



Online Articles

Meet MoPOP: Paul Allen's EMP Museum changes name to Museum of Pop Culture



The Museum of Pop Culture, formerly EMP Museum, near Seattle's Space Needle. (Kurt Schlosser / GeekWire)

Update: *The museum shared a news release about the name change late Tuesday. This story has been updated to reflect additional information.*

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The branding department responsible for putting the name of Seattle's EMP Museum onto merchandise should just take a deep breath. They're probably just as confused as the rest of us who are tasked with remembering what to call the colorful blob at the base of the Space Needle.

For the fifth time in its 16-year history, the museum founded by Microsoft billionaire Paul Allen has undergone a name change and will now be called the Museum of Pop Culture, or MoPOP.

The change isn't yet reflected in the [website URL](#) for the museum, but banners at the top of the site announce the change. And over on Twitter, @EMP Museum has given way to [@MoPOPSeattle](#).



The museum was designed to incorporate Seattle's monorail. (Kurt Schlosser / GeekWire)

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“MoPOP reflects who we are today and the future of the museum,” Patty Isacson Sabee, CEO and director of MoPOP, said in a news release. “Pop culture is a platform that resonates with audiences in a powerful way. And at MoPOP we provide avenues through our exhibits and programs for people to explore, learn, create, and celebrate pop culture in all of its diversity.”

Founded in 2000 as the Experience Music Project, the museum was originally christened as a home to celebrate rock ‘n’ roll. Designed by renowned architect Frank Gehry, [the 140,000-square-foot building itself](#) was inspired by models Gehry made by slicing up and piecing together electric guitars. The mix of textures and colors is meant to convey “the energy and fluidity of music.”

[Subsequent name changes](#) included EMP, Experience Music Project and Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame, and then EMP Museum as the focus of the the museum and what was on display seemed to continually change and go way beyond just music.

“This new naming captures the evolution of the wide set of experiences the museum has come to offer,” Allen said in a statement. “It has become a landmark destination and a valuable learning resource for visitors of all ages and engages passionate fans of pop culture from all over the world.”





(Kurt Schlosser / GeekWire)

Curatorial director Jasen Emmons [told The Seattle Times](#) that MoPOP has been in the works for about a decade as the museum continued to grapple with its identity.

“It gets frustrating when people say: ‘What does EMP stand for?’” Emmons told the Times. “It was a head-scratcher for the public as we made zigs and zags while we were growing up. People said: ‘Wait, I thought you were supposed to be a rock ‘n’ roll museum.’”

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The museum says it saw record attendance in 2015, with 743,533 museum visitors, an increase of 26 percent from 2014.

MoPOP says it holds a music collection of approximately 140,000 artifacts and an oral history archive consisting of more than 1,000 curator interviews with musicians, filmmakers, authors, and other luminaries who have shaped and continue to influence contemporary culture.



(Kurt Schlosser / GeekWire)

The museum employs 161 people, has more than 100 volunteers and offers dozens of internships throughout the year. The news release said its economic impact is approximately \$35 million annually.

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MoPOP is hosting a [Pop Culture Party](#) on Saturday, with free admission to all galleries, including exhibitions “Star Trek: Exploring New Worlds” and “World of WearableArt.” The event, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., will include games and activities, live music, screening of past Sky Church performances, architecture tours and museum store deals.

Available from:

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