 1874. Its objects are to further the work of scientists, to facilitate cooperation among them, to improve the effectiveness of science in the promotion of human welfare, and to increase public understanding and appreciation of the importance and promise of the methods of science in human progress.

The Pacific Science Center

A year ago, on 21 October, the Seattle World's Fair came to a close, but not its star attraction, not what Murray Morgan, one of the fair's historians, called "The memorable attraction of the Seattle World's Fair—its Sally Rand and Little Egypt, the thing the old-timers will probably be talking about when the next century is a reality rather than a projection . . . the United States Science Pavilion. More than two out of three visitors (6,770,109 out of 9,609,969) sought out the exhibit that the pros had warned was black plague at the box office." From opening day onward, admiring visitors wondered what would happen to the science exhibit when the fair came to an end and commented that it was much too good to be allowed to shut down. Local business and educational leaders agreed, and formed a nonprofit corporation; the U.S. Government agreed, and provided a dollar-a-year lease for the land and buildings and an NSF grant to help with initial expenses. And so the Pacific Science Center was born.

Permanent financing is still a problem, for admission charges cannot meet all of the costs. But financial help is beginning to come from industry, local government, and private individuals, and there is optimism that the financial problem can be met if the other major problem is solved, that of converting the exhibit from one designed for a stream of one-time visitors to a permanent community science center. Taking tips from and hoping to improve upon other science museums here and abroad, staff, trustees, and a national advisory committee are planning a multiple-purpose institution to serve a variety of users. They want a science museum with gradually changing exhibits that will be of interest and educational value to students. They intend it to be of equal value to the large number of adults who want to learn some elementary things about science, things they did not learn in school. School teachers from the region are coming to the Center for discussions of science teaching, for help in locating or building teaching materials, and for ideas they can use in their own classes. Whole classes come for lectures, science films, guided tours, and the opportunity to use the specially designed and ingenious demonstration equipment. Possibilities are being explored of using the Center as a home and sponsor for amateur science groups. The serene and lovely buildings which Minoru Yamasaki designed for the U.S. Science Exhibit provide a setting of great beauty for exhibits relating science and the arts. And the acoustic perfection of one of the five great halls suggests exhibits and demonstrations linking science and music. Along these varied lines the staff and trustees are developing their ideas, planning a Center that will appeal to a variety of audiences and that will have a continually evolving program.

The public reception of the U.S. Science Exhibit taught a lesson to those who have claimed that science can be made palatable for a general audience only if it is candy-coated with gadgetry, breakthroughs, and artificially exciting treatment. Imaginative exhibits on basic science hold the interest of a large public audience if technical jargon is avoided and if clear explanations are given. The Pacific Science Center inherited an excellent set of exhibits and has the record of their effectiveness as a guide for future development. If the Center succeeds as well as did the U.S. Science Exhibit from which it grew, it can become a model that other communities will want to copy.

—D.W.