

**museo + UCR**

**UNIVERSITY OF COSTA RICA  
INSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE FOR COLLECTIONS**

**ESTABLISHMENT PROJECT**

**MUSEUM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF COSTA RICA  
(museo + UCR)**

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## **I. Introduction**

Many generations of university community members have cherished the idea of creating a museum. For several reasons, this idea started to take shape in 2005 with the resolution R-286-2005 issued by the current Rector of the University of Costa Rica (UCR), Dr. Yamileth González-García<sup>1</sup>. This was the result of the serious, responsible and reflective work undertaken by the Institutional Committee for Collections (Comisión Institucional de Colecciones), reinstated by Dr. González during her former position as Vice Rector for Research.

The Institutional Committee for Collections, together with academic authorities, researchers, students, curators and persons in charge of the collections have been building this dream with the development and establishment of a great amount of collections, which at present are more than fifty. These collections are distributed among different academic units, research centers and institutes, museums, laboratories, biological reserves, experimental farms and stations, libraries and archives.

As an academic project, the Museum of the University of Costa Rica is not a capricious idea; on the contrary, it is the result of serious pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, as well as surveys on the creation of a university museum. UCR has undertaken the task of establishing precise policies regarding the preservation of collections belonging to the university along with actions and decisions that have generated adequate forms of managing, recording and exhibiting this valuable institutional and national heritage.

The institutional interest is aimed at promoting an integral, interactive museum rich in knowledge, but –above all– the main objective is to promote a political project built on the common good, respect for individual differences and nature, that promotes tolerance, that informs and forms, where visitors experience

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution 286-2006 by the Rector's Office. In: *Gaceta Universitaria*. I-2005, año XXIX. January 14, 2005. Pp. 17-19.

a welcoming and motivating museographical environment that enables them to participate in the country's and region's socio-cultural history and educational processes; a museum that will raise awareness of the need to safeguard our planet; that is, to watch over our own existence and that of other beings who share the planet with us.

The efforts to create a university museum are a response from the University to the trust that the Costa Rican society has put in it to take care and preserve part of its cultural, natural, tangible and intangible heritage, much of which has been generated through teaching, research and extension. As an ethical and academic principle, the UCR is responsible for protecting, preserving and using the collections that have been entrusted to the institution in a responsible way, which are for the benefit of both the university community and the country.

The establishment of the Museum of the University of Costa Rica draws together the endeavors and concepts of different people, entities, curators, officers in charge of the collections and the Institutional Committee for Collections.

## **2. The First Museums**

If we ask ourselves: what came first, the museums or the collections? Undoubtedly, the answer goes to the collections. Before museums existed, *homo sapiens* already collected objects: they collected trophies from wars and accumulated working tools. Collecting originates as a spontaneous and cultural action; it was our recent ancestors' first step in the process of creating museums. In addition, museums are a cultural product being a predetermined action. Their main objective is to preserve and recreate the culture and memory of the people.

The word *museum* (“museum” in Latin; “mouseion” in Greek) has had different meanings over the centuries. During the Classical Age, it referred to the temple of the nine young goddesses known as the Muses, Daughters of Zeus and guardians of the epic, music, love, poetry, oratory, history, tragedy, comedy, dance and astronomy.<sup>2</sup>

The only known museum from ancient times is the Library at Alexandria, created by Ptolemy II in the year 285 B.C. This was the meeting place of poets, artists and wise men. It was divided into several spaces: meeting rooms, observatory, laboratory, zoological and botanic gardens and a library containing more than 700,000 manuscript volumes. Because of its multidisciplinary character, it functioned more as a university than as a museum. Its importance lies in that it was a place for discussion and for the generation of knowledge; in other words, it was a meditation centre. This library was destroyed 600 years after its inauguration.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of the Roman culture, the chronicles and recent studies do not refer to any place or year concerning the creation of museums as places where objects were collected and exhibited. However, the word *museum* meant a particular villa where philosophical meetings took place. The villas recreated artistic

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<sup>2</sup> Edson, Gary; Dean, David. *The Handbook for Museums*. London: Routledge, 1996, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Loc. cit.

landscapes with gardens, buildings and sculptures. In fact, these places were open-air museums.<sup>4</sup>

In the Middle Ages, there is no information on museums as large as the Library at Alexandria. The sciences and the arts, as well as the knowledge-generating centers were in the hands of the Catholic Church. During this Christ-centered period, knowledge was screened and censored by both the ecclesiastical and monastic authorities. Historical studies fail to reveal the existence of museums during that era, but collecting took place and there were collections. Rich and important people, such as the governors, collected treasures to show them to their close friends and relatives. Many of these treasures were trophies from wars and invasions that were later displayed in galleries and museums.

