

MUSEUM

ASCENT

A Campaign for the MSU Museum

Shaping the Future: Join Us on This Exciting Journey



Dear Friends and Supporters,

It is with tremendous excitement and pride that I invite you to join us on an extraordinary journey—a journey that will transform the MSU Museum and shape the future of how we learn, collaborate, and innovate together. As we approach the Museum’s 170th anniversary, we are forging ahead, building a vibrant future for our University, our community, and beyond.

The MSU Museum has long been a beacon of innovation and discovery at the heart of Michigan State University, a place where knowledge and creativity intersect. But today, with your partnership, we are taking this to the next level. The Museum is evolving from a traditional institution into a groundbreaking “collaboratory,” where innovation thrives at the intersection of disciplines, and where the creative and intellectual spirit of MSU flourishes in new, exciting ways.

Imagine stepping into a museum where you can immerse yourself in the wonders of the human genome, navigate the world’s migration patterns in real time, or engage in lively debates about food sustainability—all through cutting-edge technology and interactive exhibits. This is not a vision for tomorrow; it is happening right now at the MSU Museum. And with your support, we will continue to break new ground.

This transformation is not just about revitalizing a building—it’s about creating a space where ideas are born, knowledge is shared, and meaningful change begins. Your contribution to this capital campaign will empower the MSU Museum to remain at the forefront of research, discovery, and education, providing world-class exhibitions, cutting-edge technology, and accessible learning opportunities for all.

Join us in making history, as together we reimagine the MSU Museum as a place where tomorrow’s ideas come to life—today. Your investment will leave a lasting impact on the MSU community and beyond, inspiring generations to come.

With gratitude and excitement,

Devon M. Akmon
Director, MSU Museum



From the Foundations of MSU

The MSU Museum serves the Michigan State University community by facilitating and creating experiences at the nexus of the arts, sciences, cultures, and technologies.

Directly east of Beaumont Tower and north of the Main Library, the MSU Museum sits on Michigan State University’s “sacred circle.” This location at the center of campus reflects the MSU Museum’s centrality to MSU’s mission of advancing knowledge and transforming lives. Founded in 1857, the MSU Museum was a laboratory for teaching and learning for students and faculty. Since that time the MSU Museum has grown to support research and experiential learning through its collections of over one million objects and specimens. Last year over 134 classes and nearly 6,000 MSU students engaged directly with Museum exhibitions and collections, and over 150 scholarly articles from around the world cited Museum collections in their research. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and designated as the first Smithsonian Affiliate in Michigan, the Museum connects our region to a vital national network. A constant in MSU’s history, the MSU Museum is transforming what it means to be at the crossroads of disciplines in a leading public research university. Leveraging MSU’s innovative research and learning, the Museum is creating experiences that can only happen here. Behind its traditional brick facade, the future of university museums is now being built, beginning with a major infrastructure investment by the university. As we are nearing the 170-year anniversary, we invite you to consider the possibilities as we redefine the MSU Museum.

▼ Tomorrow Today

Imagine entering this historic building on central campus and experiencing an exhibition that adapts content for visitors with low or no vision, using technology designed by a multidisciplinary student team. Imagine entering the human genome via a virtual reality experience that brings MSU faculty research to life. Imagine following the path of migrating birds on a room-sized, global display system shaped like a large hanging sphere, through animations of historical and real-time data. Imagine a collaboration among international artists, scientists, MSU researchers and community groups to produce an interactive exhibit where visitors engage in spirited discussions about food sustainability. If you entered the building recently, you wouldn't need to imagine these scenarios: they are happening now at the MSU Museum.



▲ From Laboratory to Collaboratory

Since its inception the Museum has served as a laboratory for learning and research, but what that looks like in today's university is undergoing a shift. With MSU's \$28 million investment in necessary infrastructure improvements, the MSU Museum is launching a comprehensive renovation of the historic building. This marks a pivotal moment in the Museum's history. When the Museum reopens, it will embark on the next phase of its transformation, shifting from a laboratory to a collaboratory—a center for experimenting with ideas across disciplines. Tomorrow's museum will serve as a hub where communities come together to innovate, enhancing how we learn about and explore our world through the nexus of arts, sciences, cultures, and technologies.

Tomorrow's museum begins today. With a generous \$2 million gift from the Forest Akers Trust to build the Immersive Lab and Exhibition Lab on the lower level, our transformation is underway. With your investment, we will continue this transformative journey throughout the building. Take a look at what is possible as we move forward together.





VISIT THE FIRST FLOOR

◀ Collaborate in the Main Gallery

The first room on our tour is the Museum's primary rotating exhibition space — the Main Gallery. The gallery is designed for nimble programming, responsive to what is relevant today with a visionary eye toward imagining the future. It is the primary home for the Museum's CoLab Studio exhibitions. Bringing together arts, sciences, cultures, and technologies with the experimental ethos of a research university, the CoLab Studio redefines the boundaries of a 21st-century museum. CoLab exhibitions are the product of a unique partnership among international artists and scientists, researchers, community groups, Museum staff, and students, in which the final exhibition is co-created and co-produced through a joint collaborative process. A distinctive feature of the CoLab experience is the gallery CoLaborators, a multidisciplinary team of undergraduate and graduate students who infuse learning and creativity into the exhibitions, facilitating thought-provoking conversations. The result is an interactive visitor experience where no two visits to the gallery are the same.

