The Wellcome Centre for Medical Science : an introduction, June 1992.

THE WELLCOME CENTRE

FOR MEDICAL SCIENCE

AN INTRODUCTION

JUNE 1992

INTRODUCTION

The Wellcome Centre for Medical Science is due to open to the public in January 1993. It represents a major new initiative by the Wellcome Trust to provide in depth support for biomedical research in the UK.

The Wellcome Centre will be housed in part of the newly refurbished Wellcome Building at 183 Euston Rd, London NW1. It will provide a place where people can learn about the past, present and future of biomedical science and appreciate its impact on everyday life.

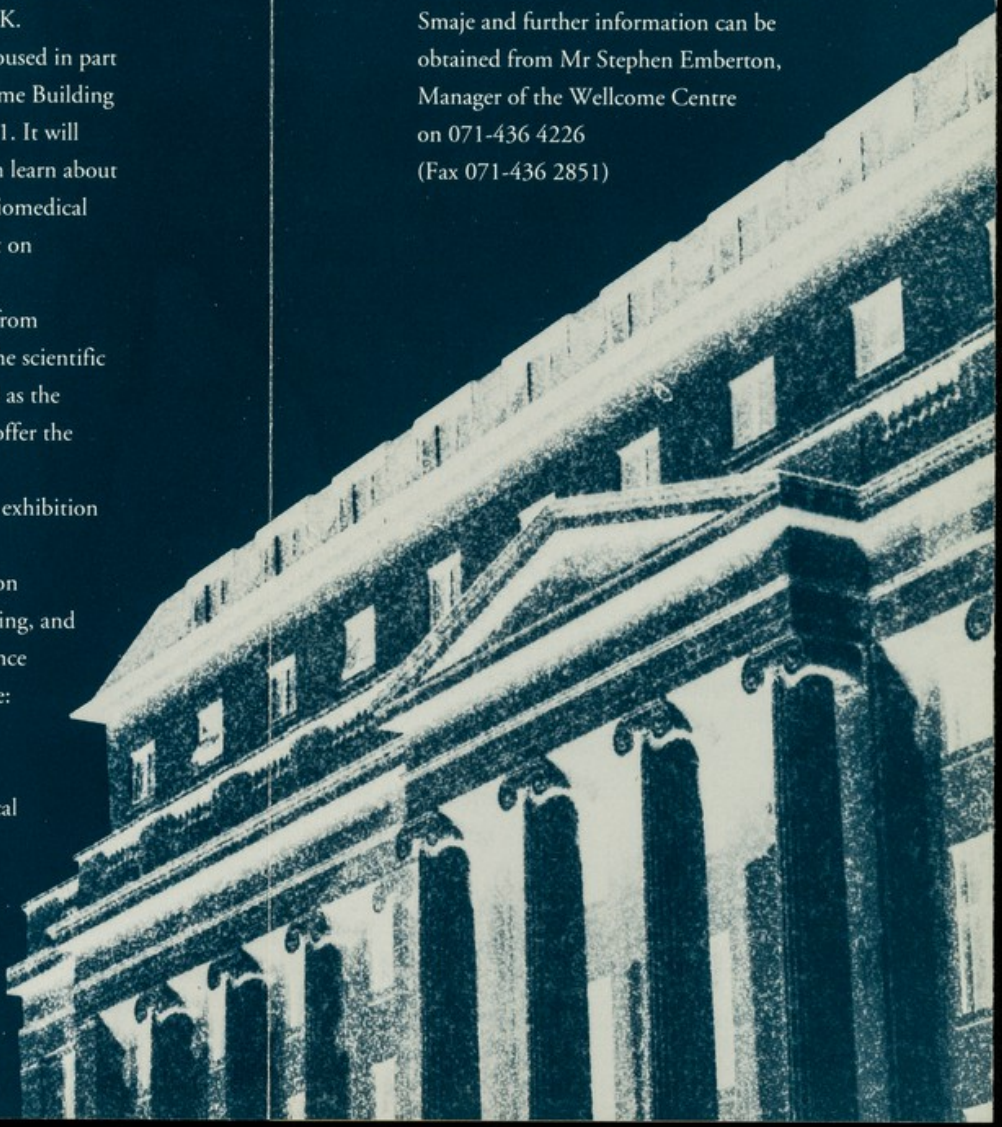
With a target audience ranging from Government and the media to the scientific community and schools - as well as the general public - the Centre will offer the following facilities:

* 'Science for Life': a permanent exhibition on modern medical science
* Information Service: focusing on biomedical research policy, funding, and the public understanding of science
* Scientific Meetings Programme: aimed both at scientists and at the public
* Interactive videodiscs on tropical diseases and the Iconographic Collections of the Wellcome Institute Library

INTRODUCTION

* A comprehenisve Photographic Service
* Historical exhibitions including 'Medicine in Time'

The Director of the Centre is Dr Laurence Smaje and further information can be obtained from Mr Stephen Emberton, Manager of the Wellcome Centre on 071-436 4226 (Fax 071-436 2851)



'SCIENCE FOR LIFE'

Our quality of life depends on continuing medical advance - yet few of us fully appreciate the nature of biomedical research and the benefits, processes and challenges it represents.

The 'Science for Life' exhibition offers a rich variety of exhibits enabling visitors to explore the workings of the human body and the many dimensions of medical science which affect people's lives.