The Renaissance constitutes an essential period for collecting, and afterwards, for museums. This productive era seeks and considers that the human being is the center of knowledge; by virtue of this concept, the arts and sciences must be a part of humanity, without religious ties. In this way, future museums respond to the ideal of presenting in their exhibition rooms what men and women produce and recreate, and even include things obtained in other lands.

Museums as we know them today start to appear in modern times. The first university museum was created at Basle<sup>5</sup> in 1671, and in 1683, the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford opened its doors and became the first university museum to be organized as a public institution.<sup>6</sup> Emphasis was placed on collecting and exhibiting natural history specimens and curiosities that awoke the interest of privileged visitors.

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<sup>4</sup> Hernández Hernández, Francisca. *Manual de Museología*. España: Editorial Síntesis. 1998, p.15.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander, Edgard P. *Museums in Motion. An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. American Association for State and Local History. 1996, p.8.

<sup>6</sup> Hernández Hernández, Francisca, op. cit, p. 21.

The Louvre Museum, created in 1773, became the first national public museum<sup>7</sup> and a direct product of the French Revolution and of contemporary times. This museum, like others created in Europe, tended to consolidate the State and to present a vision and history of the new groups wielding the power. Museums, however, were not totally open to the public as visitors needed a previous appointment and ability to read was also a requirement.

As an institution, the museum is an invention of the Old World brought to America by travelers and scientists. Neither the chronicles of conquistadors and scribes nor native legends describe the existence of museums in the American continent. The first institution with museum characteristics was the *Library Society of Charleston*, established in 1773 in the United States. Other museums in the continent founded during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century were: Science Museum at Rio de Janeiro (1818), the National Museum of Colombia (1823), the Museum of Antiquities and Natural History of México (1823) National Museum of Natural History of Chile (1830), the Smithsonian Institution in the United States (1846), the Emilio Goeldi Museum in Para, Brazil (1871) and the National Museum of Costa Rica (1887).<sup>8</sup>

The creation of these museums in America and others around the planet is important because they pass from being private to public museums. Many were established or taken on by the governments, which demonstrated that they were interested in conveying a central message, an ideology and a language to their fellow countrymen. Therefore, museums represented part of a state structure intended to consolidate support provided to the groups that exercised power.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a greater development of natural and social sciences, particularly anthropology, archeology and history lead to the development of museums and to their professionalization, as well as to the development of

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<sup>7</sup> Burcaw, G. Ellis. *Introduction to Museum Work*. American Association for State and Local History. 1997, p.27.

<sup>8</sup> Barboza Retana, Félix A. *Museums in Latin American Countries: Role, Issues and Perspectives*. Lubbock, Texas: A Master's Thesis in Museum Science. Texas Tech University. Texas, 1995.

museology. New knowledge allowed the application of conservation methods and exhibition of collections, in addition to the collections' systematization and cataloguing. The creation of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1947 permits the establishment of collaboration among the community of museums, including university museums.

### 3. The New Museological Concepts

An essential part of the museums' professionalization process has been the establishment of statutes, policies on collections, ethical codes and procedures. A cardinal aspect of museums is their orientation toward informal education that links them with the communities. This type of education informs the communities that museums preserve, investigate and exhibit.

