

HISTORY, HEADLINES AND TECHNOLOGY

•The Newseum



by Judith Rubin

Relocating from Arlington, Virginia, the \$450-million Newseum opened in April 2008 in a brand-new, ultramodern building in the heart of Washington, D.C., where it anticipates welcoming some 2 million visitors annually. In this glass-curtained, skylit and sun-filled building, the 250,000-sq.-ft Newseum takes up seven levels with galleries, theaters, and event spaces, blending news history with cutting-edge technology and hands-on exhibits. The primary funder is The Freedom Forum, a nonpartisan foundation. Sponsors include an A-list of prominent news agencies.

Visitors pass through the main entrance into the New York Times – Ochs-Sulzberger Family Great Hall of News (the atrium) where they are met by a gigantic video display. From there it's on to Level 1 for the Hearst Corp. Orientation theaters and the Berlin Wall exhibit. Next stop is Level 7 via the central elevator, which is an exhibit in itself, traveling along a glass shaft that lets you admire all its intricate workings. Working back down through the building, the visitor's immersion into news, news makers and news history can include the 9/11 Gallery sponsored by Comcast, the Cox Enterprises First Amendment Gallery, the Time-Warner World News Gallery, the Journalists Memorial, Pulitzer Prize Photographs, the ABC Changing Exhibits Gallery, Sports theater and Documentary theater, Ethics Center and Early News Gallery, the Walter and Lenore Annenberg theater, the Robert H. and Clarice Smith Big Screen theater, the News Corp. News History Gallery and the Pulliam Family Great Books Gallery.

The abundance of natural light that passes through the Newseum's generous windows, window-walls and skylights is refreshing to

visitors. It also has a metaphorical purpose: to symbolize the openness and transparency that are fundamentals to a free press. The exhibits seek to convey a definition of news and how it is created, and to motivate visitors to protect its freedoms. The journalist is presented as inquisitive adventurer, chronicler, and a champion of the people. But open and light-filled spaces coupled with hard reflective surfaces in a museum present special design challenges to lighting the exhibits, projecting content onto screens, and keeping the sound clear, contained, and intelligible. Credit an excellent acoustical and sound reinforcement strategy for the Newseum's providing a focused guest experience even in the densest and most open areas. Virtually all the spaces are set up to accommodate special events of all types, and are divided into 80 sound zones that can operate independently or together.

In the user stations of the NBC Interactive Newsroom on Level 2, the visitor can role-play

as a journalist or photographer. This room also contains eight open video production bays that form the Be A TV Reporter experience: an immediate hit with the younger set. The user buys a ticket and is entered into the system. Users choose a backdrop and a script, and are led by a docent through a photo snap, a rehearsal, and then the recording process, after which he or she receives a souvenir photo; one can later download one's entire video from the Newseum website.

The show-stopping, giant LED screen in the atrium is visible from the street outside, and inside visitors may view it from any indoor level to catch up on breaking news, historic news and documentaries. To hang the screen, which weighs some 21,500 lbs, and enable it to be raised and lowered required rigging expertise and a monster, custom lineshaft winch, itself weighing 12,500 lbs.