The centre piece of the 'Science for Life' exhibition is a giant model of a cell. Magnified one million times from actual size to form a chamber 10 metres across, visitors will be able to take a fascinating walk among the cell's internal structures and learn about their function and dynamic behaviour.

One section is devoted to the nature of scientific research. Cartoons challenge common perceptions of scientists and other exhibits examine the realities of scientific work. A Demonstration Area provides a unique opportunity for small groups to participate in experiments such as DNA fingerprinting.

'Science for Life' aims to excite curiosity and provoke thought in the hope that visitors will leave with a greater interest in medical research and a deeper insight into its nature.

INFORMATION SERVICE

The Information Service will provide an invaluable resource on the organisation, management and public understanding of biomedical science.

It will offer users access through an Information Centre and enquiry service to a source of reference on topics ranging from biomedical science policy and funding to research ethics and careers.

It will also support the 'Science for Life' exhibition by providing a variety of non-technical background information on biomedical science designed to advance public awareness of the processes of biomedical research.

Visitors to the Information Centre will be able to search databases on compact disc and view the Trust's interactive video discs on tropical diseases and the Iconographic Collections.

A growing collection of films about human biology will be available, some of which are of unique medical and historical interest.

Databases on research grants and vacancies will also be available in the Centre and via the Joint Academic Computer Network (JANET).

For those unable to visit in person, an enquiry service will be available via electronic mail and fax as well as 'phone and post.

SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS

PROGRAMME

One of the most important objectives of the Wellcome Centre for Medical Science is to increase awareness and appreciation of biomedical science.

With an auditorium seating up to 170 people and symposia and workshop facilities employing state-of-the-art audiovisual and technological aids, the Wellcome Building will serve as a valuable forum for the biomedical research community at large and for interested members of the general public.

Several types of meeting are envisaged including:

Scientific frontier meetings - international meetings bringing together leaders in the field of cutting-edge developments. Meetings planned include topics such as 'Hypoxia', 'Metamorphosis' and 'Antibody Engineering'.

Trust-funded scientists meetings - including interdisciplinary meetings on broad topics such as 'Diabetes'.

Special interest group workshops - the Wellcome Building will also provide a forum for special interest groups such as medical charity workers, teachers, and journalists.

Policy research meetings - organised in collaboration with the Unit for Policy Research in Science and Medicine (PRISM).

THE TROPICAL DISEASES

INTERACTIVE VIDEODISC

Replacing the old Wellcome Museum of Medical Science, the Tropical Diseases Videodisc is a sophisticated teaching archive in the area of tropical medicine containing up to 40,000 high quality video stills, combined with a limited amount of moving video. This visual archive can be accessed in a number of different ways leading to *Diseases*, such as Malaria or schistosomiasis, *Topics*, such as sexually transmitted disease or malnutrition, *Country*, such as Ghana or Brazil and *Clinical Features* such as jaundice or fever.

The user is lead to a large number of modules of interactive learning material, which utilise the power of the computer to display pictures with their explanations, request input by the user and to give appropriate feedback.

The system also contains a *Challenge Option*, which provides the user with the opportunity to diagnose and treat simulated cases of tropical disease. In addition to this, the system provides easy-to-use reference facilities, so that users can browse any part of this tropical archive.

To complete the package the computer will contain an authoring system which, acting in a similar manner to a word processor, will enable teachers unfamiliar with computers to produce many additional learning modules based on pictures in the archive.

THE ICONOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS VIDEODISC

The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine's Iconographic Collections form Europe's most important general source of pictures of historical medical subjects, including biomedical sciences, medical and surgical practice and other cultural forces which have left their mark on the development of medicine over the centuries.

An interactive videodisc database system is being prepared which will be able to retrieve and display any one of some 50,000 pictures. Using the Library's computer system, users will be able to home in on specific subjects, navigate through broader areas, or if they wish, browse the entire disc, scanning medical themes and personalities from antiquity to the twentieth century.

The oldest item on the videodisc is a fourteenth century panel painting; the largest a Japanese scroll some 10 feet long. As for subjects, the oldest is of course the Creation of the World, while among the most recent is the Human Genome Project.

In addition to the benefits which it will offer to users, the high quality images presented by the videodisc will relieve the intense pressure of demand placed on the delicate originals by historical researchers, the medical world and the media.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC SERVICE

A comprehensive photographic service has been established to cater for the needs of all those requiring copies of material held in the Wellcome Institute Library or images of contemporary biomedical science. Customers will also be able to obtain copies of images from the Tropical Diseases and Iconographic Collections Videodiscs.

Photographs of scientists using state-of-the-art research techniques, pictures of maternity and childcare through the ages, a collection of animal engravings dating from the seventeenth century by Johann Elias Ridinger are a few examples which illustrate the breadth and diversity of the resources available.

The Iconographic Collections Videodisc includes thousands of items hitherto unknown to picture researchers.

Apart from the wealth of subject matter, researchers will find pictures in a great variety of genres and techniques, including shadow pictures, oil paintings, scraper board pictures, albumen prints, X-rays and lantern slides.

For immediate reference purposes, picture researchers will be able to obtain copies of material identified in subject albums or printed images from the videodiscs.

An express service will be offered to commercial and media clients.

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