A crucial moment in the history and development of museums, particularly in Latin American museums, was the seminar on **“The Role of Museums in Today's Latin América”**, organized in Santiago, Chile in 1972. Known as “the round table of Santiago”, the seminar included a discussion on the role of museums as cultural, educational and scientific entities, and the concern for financial and social aspects.<sup>9</sup> The most significant contribution of the seminar was the concept of integral museum or integrated museum:

*“...present that museums in Latin America are not adapted to the problems raised by its development and that they should endeavor to fulfill their social mission, which is to enable man to identify with its natural and human environment in all its aspects. The museum is not only concerned with the heritage of the past, it is also concerned with development.”<sup>10</sup>*

According to this concept, the ICOM has developed a definition for museums that adapts to the present time and includes every type of organization that guards and exhibits the popular memory, such as archives, libraries, cultural

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<sup>9</sup> Museum: “Basic principles of the integral museum”. En: *Museum*. France

<sup>10</sup> Museum: “Basic principles of the integral museum”. En: *Museum*. France, 25/3 (1973) p. 127.



centers, planetariums, zoos, archaeological sites, monuments, herbariums, aquariums, national parks and museums.

The contemporary definition of museums made up by ICOM states:

*“A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment...” (ICOM, 2004)<sup>11</sup>*

The social and cultural responsibility of museums, therefore, is essential. While they act in the present, they also deal with aspects of the past and reflect on the future. Museums are a product of human beings, and as such, present mankind’s material and spiritual actions and the surrounding environment. This definition articulates the concept of integral museum as an entity committed to society and its development and which cannot grow apart from the social and cultural means in which it was created.

#### **4. Museums and Collections in Universities**

University museums fit perfectly with ICOM’s definition. Par excellence, university museums are a means towards research, teaching and extension. They are and should be the forefront in the generation and socialization of knowledge. They are a means through which the university communicates with its community and with society. In a university museum, faculty members, researchers and students find a place to practice, teach, research and set out developments and findings.

The university, born in the Middle Ages, as we know it, is an invention of the West for the advance of knowledge. From the beginning, universities have collected and grouped collections with teaching and research purposes. They have accumulated since “...over the last nine centuries, a considerable heritage, both

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<sup>11</sup> ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums. *Approved by the 22<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the ICOM (Seoul, South Korea, 2004).*

tangible (historic buildings, museums and collections) and intangible.”<sup>12</sup> The collections in these higher education institutions preceded the university museums.<sup>13</sup>

Countless objects were and have been collected by scholars and scientists with the purpose of using them in their classes and experiments. Through the years, it became necessary to organize, systematize and classify these objects into categories, and this gave rise to the collections. As collections grew, they needed to be accommodated in an appropriate space, which gave way to either thematic or interdisciplinary museums. Collections were provided with an ideal space for their conservation and exhibition. This space was also necessary for researchers, faculty and students, in order to study and value the accumulated objects. Museums were and continue to play a fundamental role in universities. They show society the generated progress and knowledge. They are a means to maintain and consolidate the public’s support.

Museums in universities have a number of characteristics that make them unique. Some of these are:

- 1) The public that visits them is diverse, made up by local and foreign researchers, faculty, students, groups from elementary and secondary schools, communities, enterprises, groups from other museums and universities.
- 2) Their collections are very diverse, reflecting the different fields taught at the universities. In addition to their historical and cultural value, the collections are used in teaching, research and extension (exhibitions, formal and non-formal educational activities) among others.

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<sup>12</sup> Boylan, Patrick J. “European Cooperation in the Protection and Promotion of the University Heritage” En: *Cuadernos de Estudios*. No. 11. Consejo Internacional de Museos. París. 2003, p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> De Clercc, Steven W.G., and Lourenço. “A Globe is just another Tool: Understanding the Role of Objects in University Collections”. En: *Cuadernos de Estudios*. No. 11. Consejo Internacional de Museos. París. 2003, p. 4.

- 3) They have a commitment to society and to those taxpayers and contributors that support universities through taxes, donations and other contributions.
- 4) Their character as integral museums can be observed in the universities' concern to promote the transformations that society needs and to improve people's quality of life.
- 5) Museums are a means for universities to communicate with the country and with all of the sectors of the population, regardless of gender, origins, ethnic group, ideology, religion or socio-economic status.
- 6) University museums, as part of their parent institutions, represent the latest advances in the arts, sciences, technology and humanities.