Guests thoroughly explore The Newseum

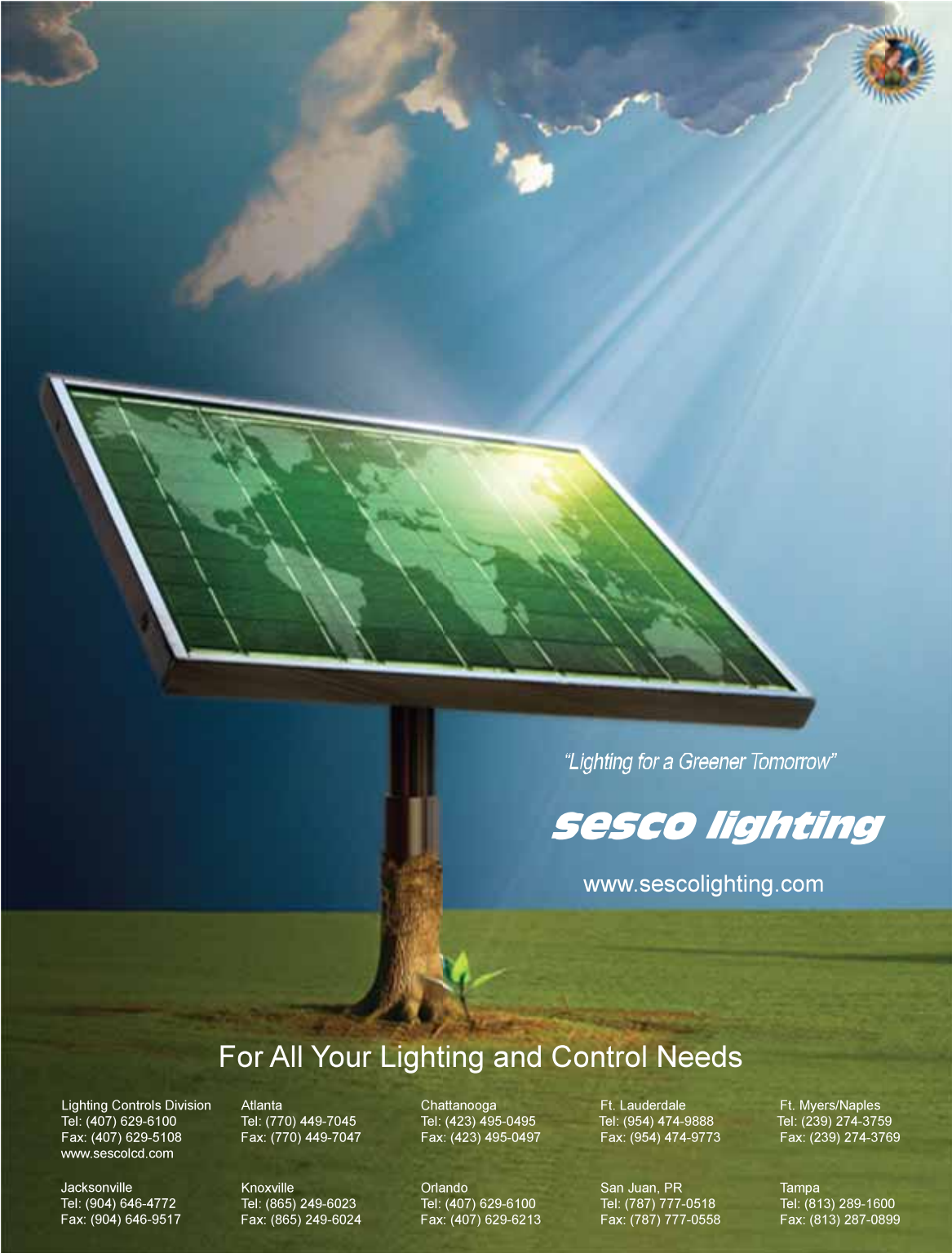


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I-Witness: A 4-D Time Travel Adventure, puts visitors in the journalist's seat in the Walter and Lenore Annenberg theater, on Level 1. The 350-seat custom theater features a 3-D presentation dramatizing the respective contributions of Nelly Bly (the first female reporter) and Edward R. Murrow (pioneer television reporter and interviewer). Seats that rock and vibrate, plus wind effects, give the extra dimension. A custom motorized curtain system conceals and reveals the screen and enables the theater to double as a live auditorium and broadcast venue.

Level 5 houses the Robert H and Clarice Smith Big Screen theater, the News Corp. News History Gallery, the Pulliam Family Great Books Gallery, and several pocket theaters. The News History Gallery contains a long swath of glass cabinets holding a vast archive of articles that visitors can slide out and view, accompanied by projected murals and touch-screen displays with mimic screens above. The Big Screen theater has casual tiered seating running the width of its 90' x 10' video screen. Its projectors display a repeated program interspersed with breaking news clips.

Thanks to its great view of Pennsylvania Avenue, the Newseum had become a favored broadcast location even before opening to the public. ABC News broadcasts *This Week with George Stephanopoulos* every Sunday from one of the Newseum's two state-of-the-art HD TV studios. The Capitol building is clearly visible in the background through the glass curtain wall.

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