

EDITOR'S NOTE

Six years following the inauguration of a public museum at Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, this century-old research institute, provider of products and services in the health field, has taken up the challenge of a new set of issues and initiatives. The Museum of Life has worked steadily to shape a true research facility where the relevant objects of study within the history of the sciences will be not only museums themselves but also educational processes, scientific communication and outreach, and the social use of these cultural spaces. With such concerns in mind, in April 2005, the Casa de Oswaldo Cruz/Fiocruz, through its Museum of Life, will host the 4th Science Center World Congress, the first of its kind to be held in Latin America.

This supplement of *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos* has gathered together for our readers some thoughts on the processes and products that have over time interwoven relations between the various types of museums and various sciences. We have endeavored to encompass a wide array of approaches to the topic, some speaking *about* museums, from a certain academic remove, and others speaking *from* the vantage point of this particular place where knowledge is produced.

A variety of disciplines explore the topic. Sociology and history seek to know how museums participate in the structuring of cultural dynamics and of fields of knowledge, and how roles and emphases in research, outreach, and teaching have varied between museums or within each one. They also investigate how political and social contexts and developments outside the sciences may interfere in the creation, transformation, and sustainability of these institutions. This is the keynote running through the texts by Maria Margaret Lopes and Sandra Elena Murriello; Maria Alejandra Pupio; Irina Podgorny; and Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos.

Communication theories, psychology, and education sciences all approach the museum as an object of study from other angles. Their interest lies in the specific knowledge produced by reformulating the information exhibited at these institutions and also in the need to better understand the nature of the museum experience, an experience that is at one and the same time social, cultural, cognitive, and epistemological. Such are the discussions put forward by John H. Falk and Martin Storksdieck; Lynn D. Dierking; Michel Van Praet; Daniel Jacobi; Jean Davallon; Adriana Mortara Almeida; Denise Coelho Studart; Dominique Colinvaux; Douglas Falcão and John Gilbert; Martha Marandino; Maria Esther Valente; Sibebe Cazelli; Fátima Alves; Marília Xavier Cury; Thelma Lopes; and Julia Tagüena. The bulk of contributions to this supplement have come from this second group, which brings to our greater attention the issues and information shared by those involved in organizing or evaluating museum activities and visitor spaces.

Lastly, this supplement of *História, Ciências Saúde – Manguinhos* inaugurates the department “Museums and the Sciences,” which will harvest information on what is happening inside museums: projects, programs, activities summaries, commentated reports, and testimonies from those in the area.

In these pages, we offer you the opportunity to analyze this series of documents on museological, museographic, or educational proposals. I hope you will find this supplement of value. May it enhance your perception of the issues now permeating relations between museums and the sciences, culture, and society.

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Guest editor