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Smithsonian Innovation Wing Opens at National Museum of American History

The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History opens its Innovation Wing July 1 with a celebration to inaugurate the 45,000-square-foot space featuring 12 exhibitions, learning galleries and program places all centered on the themes of invention, creativity and business.

The experience begins in the Johnson-Louis Gateway to Innovation where "Inventing in America," in collaboration with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, displays early patent models, trademarks and inventions of National Inventors Hall of Fame members. One member, Ralph Baer, known as the father of the video game, donated his workshop to the museum. It is the landmark object that introduces the floor's innovation theme.

Museum goers can go global in "American Enterprise" in the Mars Hall of American Business, with objects from George Washington's tea chest to the cellphone belonging to Vint Cerf, recognized as one of the founders of the internet. In the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation Object Project, visitors consider everyday things that changed everything—such as the bicycle and refrigerator—through 250 objects displayed within a 9-by-40-foot sculpture.

"Our goal is to make history essential by presenting the compelling ideas and ideals of America and animating them through transformative experiences," said John Gray, the museum's director.

A vault door marks the new Gallery of Numismatics with its inaugural exhibition, "The Value of Money." Opening in the Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Hall of Invention and Innovation are two exhibitions, "Places of Invention" and "Inventive Minds;" and kids ages 6-12 and their companions can engage in the invention process in "Draper Spark!Lab."

Almost 2,000 objects are featured throughout the galleries with 167 electronic and mechanical hands-on interactives. More than 800 programs are planned for the Wallace H. Coulter Performance Plaza during the opening year. The SC Johnson Conference Center is the hub of the museum's professional development training and educational outreach to schools.

The museum's Archives Center is showcasing "Mr. Wizard" in its display cases and is open to researchers by appointment. The Smithsonian's Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology reopens on the first floor in the Smithsonian's Libraries Gallery. "Wegmans Wonderplace," an early learning gallery, opens Dec. 9.

The National Museum of American History is located on Constitution Avenue N.W. between 12th and 14th Streets. To learn more about the museum, check <http://americanhistory.si.edu>.

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