The Main Gallery exhibitions rotate frequently, making it a primary hub for community programming and visitor engagement. This space has also hosted significant traveling exhibitions, such as the recent Smithsonian Institution's *Knowing Nature: Stories of the Boreal Forest*, which launched its national tour here. What would it look like to have a flexible and adaptable space designed to maximize creative collaboration? How will it prompt the kind of active discovery that primes visitors for their journey through the rest of the Museum? Building on the Museum's ongoing research in creating experiences for visitors of all abilities, the gallery will be designed in a responsive way that sets a new standard for the field.



▲ Immerse yourself in Science On a Sphere®

Across the hall from the Main Gallery is the home of Science On a Sphere® (SOS), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) projection system, where planetary data come to life through animated images on a hanging globe. Visitors activate more than 600 NOAA real-time and historical data sets with a few taps on the touch screen kiosk. While audiences can interact with SOS visualizations in 175 locations around the world, at MSU, students and faculty are actively authoring original animations. Last year, they created over 120 custom datasets for novel displays. The MSU Museum aims to push this experiment further, transforming the first floor SOS room into a unique immersive experience. Imagine not only watching the migration of birds in real time on the sphere but also traveling with them, accompanied by projections on the surrounding walls and multi-channel ambisonic sound. Or explore a city of the future: what might it look and sound like to walk the streets in 100 years? The latest audio technology and enhanced projection systems will enable students and faculty across disciplines to work together in bringing such experiences to life.

Experience the Technology Innovations Gallery ▼

Adjacent to the SOS, this high-tech room will enable exhibitions that explore the human impacts of continuously changing technology. The first such exhibition, *Game Changers*, will build on the Museum's foundational commitment to experiential learning through an interactive experience highlighting the role games play in society. Leveraging and showcasing research from Games for Entertainment and Learning (GEL) Lab, part of MSU's top ranked Game Design and Development Program, the installation will mimic the look and feel of a game arcade. How do creative, innovative, and interdisciplinary practices come together in game design? How do games for entertainment and learning shape behaviors, our sense of community, and our understanding of the world and complex global challenges? The exhibition will invite audiences to play games produced by MSU students and faculty while critically reflecting on their design, purpose, and function. Equipped with adaptable tech, this exhibition will support MSU's leading edge innovations across a range of fields, providing a central space on campus to experience and explore their impacts.



UPSTAIRS TO THE SECOND FLOOR

▲ Ask new questions in the Interdisciplinary Collections Gallery

The Interdisciplinary Collections Gallery will be the keystone teaching and learning space for the MSU Museum's nationally recognized holdings in natural, cultural, and historical collections. Separating them into distinct galleries, as museums have traditionally done, offers a fragmented view of our world. While the collections are actively being used for research that crosses disciplines, the way the Museum has historically displayed them has not reflected or promoted that work. In this gallery's first long-term installation, objects from across the collections will be brought together to pose complex questions about adaptation. How do humans impact nature, and how are cultures affected by the conditions of the natural world? Curated through collaborations among researchers across fields, this exhibition will tell novel stories about co-adaptation, expanding our understanding of the world. Incorporated into courses across the University, the exhibition will enable students to understand the past and present through multiple lenses, empowering them to create novel approaches to our collective futures. The gallery, designed for reinstallation every five years, will adapt to changing discoveries, allowing evolving stories about the interrelationships of humans and the natural world. Interactive experiences in the gallery will extend learning for visitors of all ages and abilities.



▲ Transformations

We envision an MSU community, inspired and informed by the arts and sciences, working collaboratively, creatively, and equitably to solve problems and pursue a better world for all.

You have just experienced the future of the new interdisciplinary museum at the heart of Michigan State University. The campaign to transform the MSU Museum from laboratory to collaboratory is just beginning. Join us in launching this bold initiative by considering an investment that will:

- ▶ **Make the Main Gallery a dynamic interactive space through investments in flexible room design, responsive technology to support accessibility, sophisticated exhibition production, and collaborative programming;**
- ▶ **Enable original data visualizations and sonic installations for immersive journeys in the Science On a Sphere® Gallery;**
- ▶ **Equip the Technology Innovations Gallery to explore how the latest uses of technology shape our lives;**
- ▶ **Build new cases, enhanced displays, interpretive stations, and technologies in the Interdisciplinary Collections Gallery.**

Your investment drives experimentation and innovation. This campaign builds a campus community for today and tomorrow's students and researchers, keeping the MSU Museum as a vibrant center for our proudly public, global research university.

For more information contact:

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▶ Naming and Sponsorship Opportunities

Individuals, corporations, and foundations have a range of options for supporting the campaign. At the highest levels of sponsorship, we are pleased to offer naming rights for specific, iconic spaces in the Museum:

- ▶ **Main Gallery**
- ▶ **Science On a Sphere®**
- ▶ **Technology Innovations Gallery**
- ▶ **Interdisciplinary Collections Gallery**

Campaign donors may also choose to sponsor other components of the campaign including technology upgrades, collections infrastructure, or programmatic and educational funds.



Photo Credits: Doug Coombe and Aaron Word

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MUSEUM

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