

MUSEUM AIDS TO THE TEACHER OF GEOGRAPHY

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Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.

The movement among American museums to reach the public has been directed through the best possible medium—the schools. Realizing that the mere exposure to knowledge is not always fraught with the best success, the museums have presented this education in its most attractive setting. Not all of the activities have been centered on the child, it is true, for appeal is also made to the adult, but it is through the child, in the hope of extending the vast resources of the museum to the adult of tomorrow, that the campaign is being concentrated.

In this vast program the purveyor of geographical lore needs but to look to find his subject reached even to its widest applications. It is well to bear in mind that most of our larger institutions function as museums of *natural history*—the term *geography* being foreign to their curricula. Even so, their geographical resources, applications, and interrelationships are more vast than those of many distinctly geographical institutions. In fact, it would not be deviating widely from the truth to designate them as "Museums of Applied Geography."

As the exhibits are the special attraction, guide-lecture service exists for the purpose of disseminating information concerning them. The lecture tours vary from the most general to the very specific, the regular schedule embodying both kinds, but it is an exceptional audience that desires a very technical dissertation. Such tours are for the general public, and rarely do specialized groups utilize them, although industrial concerns in Chicago have been known to send employees to participate in tours that concern their businesses. But the special tours given by request on any sphere of a museum's activities and exhibits are the special prerogative of the teacher, for here he has an implement constructed especially for his needs.

The 1928 attendance figures for Field Museum of Chicago give an idea of the scope of this work. During that year 413 lecture tours were given to 17,392 school children from Chicago and its environs. None of these tours were standardized, each being

given on the subject requested. In the absence of statistical data it is difficult to draw satisfactory conclusions relating to the subject matter, but the experience of the writer has convinced him that the majority of such visits are sponsored by geography teachers and call for geographical subjects.

It may be well to add, also, a word concerning the personnel of the lecture divisions. Each lecturer must be familiar with the four departments of the museum (geology, botany, zoology, and anthropology), although each has specialized in some one department. Thus the training of the lecturer may influence his tour. Supposing a geography tour is requested on South America, if the lecturer be a botanist, it is not difficult to conjecture as to the department of the museum which he will utilize most fully in his portrayal of South American geography. The same holds true for the other three divisions, whereas a lecturer with geographical training will be more impartial and utilize each of the four departments to its best geographical advantage.

The Natural History Museum of the Chicago Academy of Science also gives lecture tours to visiting groups of school children, although geography is not presented as a differentiated subject. The Cleveland Museum of Natural History offers a series of graded lessons on natural history by resident teachers under the pay of the board of education. No definite tie-up is made with the school course of study, but the lessons can be, and often are, used by the teacher to give a background for certain phases of work in the regular school curriculum.

The Chicago Board of Education co-operates with the Field Museum to a considerable degree. Teachers, at their own discretion, may bring classes to the museum during school hours, and make museum studies an accredited part of the school work. For the grades (2 to 8, inclusive) there is a correlation program between the museum exhibits and the classroom studies in geography, history, science, and manual arts.

The museum libraries are also at the disposal of visitors. These well-stocked scientific libraries are among the best to be found anywhere, but only too rarely are they taken advantage of. Descriptive pamphlets relating to the exhibits are on sale at nominal prices within the reach of the school children. The pamphlets are written by the scientific staff, but are usually condensed and as non-technical as possible. Such pamphlets can be

successfully used for independent museum study or as a sequel to lecture tours.

Children's movies, with or without lectures, are an added drawing card at many institutions. The Natural History Museum of the Chicago Academy of Science and Field Museum have series of such Saturday morning programs. The subject matter in both institutions is related to natural history, but various phases of geography are well represented in most of the productions. The American Museum of Natural History in New York is one of a few to offer a series of movie lectures on definite subjects: natural history, early American history, geography, and industries. A geography series reads:

Africa

France And Her Neighbors

Child Life in Japan

Russia in Europe

South America

Mexico And Central America

One of the industrial series reads:

Life in the Far West

Our Waterways and Their Protection

The Conservation of Our Forests

Mining in the United States

Farming in the Middle West

Canada

Lecture courses are presented to the general public with no particular appeal to the schools. Students are welcome to them but are treated as part of the general adult public. These courses are popular and they do not delve very deeply into any particular science. For that very reason I believe that they are more valuable to geography than to any other science with the possible exception of anthropology.

