

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM THAT NEVER WAS AND THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS THAT REPLACED IT

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Greece does not have a National Natural History Museum. Instead, since 1858, the role of assembling natural history objects has been covered by the museums of the University of Athens (UOA). The presence of extensive collections within the university proved to be a valuable agent for scientific research and academic teaching. However, the university museums did not succeed in performing the role of collection management and serving at the same time different audiences, other than the students. In addition, the collection management was hampered by the very nature of university museums, which focus on teaching and research and not on new approaches to become a resource of learning to a wider audience. Even though the last 20 years efforts have been made to improve their role in educating the public, it is evident that they need radical changes in order to advance their role within the society. The aim of this contribution is to analyse the role of the natural history museums of the UOA in supporting academic research as well as in being a replacement of a national natural history museum. Do university museums need to develop their collections in order to advance their role within the society and education or do they see this as a risk of compromising their traditional mission of scholarship, teaching and education? This contribution attempts to raise these questions as well as to propose valuable solutions.

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