



13. medzinárodné Erbe sympóziu
13th International Symposium/13. "Erbe" - Symposium
15. - 20. júna 2015, Banská Štiavnica, Slovensko
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The rise and the fall of an important collection of the University of Vienna (from 1862 until today)

“Aufstieg und Niedergang von einer bedeutenden Sammlung in der Wiener Universität (von 1862 bis heute)”.

“Vzostup a pád významnej zbierky Viedenskej univerzity (od 1862 dodnes)”.

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Abstract

It is not only in the realm of scientific research that the instruments employed, even before their functional life has expired, are replaced by newly available ones, thanks to rapid and continued development. Continued use of discarded yet still functional apparatuses elsewhere would be desirable, but the search for a potential follow-up user is usually too troublesome and thus does not happen. Material used for teaching purposes, such as the study collections commonly employed in the Earth Science disciplines, are not exempt from this process. Due to changes in course content, along with the disappearance or the dramatic reduction of the teaching of the basic tenets of regional geology and stratigraphy, the educational collections assembled for this purpose are increasingly being marginalized, and consequently their survival is seriously threatened, despite their considerable material and educational value. This process of gradual reduction of a collection and its continuous adaptation to changing demands, up to the point of it becoming redundant, with all the resulting consequences, can be very clearly demonstrated by the history of the stratigraphic and regional geologic educational collections of the Geological Institute of the University of Vienna. The guidelines for a "Collection Strategy and Organization", enacted in the University of Vienna on 1 March 2013, are a first attempt to resolve this issue and to protect endangered cultural material.

The educational collections of the Geological Institute of the University of Vienna, essential for regular teaching as well as for comparative research purposes, are also very significant because, as can be demonstrated by the inventory records, they were almost single-handedly put together by Eduard Suess (1831 - 1914). Following his retirement the further expansion of the collection came to what amounted to a complete stop.

*Kultúrne dedičstvo v geológii, baníctve a hutníctve
Knížnice - archívy - múzeá
Cultural Heritage in Geosciences, Mining and Metallurgy
Libraries - Archives - Museums*



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When Eduard Suess was named **Extraordinarius** Professor of Geology in 1862, the establishment of an educational collection for this newly-created institute, which initially bore the name of "Geologic Museum", was one of his most important tasks. Thanks to his previous activity at the *Hof-Naturalien-Cabinett* (the Imperial Court Natural Science Collection, the predecessor of the Vienna Natural History Museum), he had all the necessary familiarity with such work. He obviously had a clear concept for the multi-phase assembly of the collection. Initially a modest basic assemblage was created thanks to duplicates from existing public collections; in the following years, with the knowledge that the institute would be housed in the planned new palace-like building along Vienna's Ring, and with an increased purchasing budget, the collection was considerably expanded. Following the 1884-1885 move of the institute to the new building, the collection, now grown to significant size, was housed in four large halls. It had now reached the zenith of its importance. The beginning fall of the collection in 1902, initiated by a cessation of further acquisitions, is an indication of a lessening of its use. In 1944 the collection suffered severe losses from bombs. However, by far the worst damage to the formerly famous collection was caused by two moves of the institute. In its present location, the UZA II, Althanstrasse 14, 1090 Vienna, where it is currently stored in dark cellars, it has presumably reached the nadir of its fortunes. It is to be hoped that the new regulations will at least protect its contents.

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