The most important phase of the present-day museum program is not in the museum where the attractive exhibits are always free to the students, but it is the reaching out of the museum into the schools themselves. First let us consider the extension exhibits. The Cleveland Museum maintains loan exhibits in libraries throughout the city, in the schools of the suburbs where the museum's projects are being carried on, and in other schools, community centers, and such institutions where there are requests for loan material. The Field Museum, through the N. W. Harris

Public School Extension Department, in 1928 reached the public schools and such parochial schools, and organizations as the Y. M. C. A., social settlements, community clubs, and libraries to the number of 402. Of the more than 1,000 exhibits, three-fourths were in circulation among 371 public schools. There are 350 subjects, the more popular ones being duplicated from one to ten times. Two cases are delivered to each school at the beginning of the school year and changed every two weeks, so that each school receives 36 different cases in a school year. Only once in several years does the same case reach any one school, so a constant change and variety of subjects is maintained.

A few exhibits chosen at random are listed below to suggest the geographical value of the exhibits even though they are classified under the Natural History sciences.

Botany:

- Paper (various kinds)
- Dye-woods
- Coffee Plant and Product
- Cotton To Cotton Goods

Geology:

- Graphite (its uses)
- Useful Minerals
- Coal Mine
- Plate Glass and Mirror Making

Zoology:

- Bluejay
- Porcupine
- Eel
- Potato Beetle

With the possible exception of the zoological exhibits, most are geographical in their applications, and those pertaining to zoology, if nothing else, illustrate geographical distribution. Labels give in simple language the most important facts concerning the contents of the cases. Here then we have a medium for classroom study taken, as it were, right out of the museum.

More important than the cases are the extension lectures. The Raymond Lecture Division of Field Museum has a force of three lecturers giving extension lectures in the Chicago public schools. In the school year 1927-1928, 556 lectures were given to 209,290 children. These lectures, illustrated with slides, are given on those

subjects studied in the classroom which are displayed in museum exhibits. The list offered for presentation is as follows:

- What We Owe to South America
- Flax and Cotton
- African Animals
- Glimpses of Chinese Life
- The Story of Coal and Iron
- Food Fish of the World
- Roman Home Life
- Silk and Wool
- Life of the Ancient Egyptians
- Native Life of the Philippine Islands
- Activities of Field Museum
- North American Indians
- North American Mammals
- Mammals of the Chicago Area
- Birds of the Chicago Area

These lectures stimulate an interest in the museum and ultimately bring the children to the museum in school groups or as individuals. The schools have their choice of two lectures with a possible return date for two additional lectures. Of the 530 lectures given in 1928, the leading choices were grouped as follows:

Indians	17%
Coal and Iron.....	14%
Birds	14%
South America	13%
Philippines	6%

And of the requests for the school year of 1928-1929, the leaders were as follows:

South America	12%
China	11%
Indians	8%
Coal and Iron.....	8%
Fish	7%
Flax and Cotton.....	7%

Note that in each instance a majority of the leaders are those lectures most closely allied with geography. From talks with a limited number of principals, the writer has ascertained that more than one-half either choose the lectures from a geographical viewpoint or allow their geography teachers to make the selections.

These lectures are adapted for the particular grades, usually geography classes, studying the lecture topic. The extension lectures constitute one of the more important of the geography teachers' assets, at least of the teachers in Chicago.

Right at our very doors, in the larger cities at least, are the second-best geographical laboratories, second only to the actual regions themselves. And these museum laboratories offer a wealth of material; in fact, they invade the schools to deliver it. Has the geography teacher exerted as much effort in his search for this information? A corollary of the above might also be stated. Not only can geography get a great deal from the modern museum, but it should contribute to the museum more than it does. The museum organizations should realize more the value of geography, for no other science can or does have the breadth of view to weave this thesaurus of material into a unit whole. It remains for the geographer to take the many interrelated exhibits and make them with word pictures into living things for the museum visitor.

It may be well to close with a mere truism: Not only do we need to utilize the museum more in our study of geography, but the thousands of daily visitors need also the geographer to interpret for them the varied exhibits. At least a majority of those who come to the museums are not there from idle curiosity, as is attested by the attention given to the presentations of the guide-lecturers. The public wants to know, and it should be given not a partial but a comprehensive view.