

MEDIA INFORMATION

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A facility of the City of Los Angeles
Department of Recreation and Parks

Over 70 Years of Marine Education A Brief History of the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium

- 1935 Marine specimens collected at Venice Beach by local City of Los Angeles beach lifeguards were moved to the Cabrillo Beach Bathhouse, which became the Cabrillo Marine Museum under the City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department. Dr. William Lloyd, a retired dentist, was hired to curate the collection.
- 1949 John Olguin, Captain of the Cabrillo Beach Lifeguards, was appointed Director of the Museum. He began to give impromptu talks to visiting school groups and later, as the popularity of the museum as a school field trip site grew, began recruiting volunteers to assist with tour and beach walk programs.
- 1951 Under John Olguin's leadership, the Museum began an evening program that highlighted a local marine phenomenon, the grunion fish spawning on the beach. The unique and highly popular program continues to this day.
- 1969 Cabrillo Marine Aquarium and its evening grunion program were recognized nationally by National Geographic magazine in May.
- 1971 The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks initiated the planning for an entirely new Cabrillo Marine Museum with a new building and new exhibits.
- 1972 The Museum's whalewatch program, co-sponsored by the American Cetacean Society, began taking school groups to sea in boats to observe the winter migration of the Pacific gray whales.
- 1974 Hiring of initial staffing for the new museum was completed with the appointment of Dr. Susanne Lawrenz-Miller as Exhibits Director.
- 1975 The Museum's volunteers became incorporated as the Cabrillo Marine Museum Volunteers and began raising funds in support of the museum as well as recruiting and training volunteers for its programs and activities.
- 1976 John Olguin and Susanne Lawrenz-Miller were appointed Associate Directors, jointly in charge of the Museum. Planning for the new museum was reactivated when a new architect, Frank Gehry and Associates, received a contract from the Department of Recreation and Parks in May.
- 1980 The Cabrillo Marine Museum Volunteers formed a general public membership branch, FRIENDS of Cabrillo Marine Museum.
- 1981 On October 21, the grand opening of the new \$3 million Cabrillo Marine Museum was held. Programs were transferred to the new Museum and the original building was closed to the public. The Museum won a Special Merit Award from the California Coastal Commission "for embodying the importance of educating the public on the marine environment and for its thoughtful design and arrangement of exhibits."
- 1982-1988 New exhibits opened on a regular basis, and new programs, including Sea Search, were developed and enthusiastically received by the community. John Olguin retired and became Director Emeritus. Dr. Susanne Lawrenz-Miller was appointed Museum Director. Marineland closed, leaving Cabrillo Marine Museum as the only public aquarium in the greater Los Angeles area.

- 1989 A Long Range Plan for the 1990s was developed, including major expansion and capital expenditure over the next 10 years. The plans detailed large new exhibit spaces plus additional support space and staffing. Size of CMM would triple.
- 1993 The Museum changed its name to Cabrillo Marine Aquarium to highlight its living collections and in anticipation of major expansion as a public aquarium in the future. The Cabrillo Marine Aquarium Volunteers merged into a new non-profit support group, called FRIENDS of Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, headed by a Board of Directors.
- 1995 A Master Plan for expansion was completed and strategic planning for its funding and implementation begun. In the meantime, expanded and new programs, such as Ocean Outreach, Sea Rangers and Discovery Labs, were added as FRIENDS of Cabrillo Marine Aquarium increased their grant-seeking and other support.
- 1997 Master Plan was modified when the development of the Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific reduced need for large-scale growth. The Revised Master Plan would double the size of CMA and focus on expansion of programs and exhibits throughout the coastal park and new interactive laboratory, exhibit halls and library.
- 2000 Fully accessible trails and interpretive exhibits were added throughout the Cabrillo Coastal Park, staffed during low tides with volunteers from the Sea Ranger Program.
- 2001 Following ideas presented in the Master Plan, Phase 1 of the CMA expansion was approved by the Los Angeles City Department of Recreation and Parks. The Aquarium will almost double in size with the addition of an Exploration Center, Aquatic Nursery, Research Library and volunteer and staff offices.
- 2002 On July 19, CMA Staff, volunteers, FRIENDS and members of the community celebrated the groundbreaking ceremony for the new expansion. This event was highlighted by the attendance of local dignitaries and received media coverage.
- 2004 On October 23, the new \$10-million expansion was opened to the public following dedication and "Kelp Cutting" ceremonies. Expansion highlights include an Exploration Center, S. Mark Taper Foundation Courtyard, Aquatic Nursery and the Virginia Reid Moore Research Library. Earlier in the month, special preview receptions were held for the funders, supporters, volunteers and members.
- 2005 CMA opened the Virginia Reid Moore Marine Research Library to the public and celebrated its 70th anniversary with special programs, exhibits and celebrations. CMA also received the prestigious Munson Aquatic Conservation Exhibitory award for its Aquatic Nursery exhibits through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.
- 2006 For the second year in a row CMA received the prestigious Munson Aquatic Conservation Exhibitory award for its Exploration Center exhibits through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Dr. Susanne Lawrenz-Miller retired and Exhibit Director Mike Schaadts was named Aquarium Director
- 2010 In October 2010, CMA will celebrate 75 years of engaging all visitors in education, recreation, and research to promote knowledge, appreciation, and conservation of the marine life of Southern California.