With regard to the collections, these are an essential part of museums. Although the idea of having museums without objects or virtual museums is being discussed at present, university museums are par excellence repositories of diverse collections. The importance of these collections lies in their properties, some of which are the following:

- 1) Collections held in universities express the work and effort of their faculty, researchers and students, who have collected objects that show the country's or region's natural, social and cultural history.
- 2) They are used to perform comparative and reference studies in both natural and social sciences.
- 3) They show part of the biodiversity, as well as the products of society's tangible and intangible culture.
- 4) Because of their interdisciplinary nature, collections reflect the institution's humanistic and universal spirit. Collections not only represent the geographical location of the university and the museum, but also other zones and regions of that particular country and of other countries.

- 5) The collections' diversity allows and strengthens interdisciplinary studies; moreover, collections of the same type can be studied from different fields of knowledge, offering different results.

All museums are responsible for the collection's care and that includes university museums. According to the American Association of Museums (AAM), *"As repositories of our national heritage, museums are responsible for preserving and maintaining the collections and capture and transmitting knowledge about them"*.<sup>14</sup>

The availability of the collections for teaching, research and extension is a pressing responsibility of these museums. Due to the importance and presence of university museums and collections, the ICOM International Committee on Museums and Collections – UMAC - was created.

This Committee

*"...is a forum for all those working in, or associated with, academic museums, galleries and collections (including herbaria and botanical gardens). The aim is to protect the heritage in the care of universities. It is concerned with the role of collections within higher education institutions and the communities they serve."*<sup>15</sup>

UMAC is an important step in the collaboration among university museums. Universities and their museums cannot continue to be isolated; many experiences need to be communicated, knowledge needs to be shared, assignments and resources must also be shared and allocated.

In the case of the University of Costa Rica, according to the Organic Statute, its purpose is *"...to promote the transformations required by society to achieve the common good, through a policy aimed at the attainment of true social justice, integral development, complete freedom and the total independence of our people"*.<sup>16</sup> As part of

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<sup>14</sup> American Association of Museums. *Caring for Collections. Strategies for Conservation, Maintenance and Documentation*. 1984.

<sup>15</sup> Consejo Internacional de Museos. *Cuadernos de Estudios*. N° 11. contraportada.

<sup>16</sup> Universidad de Costa Rica. *Estatuto Orgánico*. Artículo 3. 2001.

this noble purpose, the Museum of the University of Costa Rica is able to fully comply with the statements established in its mission:

*“The Museum of the University of Costa Rica (**museo+UCR**) is a permanent, non-profit institution in the service of society and its development, open to its community and to the general public, that acquires, preserves, researches, disseminates and exhibits mankind’s natural and cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, particularly from the Central American region, with educational and enjoyment purposes. Its mission is to support the University of Costa Rica in its three fundamental functions: teaching, research and social action, in addition to studying, reflecting, artistic creation and the dissemination of knowledge.”*

The definition of museum provided by ICOM is in keeping with this mission.

The vision of **museo+UCR** is the following: “Become a model university museum nationwide and in the Central American region.”

## **5. Justification of the Museum of the University of Costa Rica**

Most collections at the University of Costa Rica are the result of scientific and artistic activities. Throughout its history, the institution has created specialized groups in charge of collecting, documenting, preserving, researching, exhibiting and popularizing the collections. One of the oldest collections is on fine arts, created in 1897, and the other one is the University of Costa Rica Herbarium (named after Dr. Luis A. Fournier Origg), founded in 1931 at the former “Centro Nacional de Agricultura”. Nowadays, there are 50 collections in a wide variety of fields, such as agronomy, geology, arts, biology, archaeology and microbiology.

In regards to natural history museums and collections, to point out several examples, the *Herbarium* has gathered approximately 100,000 samples; the *Museum of Zoology* has a collection of over 500,000 specimens; the *Museum of Insects* has collected one million specimens; the *Lankester Botanical Garden* stands out for its collection of orchids, palms, bromeliads, cacti, heliconias, succulents and bamboos;

and the *Archaeology Laboratory*, by law, protects national heritage from more than 500 archaeological sites.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, UCR has the *Regional Museum of San Ramón* (located at the Western Regional Campus), the “*Omar Salazar Obando*” *Regional Museum* (located at the Atlantic Regional Campus), the collections of the *Ethnology Laboratory*, and the Fine Arts collections, to mention a few.

All of these museums, groups and collections are part of the institution’s infrastructure for the benefit of the university community and particularly for the public. The large amount of artifacts and specimens under its custody constitute a clear representation of the country’s cultural and natural heritage.

