

THREE THOUSAND shocking-pink guinea pigs are loose in the city of Boston, in the form of buttons created by the Children's Museum as part of its summer program, "Guinea Pig Days."

On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons during June, July, and early August youngsters from all over the greater metropolitan area lined up outside the Museum waiting their turn to serve as human guinea pigs, the latest in the series of experimental programs devised by the Museum staff. The eager guinea pig members were testing out exhibits being developed for the Museum's new Visitor's Center scheduled to open on October 19. From the start of Guinea Pig Days children eagerly suggested changes, which, because of the flexibility of the program, are easily incorporated into the exhibits during development.

Child-tested exhibits are one of the techniques that have helped the Children's Museum, the second oldest institution of its kind in the world, carve a niche for itself in the modern educational community. This extraordinary educational resource center provides programs, materials, and services for 100 school systems in the Boston area alone. For other museums it serves as a living laboratory, an example of what museums can offer schools and communities.

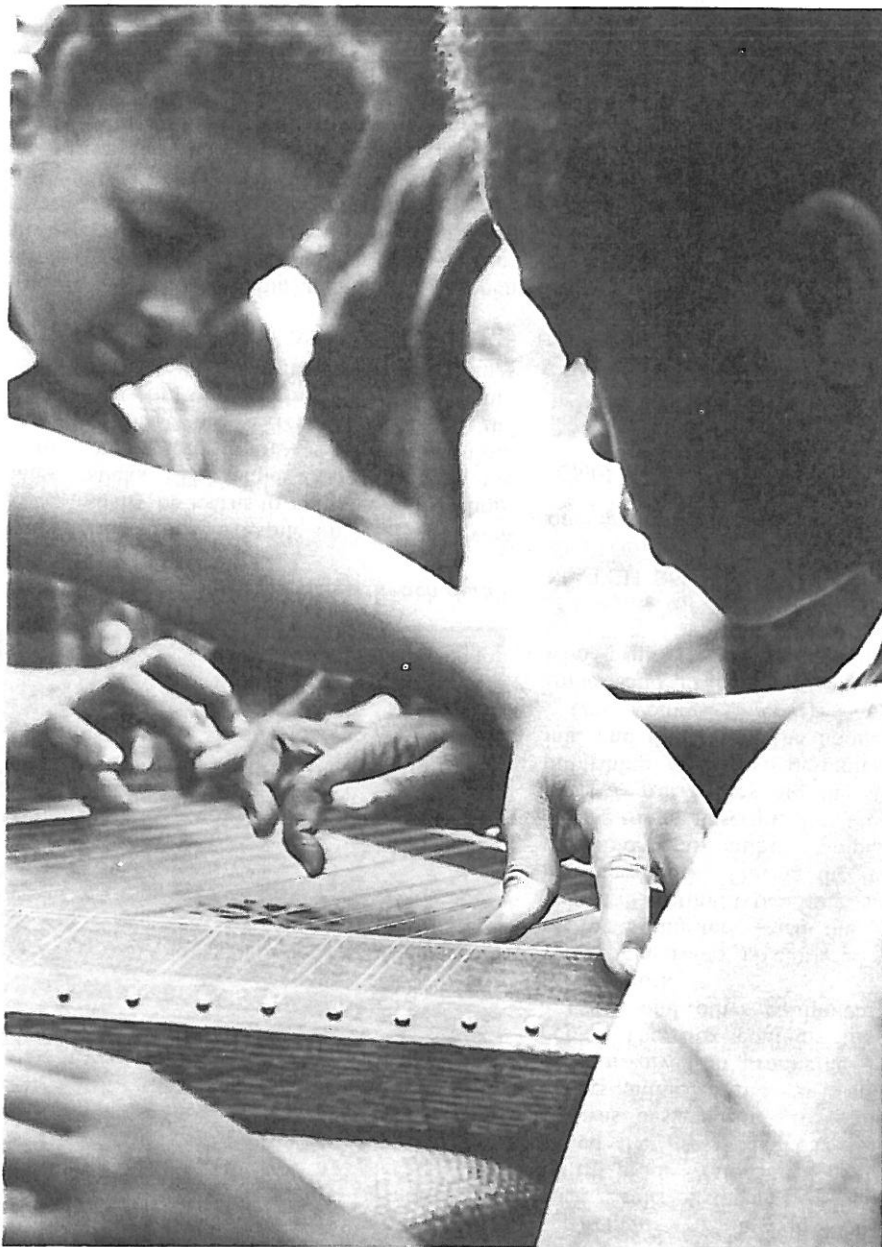
Director Michael Spock describes its philosophy: "Rather than a building exhibiting stuffed birds and mummies, a museum should be an exciting event that brings children and objects together."

He continues, "A simple pair of Eskimo snow goggles can tell us volumes about the harsh demands of the Arctic, of relief from squinting at ice floes in the glare of a low spring sun, of the craftsmanship of the Eskimo, and even about the shape of his face. But the goggles will not tell their story while locked inside a glass case, even when 'explained' by a neatly typed label. Snow goggles are not to look at—they are to look *through*."

