

## THE NATURAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT OF MUSEUM OLTENIA CRAIOVA, 90 YEARS OF HOPES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS (1923-2013)

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**Abstract.** This work presents the history of the Natural Science Department of the Oltenia Museum, Craiova and also mentions the goals and hopes of the management and staff for the future development of the department. There are also presented the accomplishments during nine decades of existence of the department. For the writing of this article there were also used previous articles of the author and I. Firu. This is the reason for which certain concepts are not presented in detail but the appropriate references are provided.

**Keywords:** Natural Science Department, nine decades, activities, accomplishments.

**Rezumat. Secția de Științele Naturii a Muzeului Olteniei Craiova - 90 de ani de speranțe și împliniri (1923-2013).**

Materialul prezintă sintetic istoricul Secției de Științele Naturii a Muzeului Olteniei Craiova cu menționarea speranțelor conducerii și colectivelor de specialiști ale secției, de dezvoltare a secției. Sunt menționate totodată împlinirile și realizările de-a lungul a nouă decenii de existență. Pentru elaborarea acestui material au fost consultate și utilizate lucrările publicate anterior de autoare și de I. Firu. De aceea nu sunt dezvoltate anumite idei, ci se face trimitere la lucrările publicate anterior, pe aceeași temă.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Secția de Științele Naturii, 9 decenii, activități, realizări.

### INTRODUCTION

During the nine decades of its existence, the Natural Science Department had an eventful existence. Due to the fact that the department was a part of the Oltenia Museum, the allocated funds were distributed according to priorities amongst the departments of the Museum. During the years, even if some of the goals of the department were achieved there are goals that are still to be achieved.

During the time, the specialists of the department managed to enrich the scientific patrimony, to realize new exhibitions, to organize a lot of scientific manifestations and also to publish the results of their scientific research.

The most difficult time for the department was during the years 1975-1986, when due to the lack of expository space, the main way for the specialists of the department to interact with the public stopped. This led to the exclusion of the department from the cultural-educational circuit. The students' generations of that time were deprived of the knowledge regarding flora and wild fauna they could have acquired from the department.

The fast development period of the department started after the year 2003 and reached a peak during the years 2008-2012. During this time, the building the department is based in has been completely renovated, the display furniture in the deposits has been upgraded and new permanent exhibitions have been built. We also mention that the National Conference "*Museum and the Scientific Research*" became an international scientific manifestation. The scientific journal of the department „*Oltenia. Studii și comunicări. Științele Naturii*” climbed the highest level of scientific acknowledgment at a national level and also entered in the international scientific databases.

### CONTENT

The 2<sup>nd</sup> of December of the year 2013 marks the 90 years anniversary of the birth of the natural Science History Museum. The creation of the museum was the dream of the professor of natural science Marin Demetrescu from Carol I College from Craiova. His hope was the creation of a natural science museum in Craiova similar to the “Grigore Antipa” Museum in Bucharest (FIRU, 1969; CHIMIȘLIU, 1999).

The Natural Science History Museum functioned under this name until the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1928 when it became a department of the Oltenia Regional Museum. This new museum was formed by uniting the Natural History Museum and the Regional Antiques and Ethnography Museum of Dolj County. This union was the wish of C. Negrescu, the prefect of that time, who helped the two museums very much. The newly created museum consisted of seven “Sections” and its management was entrusted to Marin Dementrescu (VINCENZ, 1928). Therefore, the year 2013 also marks the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Oltenia Museum.

At the very beginning of its existence, the National Science Department was based in a few rooms from the basement of the prefecture building.

The increase in size of the museum collection and also the increase of the interest of the visiting public led to a new necessity and goal for the department. This was that of obtaining a larger space for the museum in order to organize larger expositions for the visiting public. This goal was achieved in 1935 when the museum moved in Casa Baniei, the current location of the Department of Ethnography of the Oltenia Museum. Here, new expositions were organized based on the increased patrimony.

Thanks to the donations of the intellectuality from Craiova, the patrimony of the museum kept increasing so that soon the need for an even larger space arose. That is why the Natural Science Department was moved in the current location of the History and Archaeology Department of the Oltenia Museum where during 1962 the main exposition was created (CHIMIŞLIU, 1999; 2003; 2011). This modern exposition had a significant impact at that time. Even if it only functioned for 12 years (CHIMIŞLIU, 1999) the exposition has remained in the memories of the visitors ever since.

After the closing of this exhibition, the patrimony of the department was moved in several other buildings where it did not have any expositional space. So the expositional activity of the department ceased during 1974 - 1986. The hope of the department director and his staff of obtaining a new space for properly storing the patrimony of the department and organizing new exhibitions was partially fulfilled in 1984 (CHIMIŞLIU, 2003). In that year, the building form Popa Şapcă street was assigned to the Oltenia Museum for the Natural Science Department. Due to financial issues the renovation of the whole building was not possible so that, at first, only the patrimony of the department was moved to the new location. Two years later (the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 1986) after preparing the space in the ground floor of the building, the expositional activity of the department was resumed starting with two temporary exhibitions followed by several dozens of such expositions until the year 2008 (CHIMIŞLIU, 1999; 2003; 2010). Also due to financial reasons, the organisation of a new main exposition could not be achieved. The thematic for a new main exhibition was agreed upon and elaborated by: PhD. Elena Bazilescu - the chief of the department and the curators: PhD. Irina Păunescu, Adrian Nastase, Cornelia Chimişliu. There were two attempts of organizing this new exposition, two technical projects were elaborated and the scientific thematic was constantly updated. Only 22 years later, after moving to the new building on 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2008, on the first floor the main exposition "*The physical-geography conditions and the ecosystems from Oltenia*" (Fig. 1) was opened. The new revised scientific thematic of the exposition was realized by: PhD. Cornelia Chimişliu - the chief of the department and curators: PhD. Adrian Năstase, PhD. Aurelian Popescu, PhD. Mirela Ridiche, PhD. Olivia Cioboiu, PhD. student Claudia Goga (CHIMIŞLIU, 2010).

