

## Jeffrey Rudolph

Interviewed by Joelle Seligson

Thirty-one years ago, Jeffrey Rudolph entered the science center and museum field “more or less by mistake.” Chance events led Rudolph, now president and CEO of the California Science Center (CSC) in Los Angeles and president of the California Science Center Foundation, to a storied career. That, in turn, earned him the ASTC Fellow Award for Outstanding Contribution, the Association’s highest honor, this year. Here, Rudolph reveals his favorite memories and his hopes for the future of the field.

### Can you give me a brief history of your career path?

In 1982, I was working for one of the state’s cabinet agencies when the director of the California Museum of Science and Industry [now the CSC] passed away suddenly. The agency’s secretary asked me to come to Los Angeles until they got a new director.

I fell in love with the concept of what could be done. I was fortunate to have great support to envision what a great science center for Los Angeles could and should be. [We developed] a 25-year plan to create the CSC as a fantastic place for science education for people of all ages. We have three major components: the public science center, a neighborhood elementary school, and a center for science learning, for our educational program [and] professional development for teachers. We are well on our way to completing the plan.

[We believe] that everyone can and should understand science, and we make a huge effort to ensure that our audience, staff, and board look like the population of our region. We work hard to maintain our free admission policy and to make sure everyone can use the place and benefit from it.

### What do you consider your favorite memory?

Two things really stand out. One was the introduction of *Body Worlds* to the Americas. We feel really good about the work that we’ve done with our community, religious and medical



bioethicists, and others to introduce it properly. The other is getting Space Shuttle *Endeavour*. Winning the award of *Endeavour* was tough enough, but then to actually get it here was something that became a source of pride for our community. It’s been amazing. It’s also just the beginning. We’ve put it in a temporary display until we build the third phase of our master plan, which is our new air and space center. It will give us an opportunity to do what we’re intrigued with now—[combining] the space shuttle with hands-on science and engineering exhibits to get people to think more deeply.

### How have you seen the field (and ASTC) change over the past three decades?

I think we’ve become much more established and with that, quite a lot less innovative. I think that we need to all take a little more risk and try new things more often.

### Do you have any specific hopes for the field?

I hope we continue to thrive and to attract new players, which will bring new energy and enthusiasm, and that we continue to focus on expanding the audience. I think that’s still a challenge in our community, to reach those who are traditionally under-represented in sciences.

It’s a tremendous honor to be recognized as a Fellow. The fact that the field is so collegial and that people work together and support each other is really important, and I do hope that continues.

For a podcast and full transcript of this interview, visit [www.astc.org/blog/category/astc-dimensions/q-and-a](http://www.astc.org/blog/category/astc-dimensions/q-and-a).

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