

Millions of artifacts and objects of
natural history are on campus, but without
proper display, they make up

The Museum Nobody Sees

By BARBARA JOHNSON

Can a university really be first-rate without a museum?

Of all the universities in the Big Eight and Big Ten, the University of Missouri-Columbia is one of the few without a full-fledged museum. In fact, the universities of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Oklahoma all have two—one for art and archaeology and another for natural history. And the University of Michigan has three.

In Columbia tucked away in basements, professors' offices and in small crowded rooms are more than two million objects - articles that any museum in the United States would be proud to display. In fact, university and large city museums regularly borrow our valuable objects for special exhibitions. Otherwise, most of the articles would never see the light of display.

"All our ingenuity has gone into squeezing more storage cabinets into the available area and stretching the exhibition space to the greatest possible extent," says Dr. Saul Weinberg, director of art and archaeology collections and professor of classical archaeology. Things are so critical today that only 5 per cent of his 4000 objects valued at over \$1 million can be displayed in the art and archaeology galleries.

"We try to rotate exhibits," he says, "But even that is impossible. There's no room in which to change the displays." The galleries are on the library's fourth floor. He is grateful for even this small space because the library is crowded, and someday the museum undoubtedly will have to move.

The situation is similarly serious in other departments. In Zoology, there are some 30,000

fish specimens. "This is a teaching and research collection with major emphasis on Missouri and North American fresh-water forms," Dr. Arthur Witt, Jr., associate professor of zoology says. "There are also good representative saltwater collections from the Atlantic, Gulf Coast, Pacific, Puerto Rico, Guam and Thailand. There is no exhibition area."

Even the newest buildings on campus are feeling the strain from lack of space. The new Geology building, built in 1965, holds some 50,000 catalogued rocks, minerals and fossils. Storage space consists of one large room in the basement and corners of laboratories and offices. Limited display is possible only in wall cases located along basement and first floor corridors.

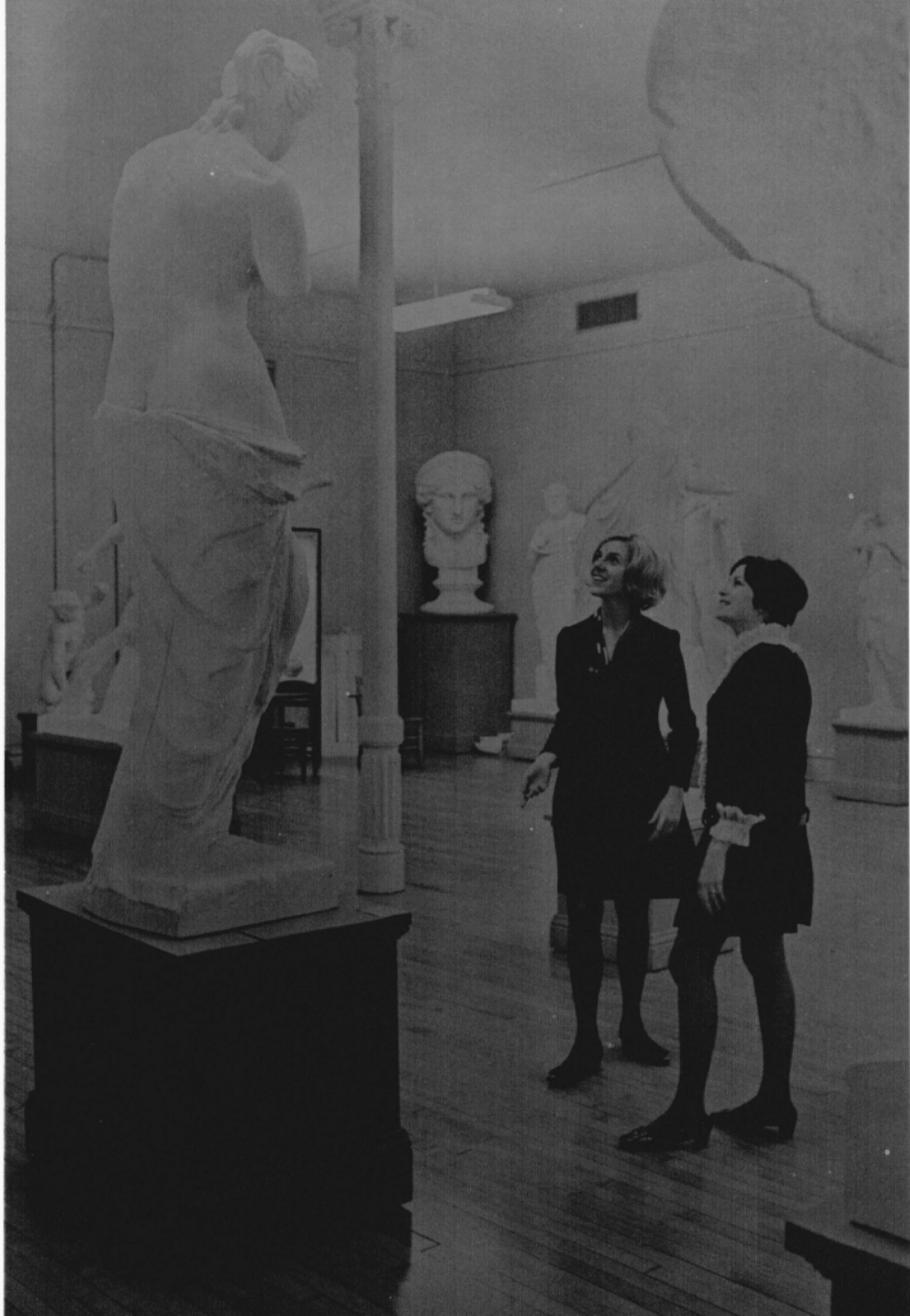
"In effect, we have no significant display space when the size of the collection is considered," Dr. Raymond L. Ethington, geology professor, says.