"In designing its programs, the Museum takes great care to find that unique set of circumstances which will bring children and objects together in the most provocative and effective interaction. This interaction can be achieved in a variety of ways and places, such as classrooms, homes, and playgrounds."

On a typical school day, four school classes of 120 children arrive in buses

Phyllis O'Connell is Assistant Director of the Children's Museum.



CHILDREN AREN'T BORED ON SUNDAY

... or any other day when, at the revitalized and expanded Children's Museum on the Jamaicaway, curious fingers explore and sometimes test exhibits designed to be handled.



Youngsters are encouraged to handle exhibits; here, oversized objects teach detail.

to participate in the school programs focused on curriculum-related subjects. They are encouraged to handle materials from the Museum's collections, to role-play, and to respond to films and slides.

Seated in an Algonquin wigwam, third graders from Belmont wait for the activities to begin. Soon they are busy at work. At the back of the wigwam, a husky boy struggles into Indian hunting gear. Nearby three squaws prepare food for an Indian feast. In another part of the Museum, the class from Dover sits on the floor of the Japanese teahouse attempting to eat rice with chopsticks. A staff member dressed in a Japanese kimono and geta (thongs) helps out.

One youngster complains, "How'd they ever learn to eat like this?" The

rice drops in a pile on his lap. Eventually he learns to manipulate the chopsticks. The child has been given the opportunity to answer his own question.

These are a few examples of the Museum's commitment to the idea that children need contact with real things and that tangible objects are effective teaching tools.

Since its establishment in 1913 when the Museum was created to serve as "an educational center, a meeting place for superintendents, teachers and children for an exchange of ideas and materials," the Museum has developed a reputation for innovation.

Through its Loan Exhibits, the Museum has extended itself beyond the Museum walls into the community. Teachers in the Greater Boston area have been borrowing such exhibits

since 1936. These boxes, although traditional in approach, did serve to make lessons more lively and meaningful.

THEN, IN 1964, the Museum, under a grant from the U. S. Office of Education, expanded the loan service to include MATCH Boxes (Materials and Activities for Teachers and Children). These are self-contained multimedia units for two to four weeks of study. The title conveys the Project's approach: materials and effective ways of using them must be designed together into flexible units responsive to the needs of teachers as well as learners. The boxes contain artifacts, models, games, and audio-visual equipment. Sixteen different MATCH Box subjects have been developed to make learning the product of the child's own actions. All the MATCH Boxes have been tested out in schools and are widely used.

Thoughts '67, a book of original poetry, rolls off the presses in Walpole; a fifth grade Walpole teacher has borrowed the Press MATCH Box. This kit was designed to give children an understanding of the work and equipment involved in producing a printed book. The Box contains ink, paper, a press, and other equipment needed for the work.

The classroom is cluttered as each of the youngsters learn the steps involved in editing, typesetting, and printing their work. During the first week the children are authors, preparing and editing the manuscript. For the remaining two weeks they are the staff of a publishing company, designing, printing, and illustrating the book.

One youngster, covered with ink, smiles and exclaims, "Gee, the guys who print the dictionary sure must work!"

Because of the great demand for MATCH Boxes, American Science and Engineering Inc. of Boston are producing three Boxes commercially: The

Child explores Eskimo snow goggles.



Japanese Family, A House of Ancient Greece, and The City will be ready for fall delivery.

During the past year the Museum opened a "Workshop of Things" where parents, teachers and others who deal with children can learn about three-dimensional curriculum materials that are now available for use in elementary classrooms.

Spread out in the new Workshop on shelves are magnets, balance scales, stuffed birds encased in clear plastic boxes for ease of handling, counting blocks, Japanese footwear, and Eskimo tools—as well as a vast array of more sophisticated media kits to support teachers' efforts in science, social studies and other subjects. Teachers who arrive at the Workshop are soon playing as children might with vegetable dyes and water to learn about density and color mixing.

Already more than 3,500 have reg-

istered either singly or in groups to explore with a staff member materials that might be helpful in planning new curriculum activities.

Mrs. Cynthia Cole, who works with groups in the Workshop, says, "We've received many requests. It's easy for a teacher to come to us and admit that she doesn't know about some of the educational materials available. We act as a clearing house for school administrators and teachers."

The Museum's continually developing services to the schools now reach over 170,000 children a year with 5,500 circulations of Loan Exhibits and MATCH Boxes, while 20,000 children participate in 700 school and group programs at the Museum. A professional staff of 17 full- and part-time developer-teachers is supported by 24 administrative, technical, and maintenance personnel.

