

The exhibition “*The time of the Dinosaurs*”: an example of education in geoscience.

KELLNER, A.W.A. Dep. de Geologia e Paleontologia, Museu Nacional/UFRJ, RJ, Brazil; e-mail: kellner@acd.ufrj.br.

During the last decades the general philosophy of museums, particularly those dealing with natural history (including geoscience), is being changed around the world. The “traditional” view of museums as places where “old things” are being kept is gradually being replaced by a more dynamic concept in which these institutions are regarded as scientific organizations that (among other important functions) produce science and disseminate scientific theories and discoveries to the general public. This educational aspect of the natural history museums is being increasingly explored through exhibits which have led to substantial investments and developments of museographical techniques, resulting the rise of visitation rates.

Despite the problematic economical situation of Brazil, the Museu Nacional/UFRJ, in cooperation with the Departamento Nacional da Produção Mineral (RJ), has organized a temporary exhibition called “*The time of the Dinosaurs*”. This exposition presented the diversity of life (not only dinosaurs) that inhabited Brazil during the Mesozoic and the changes that have occurred until the present time, including several geological aspects such as continental drift and geologic time. Being the most visited scientific exhibit ever assembled in the country (nearly 200.000 people in 6 months), this exhibition has become a reference of its kind. Despite its small size (250 m²), its success unequivocally shows that there is a demand in the country for such enterprises, which constitute a powerful way to propagate geoscience among the population. Furthermore, the multiplication of such projects will help museums occupy a distinguished position in the Brazilian society as has happened in more developed countries.