Often, when extremely small exhibit areas do exist, they are in out-of-the-way places, unavailable and unknown to the general public and students.

What is being done to correct the present problem, considering that these collections will likely double within the next 10 years? Very little.

"A museum has never been considered top priority," Weinberg explains. A committee to consider the construction of a museum has existed for nine years but response from the administration, the legislature, alumni and friends has been negligible.

Most plans for new buildings include areas



for display, research and storage. But when budget cuts must be made these are the first to go. Even buildings with initial space for museums are usually overcrowded in a year or two and the museum-research laboratory is turned into offices or new classrooms.

To combat these developments, 10 departments within the Colleges of Agriculture and Arts and Science and the School of Medicine last year put out a 54-page comprehensive report outlining the urgency for a museum building and what such a museum might look like and cost.

The envisioned building to be placed possibly a block south of the College of Education would be five stories in addition to a basement. Its dimensions would be 70 feet wide by 200 feet long. The first floor largely would be used for museum preparation and display. There would most likely be a planetarium-auditorium for films and lectures that could seat 300 students or the general public. Dioramas in many instances would integrate the materials from several departments.

"For example, a tropical jungle diorama would have a painting of an African village in one corner with primitive agriculture as distant landscape," Dr. David B. Dunn, associate professor of Botany suggests. Dunn is the current chairman of the museum committee. "Figures in the foreground would be used to depict tribal activities. A taped 15-minute discussion would be available by pressing a button." The tape would describe the types of dwellings, cultural development, agricultural practices and crops of that depicted tribe.

"The portion of the same diorama showing jungle lianas and vegetation layering," Dunn continues, "would have both stuffed animals, reptiles and birds among the plants."

On the other floors, combinations of research laboratories, work areas and storage would be available. Thus the University could combine in one building museum and research facilities in a way that no other university previously has done. Estimated total cost—\$7 million.

Each department has submitted space, furniture and equipment needs. Some of the necessary equipment mentioned are darkrooms for film developing, computer terminals, a courtyard which would lend itself to certain kinds of ex-

perimentation not feasible on a finished building floor, storage rooms equipped with humidifiers and proper light and temperature controls, and X-ray rooms. Adequate research facilities are of ultimate importance to all departments. Laboratories would be large enough and sufficiently well equipped to permit advanced scientific research as well as student participation in research.

"Perhaps one of the greatest justifications for the projected museum is the revitalization of museum research which would result," Dr. Wilbur Enns, professor of entomology, says. "Such research has languished in recent years. The University of Missouri-Columbia has not been making its fair share of contributions."

How can Missouri do its fair share? One staff member recently did a laboratory study of the growth of fishes. The only space available for his experimentation was over the bathtub in the men's room of Stephens Hall.

Weinberg says: "We ought to be teaching conservation of art and have museum training programs. But how can we? There isn't an inch left to even turn around in." He shares an office with several other people, including student assistants. "When I'm not here someone else is using my desk."

