

MIT Museum

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Role: Architect & Museum Planner for Renovated and Expanded Museum; led team of engineers and specialist consultants

Program: Interactive science, history and art exhibits, lobby, cafe, gift shop, collections storage, classrooms, function spaces, support and offices

Status: Opened in phases: 2007 & 2012

Description: The MIT Museum presented several particularly complex challenges. The existing warehouse building suffered from serious humidity and temperature control issues, poor collection storage areas, a limited amount of exhibit space, and a minimal connection to street level. Working closely with the Museum staff, we established a multi-phase strategy which allows the Museum to develop and expand their building as funding becomes available. The first phase of work created an inviting exhibit space on the street level, and established a strong presence on the street by opening up the facade with large windows. This exhibit space meets MIT's specific needs as flexible multi-use space, incorporating a multimedia presentation area, changing exhibit gallery, a new entry and ticket area, and a relocated and newly designed museum store. The Museum saw a 50% growth in attendance and a 400% growth in retail sales once this phase was complete.

This allowed funding to be available for Phase II, a 150 year anniversary gallery on the second floor, and Phase III, a new photography gallery in a portion of the building located within an un-insulated solid masonry envelope. To achieve the required museum standard climate control for photography, VernerJohnson developed a unique and cost effective "superwall" enclosure within the existing structure that allows temperature and humidity control within the space but enables the exterior wall to breathe and not suffer any damage.