For years, however, inadequate fa-

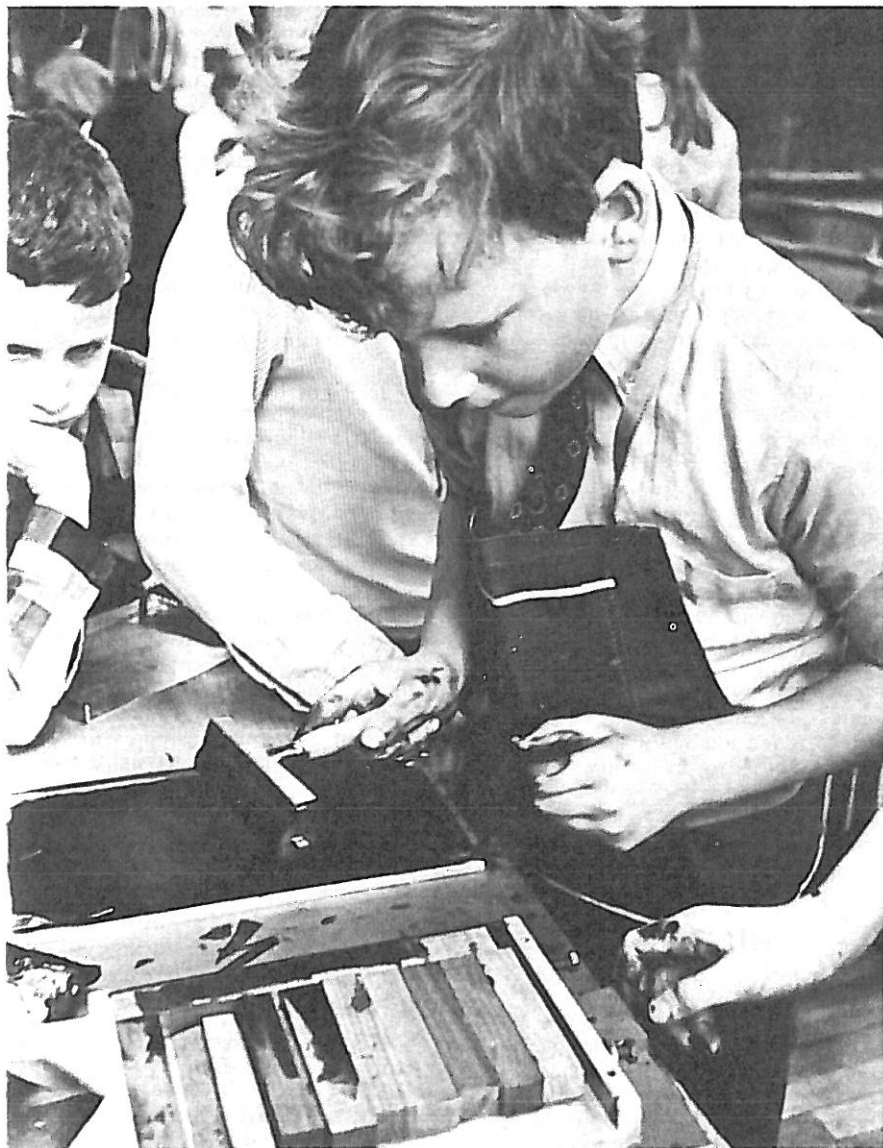
cilities have severely limited the Museum's ability to respond to the growing demands of children, parents, and teachers for the Museum's services. Staff, programs, exhibits, collections have all been jammed together in a charming but inflexible old house. In the meantime a spacious auditorium, built to accommodate pre-television Saturday movie crowds, stood virtually unused.

Two years ago the decision was made to remodel the auditorium to accommodate public services and devote the space freed in the old museum building to a long planned Resource Center for teachers, together with proper housing for the Museum's collections and staff.

THE NEW Visitor Center will consist of a multi-level exhibit hall, group program rooms, efficient public areas and an adjoining exhibit garden for large-scale outdoor activities. A jungle gym system of interconnected platforms has been erected in the former seating area to allow limitless exhibit arrangements. Doing away with the conventional barriers of glass cases, DO NOT TOUCH signs, gallery walls, and confined spaces, the visitor will be free to climb to a high platform to look into a bird's nest or go down beneath the "ground" to look at a woodchuck's burrow.

When this exciting new space, designed by Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc., opens on October 19th, the Children's Museum of Boston will present an array of exhibits, all of which will have been child-tested through the innovative Guinea Pig program. And Boston, whose museums have achieved so much international fame, will add another first in the museum world. □

Ink-smeared printer prepares an impression as part of Museum's MATCH program.



FUNDS NEEDED

With no support from the city or state, the Children's Museum nevertheless continues to grow and change in response to greatly stepped-up demands for its services. How does it do it? It isn't easy. A well-organized group of leaders in the Boston community is hard at work in an effort to broaden the base of financial support for the Museum. Their goals are to increase annual giving levels to a point where the present budget for operations is balanced, and secure major capital gifts from individuals, corporations, and foundations to underwrite recent capital outlays for buildings and expanded programs. Additional income will be received by increased user fees and a large-scale contributing membership drive to take place in the fall.