In observing the University’s work holistically, the possession of collections does not respond to the old concept of collecting-antiquarianism; on the contrary, there is an interest in continuing the humanization and knowledge processes. If we have the knowledge, we will become aware; if we become aware, we will diagnose needs, limitations and achievements. In this way, we will be taking the road to transformation and re-creation.

To preserve and develop university collections means to strengthen the historical memory, to contribute towards the definition of the identity, of their formation processes, and above all, it signifies the great opportunity to transform society through the experience accumulated over the years and millennia, and determine exactly what we want to build for the future.

Another essential aspect regarding the preservation of the collections of the University of Costa Rica deals with the academic and professional formation of students and faculty. The collections are an excellent tool to integrate teaching, research and extension. The University of Costa Rica, as a public higher education institution, has the enormous and gratifying task of educating conscious human beings, committed to their society. The collections are an ideal means for future

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<sup>17</sup> Tomado del proyecto "Taller de museología: registro y catalogación de colecciones" UCR. 2000.

professionals to learn, train themselves and decide to continue preserving the natural and socio-cultural heritage left to us, which at the same time -and in the way of a post office- must be passed on to the future generations.

All public higher education institutions should be clearly committed to the preservation of their natural and socio-cultural collections, which are concrete manifestations of a complex, long and diverse human task. This should continue being possible if we take care today of yesterday's legacy and watch out tomorrow for what we have today. In this way, we will help preserve our history and our planet. However, the lack of knowledge, identification and linkage of the university community and society in general concerning the collections' functions is quite evident: an incipient organizational structure that limits the integration of the collections, the lack of an institutional policy and regulations to preserve them and limited spaces to store the collections, and therefore, to adequately preserve them.

Another limitation has been the collections' fragmentation due to the lack of a sense of group and a physical space meeting the necessary conditions to accommodate them. These aspects would be solved by the creation of the Museum of the University of Costa Rica (**museo+UCR**). In addition, the Museum of the University of Costa Rica would have the advantage of grouping most collections, providing orientation and support to their museums.

Although **museo+UCR** will be a non-profit institution, it will bring great benefits to the University's image as an advanced institution in the preservation of the cultural and natural heritage. On the other hand, **museo+UCR** will be a means to support the three pillars of the UCR: teaching, research and social action. Thus, it will be in accord with the principles established by the following:

“The purpose of the University of Costa Rica is to obtain the transformations that the society needs for its well-being, through a policy of

pursuing true social justice, the integral development, full freedom, and total independence of our people.”<sup>18</sup>

The Museum of the University of Costa Rica will be one more way to promote society’s integral development. The **museo+UCR** will function as a means to transmit knowledge to the community on its history and current situation. In other words, it will contribute to the country’s social and cultural development.

The **museo+UCR** would be of great interest to the university and national community. In a survey, *Analysis of the interest and expectations of the national community with regard to a possible university museum*, prepared by Marco Fournier, M.Sc., of the “Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales” (Institute for Social Research) in 2003<sup>19</sup>, most people interviewed regard its creation in a positive manner. In addition, 82.6% considers that museums are very instructional. In brief, there is a favorable climate toward the creation of a museum, which adds to the University of Costa Rica’s prestige among the Costa Rican population. Undoubtedly, **museo+UCR** will contribute to affirm this prestige.

Among the approximately 50 museums that exist in the country (some are open and others have closed), none has the characteristics of a university museum; that is, they do not include different areas of knowledge. Perhaps the one with the largest variety –that is not a university museum– is the National Museum of Costa Rica, with natural history, anthropology, history, art and heritage departments. Most museums in Costa Rica are specialized or have a regional character. Even the four UCR museums (Regional Museum of San Ramón, “Omar Salazar Obando” Regional Museum, the Museum of Insects and the Museum of Zoology) do not represent the entire range of disciplines taught at the institution. However, these

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<sup>18</sup> *Estatuto Orgánico*, Universidad de Costa Rica. Título I, Artículo 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Análisis del interés y de las expectativas de la comunidad nacional hacia un posible museo universitario*. Final report prepared by “Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales” (Institute for Social Research), University of Costa Rica. November, 2003.



museums carry out the three main tasks of the University of Costa Rica: teaching, research and extension.