But if crying for laboratories and display areas and pleading the need for the University to advance its research and teaching programs isn't enough, some suggest that the hundreds of school children that visit the campus each year should be considered. The University has a responsibility to make education exciting for them.

"There are hundreds of school children of all ages who come every year to visit our museum and must surely be disappointed to see almost nothing on display," Enns says. "Entomology touches almost every other art and science and has done so from time immemorial. Egyptian scarabs; present day food habits of primitive people; beautiful designs in costume jewelry and textiles; gorgeous butterflies, moths and beetles; living colonies of social insects—these are only a few examples of what the public should be aware of and appreciate."

Youngsters also enjoy a full-scale replica of a prehistoric Indian thatched roof pole house



An Indian bronze figure of the elephant god Ganesha is shown at upper left. Above, Patricia Robbins, research assistant in the Museum of Anthropology, is pictured with African items. Left, two grade schoolers see wood sculptures of Saints Constantine and Helen in the Museum of Art and Archaeology. Below is a head from the collection of full size plaster casts of Greek and Roman sculpture. At right is a wooden mask from New Guinea.





occupied about 700 years ago in Butler County, Mo. which has been erected as one of the exhibits in the Museum of Anthropology. Located in Room 100 of ancient Swallow Hall, this museum contains displays relating to the archaeology and ethnology of the American Indian and the Old World Paleolithic era. Most of the Indian exhibits are from pre-historic Indians in Missouri, but there is also an exhibit of Eskimo culture and some African items.

For many children a trip to see the University's varied collections marks the first time they've been exposed to real art and history. Kansas City and St. Louis hold the state's only museums of real size or importance.

"Maybe you did not know it," begins a letter from a Columbia second grader who visited the art galleries in the library last April, "but seeing the pottery and other things was almost the best birthday present I ever had. Thank you for letting us come."

Another girl was apparently inspired so much that she decided: "When I grow up I am going

to be an artist." A boy asked, "Are you going to invite me again?" While still another wrote: "My mother would have come if mothers could."

Is the dream for a museum impossible? Weinberg doesn't think so. "I think it's an achievable goal as soon as someone in a high enough position feels the need is great enough and the alumni organization for one year makes this its top priority."

The problem of course is money. Who will or who can finance a \$7 million venture? The museum committee hopes that \$2.5 million will come from state funds, matched with a similar amount from the National Science Foundation and other federal agencies. The remaining \$2 million would come from private donations.

In the meantime, the museum committee is hoping to inaugurate a museum contribution series which would include research articles from all departments. Dunn says the need is urgent here. He explains that in four areas alone there are 17 monographic size works lying idle doing nothing for the researcher or the University.



Ranging in age from 1000 BC to the time of Christ, these art objects include, left to right, an Etruscan tripod, an Alexandrian lion, a Roman knocker (in front), a late Hellenistic statue, a Chinese kuei.

"This item alone cannot win eminence, but it will be a major step in that direction," he says.

Between now and 1971, the earliest possible date a museum could be completed, the departments will go on as best they can. But, just "going on" will be painful. Art and Archaeology recently lost the James Michener collection of 300 paintings. Author Michener had wanted the Columbia campus to have the \$2 million collection complete with a \$1 million endowment for preservation. But because of lack of space the collection is going to the University of Texas.

"There is no room to take any more gifts," Weinberg says. "We worked hard to collect pieces and unless some action is taken very soon, we're at the point where the whole operation will die." In 1957 the art and archaeology collections were begun. Last year Weinberg estimates gifts worth \$200,000 were donated. "If we don't take any more gifts, people will get in the habit of giving to someone else."

In most instances, even the staff responsible for the collections is not able to use them for

research. In even fewer instances are collections available to undergraduate students or the general public.

"Such hoarding of valuable research and study collections is expensive and inefficient," Dr. Carl Chapman, former chairman of the committee and director of archaeological research activities, says. "A reasonable laboratory-museum facility would actually be a savings as well as a means to upgrade the University as a research and teaching institution. Furthermore, it would increase its stature in the state as a forerunner of continuing education for the citizens of Missouri." He finishes, asking: "Can we possibly consider ourselves in the province of excellence without a laboratory-museum?" □

Barbara Johnson, BJ '67, is a former assistant editor of the Alumnus, resigning in the fall of 1968 to continue work on her master's. Both she and her husband spent the fall semester in Brussels, Belgium, working in the Journalism School's Common Market reporting program.