This main exposition provides the visiting public with the opportunity of getting to know the physical-geography conditions and Oltenia ecosystems through modern means of exhibitions. Along with the classical exhibition means (showcases), modern interactive informational systems were used. These systems comprise 2D/3D interactive animated multimedia presentations and Flash technology. The interactive informational systems (CHIMIŞLIU, 2011) have a pronounced didactical character and this is a main reason for teachers and professors to hold some of their classes at the exposition. The terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems from Oltenia are presented with the help of four dioramas. The cave ecosystem is represented by an artificial cave realized within the exposition (CHIMIŞLIU, 2010, 2011).

At the same time, the exposition "*The Mineral and Rock Collection*" was opened to the public. This exhibition displays the most valuable pieces from the mineral and rocks collection of the Oltenia Museum (CHIMIŞLIU, 2010). This modern exhibition turned the department into an important cultural-scientific attraction of Craiova.

The size and diversity of the patrimony, the generous space of the building, the professionalism of the staff have given birth to new hopes and goals. These are the creation of a new main palaeontology exposition on the ground floor of the building, a new cosmogony and a Planetarium on the second floor.

Some of these goals were fulfilled so that the palaeontology expositions "*Oltenia-Terra fossilis*" was opened on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2012. The exhibition displays part of the palaeontology patrimony of the department (16,000 pieces) gathered over the years. There are exhibited genuine pieces (plants, invertebrates and vertebrate fossils), scientific and illustrative material.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2012 the exhibition "*The Universe and our Solar System*" and the *Planetarium* were opened to the public. They provide the visitors with knowledge regarding different aspects of the Universe and our Solar System focusing on the planet Earth and its natural satellite, the Moon.

These were goals regarding the appropriate space and the activity of taking advantage of the expositional value of the patrimony of the department. The whole staff of the department contributed to achieving these goals. An important contribution was also provided by the manager of the museum prof. PhD. Mihai Viorel Fifor and the management of Dolj County Council, respectively Ion Prioteasa, Chairman.

Other hopes of specialist team were related to the exploit and scientific capitalization activity of the museum heritage. It was always wanted that every collection of the museum heritage to be scientifically processed by a specialist, but it was not possible.

That is why the goal of having specialists for every category of the collection forming the scientific patrimony of the department has only partially been achieved. During 1988 and 1992, the department had only two curators, the botanic specialist Adrian Nastase and entomology specialist, Cornelia Chimişliu. Starting with 1993 (CHIMIŞLIU, 1998), five new curator joined the department for the collections: Minerals and Palaeontology (Aurelian Popescu), Ornithology (Ridiche Mirela), Malacology (Olivia Cioboiu), Ichthyology (Claudia Ionelia Goga), Botany (Gima Lila) (CHIMIŞLIU, 2010). The collections of Herpetology and Mammalogy are still to be assigned their own curators.

The goal of the curators for professional development has delivered four PhD. theses. Thus, four of the curators of the department have a PhD. title. The last two curators that joined are PhD. students.

The scientific preparation of the patrimony, the elaboration of scientific papers and their publication contributes to the mediatisation of the patrimony and the introduction of these data into the national and international scientific circuit.



Figure 1. 18 September 2008 - The grand opening of the permanent exhibition on the first floor.

In order to communicate the results of the scientific activity of the department, starting with 1993, the annual scientific manifestation “*The Museum and Scientific Research*” has been organized.

Our hope that this scientific event will bring together specialists from Romania and abroad, has been fulfilled gradually. Initially, the participants were mostly curators of museums and natural sciences departments from Romania. Subsequently, the number of participants from universities and research institutes increased. The next step was to attract specialists from outside Romania. The first participants from abroad were specialists from Chișinău (Republic of Moldova) and in Bratislava (Slovakia). Next, there were Turkey, Bulgaria, Albania, Italy, Czech Republic, etc. Thus, the Scientific Conference (Fig. 2) became an international scientific manifestation. ([www.sesiuneinternationalamuzeulolteniei.ro/](http://www.sesiuneinternationalamuzeulolteniei.ro/)). This year (2013) is the 20<sup>th</sup> event organized under the title “*The museum and scientific research*” and the 5<sup>th</sup> international edition.



Figure 2. Image from the opening of the Conference in 2012.

The publication of the scientific papers presented by participants was done in the scientific journal of the department “*Oltenia. Studii și comunicări. Științele Naturii*” (<http://www.olteniastudii.3x.ro/>), which starting from

1999 to the present (2013), has had annual periodicity. Our hope that the modest journal of the department will become a valuable scientific journal, was fulfilled in 2008 when, on nationally level, it was included in the scientific journal "B +" (code CNCSIS-703). It is also indexed BDI, Zoological Record link to ISI Master Journal List (<http://science.thomsonreuters.com/cgi-bin/jrnlst/jlresults.cgi?PC=MASTER&Word=oltenia>).

Another hope was fulfilled when our conference room was created, where all the cultural, educational and scientific team of specialists organized by the Division can take place.

Other hopes related to the collaboration with teachers with various degrees became a reality gradually.

### CONCLUSIONS

In these nine decades of existence, the teams of specialists who worked in the department showed professionalism, patience and perseverance in the fulfilment of their hopes. The desire for better was always present no matter how working conditions were.

All hopes have been, are and will be channelled to enrich and diversify the scientific heritage, the preservation and the preparation, as well as to the its cultural and educational scientific exploitation.

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