On the other hand, there is no database or diagnosis indicating the amount or percentage of collections under the custody of each of the 50 museums. The museums with the largest amount of collections (including the museums and collections at UCR) are: the National Museum of Costa Rica, the Museums of the Central Bank of Costa Rica, the Jade Museum, the Costa Rican Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, and the private museums at Colegio La Salle and Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad – INBio (National Institute of Biodiversity). It is possible that if we sum up the collections of these institutions and compare them with the collections at the University of Costa Rica, we would realize the enormous cultural and natural heritage that the UCR has under its custody and responsibility. The fact that our institution has over 50 collections is simple but revealing information. We assume that the amount of objects and specimens under our care represent a high percentage within the entirety of natural and cultural collections in the country.

Let's look at an example abroad. In the United Kingdom, there are nearly 10,000 museums, of which 400 are university museums and collections. Those museums and collections are responsible for approximately 30% of the total amount of collections in the entire British territory.<sup>20</sup> This percentage represents a great responsibility for the British museums. We can say that the same occurs with the University of Costa Rica: a considerable natural and cultural heritage is under the institution's academic and ethic responsibility. This alone fully justifies the creation of the **museo+UCR**.

Another advantage of **museo+UCR** will be the creation of a Master's program in Museology and Heritage. The program will represent an excellent

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<sup>20</sup> University Museums UK Group 2004.(2004). *University Museums in the United Kingdom. A National Resource for the 21<sup>st</sup>. Century*. Westminster April 2004.

academic opportunity for curators and people in charge of protecting our collections. It will also be open to people who wish to obtain a degree in museology regardless of whether they work at a museum or similar institutions or not.

The master's program involves strategic alliances or partnerships with other universities, such as the University of Zaragoza and the Museum of Texas Tech University (MoTTU). There already is an agreement with the first university and with MoTTU, several initiatives have been carried out: reciprocal visits from representatives of MoTTU and UCR, as well as the organization of museology workshops delivered to UCR staff.

Another possibility under consideration that would be reinforced by museo+UCR is the start of a plan of studies in conservation and restoration. This would be a significant contribution of the University of Costa Rica to the preservation of the country's natural and cultural heritage.

In the Central American region, the University of Costa Rica and the University of San Carlos in Guatemala are the only public higher education institutions with museums.<sup>21</sup> The latter institution has the Museum of the University of San Carlos (MUSAC, as abbreviated in Spanish), the Casa Flavio Herrera Museum that is part of the "Dirección General de Extensión", and the Natural History Museum of "Facultad de Ciencias Químicas y Farmacia" (College of Chemistry and Pharmacy)<sup>22</sup>.

The MUSAC, according to information provided by its Director, Gladys Barrios, was created by a decree in 1980 and was officially inaugurated on June 21, 1994.

MUSAC's mission is the following:

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<sup>21</sup> Instituto Latinoamericano de Museología –ILAM. <http://www.ilam.org/gt/gt.html>, August 10, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Information provided by Gladys Barrios Ambrocy, Director, Museo de la Universidad de San Carlos on June 21st, 2006 by e-mail. [MUSAC <musac@inteln.net.gt>](mailto:musac@inteln.net.gt)

*“We are a service institution that contributes to the dissemination of culture and scientific knowledge; a dynamic means of providing education through permanent, temporary and itinerant exhibitions, as well as multidisciplinary academic and cultural activities that strengthen the community’s bonds of identity, brotherhood, solidarity and respect for nature. It preserves past and present material goods and commits to preserving these goods for the future generations.”<sup>23</sup>*

Another university museum that belongs to a private higher education institution is the University Museum of Anthropology (MUA as abbreviated in Spanish) of Universidad Tecnológica de El Salvador (also known as “La Gran Universidad de El Salvador”). MUA, inaugurated in June, 2006, “...is dedicated to research, preserve and disseminate the culture through which local and global elements, as well as national and foreign, old and new, past and present elements converge.”<sup>24</sup> The museum is located in an old building commonly known as “La Casa Ávila”.

The above-mentioned cases of MUSAC and MUA are examples of the importance that these institutions provide to museums. The University of Costa Rica also considers that its museums and collections are very important; therefore, it is considering the idea of creating a university museum in keeping with the standards pointed out in section 4 of this document.

The **museo+UCR** will be a meeting point for scientists, scholars, curators and faculty of the Central American region; likewise, the university community and general public, including the Central American population, will have access to the public programs (exhibitions, educational activities, workshops and lectures), to the collections for research purposes, to the classrooms and other spaces dedicated to teaching activities.

To summarize, museo+UCR will also be a Central American museum to the advantage of all university students of the region, and will share the mission of the

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<sup>23</sup> Document facilitated by Gladys Barrios Ambrocy, Director, Museo de la Universidad de San Carlos, on June 21st, 2006 by e-mail. MUSAC <musac@intelnet.net.gt>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.utec.edu.sv/website/museo/museo.htm> 23/08/2006.

“Confederación Universitaria Centroamericana” (Central American University Confederation):

*“The Central American University Confederation is the organization that integrates the Central American public university system and promotes the development of the universities through cooperation and joint work with society and the government in order to address regional problems in an integral manner and to propose solutions in the framework of commitment, solidarity, tolerance, transparency and equality. In addition, it promotes the development of scientific, technological and humanistic knowledge and its application in the formation of professionals capable of making decisions and having an impact on the region’s sustainable development.”<sup>25</sup>*

## **6. Concept of the Museum of the University of Costa Rica**

The proposed museum project is based on the fact that it will be a university museum; that is, it will be a part of the academic task of a public higher education institution. Conceptually speaking, we establish the need to exceed the traditional concept of museum, which is a place that only stores, preserves and exhibits hereditary objects, whether these be natural or a product of human action. On the contrary, museums must be aware of the new museological, humanistic and heritage reality, capable of generating a close informative and communicative relationship with the community.

The Museum of the University of Costa Rica will be known as a convergence center for the research developed by the institution in different areas of knowledge; teaching as an academic and professional development activity; social extension as a dialectical relation with the community and cultural extension as an institution that is characterized by its diverse and universal nature, respectful of the individual realities.

The museum will be organized, lively and didactic, with data banks of incalculable value and will be used not only as a laboratory but also as an attractive, recreational place in the service of the community. The **museo+UCR** must

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.csuca.org/drupal/?q=node/95>

educate in socio-cultural and natural terms, reveal aspects that are part of our identity, promote a creative people's self-esteem, and it shall also inform and encourage an accurate awareness of our coexistence with nature, its conservation and something that we often forget: its meaning. It is worthwhile mentioning that the museum that we imagine will be a physical, cultural, ethical and natural space in which the collections will be taken as a means to learn both individually and collectively, which is an essential step to promote a future project.

According to Gary Edson, Executive Director of the Museum of Texas Tech University, "The aim of the University museum must be to reinforce the academic mission of the host institution and to endorse a code of practice that verifies a commitment to making a better future for humankind and the planet."<sup>26</sup> The **museo+UCR** will reinforce UCR's academic mission as well as the commitment stated by Mr. Edson.

In addition, the Museum of the University of Costa Rica shall promote "a cultural democracy" shared by the university community and local and foreign visitors; multidisciplinary action in view of the collections' different origins; raise awareness of who we are and who we will become as a cultural and natural community; an open and interactive system of which we will all be a part; finally, it will promote the discussion between individuals of diverse levels of education, disciplines and dissimilar ways of living. Last of all, the Museum of the University of Costa Rica must be able to interpret the ever-changing human reality.

The Resolution on the creation of the Museum of the University of Costa Rica and the declaration whereby the collections are declared of institutional interest aims at preserving and protecting this richness for future generations,

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<sup>26</sup> Edson, Gary F. "El Museo Universitario como elemento fundamental de la misión académica". Traducido por Joaquín Arroyo-Cabrales y Félix A. Barboza-Retana. In: *Gaceta de Museos* (INAH, México), N° 23-24 (julio-diciembre, 2001), pp. 7-11. Gary F. Edson es Director Ejecutivo del *Museum of Texas Tech University* y Director del *Center for Advanced Study of Museum Science & Heritage Management* y asesor *ad honorem* de la Comisión Institucional de Colecciones y del proyecto Museo de la Universidad de Costa Rica.

despite the administrative and political changes that could take place inside and outside the UCR and that could affect its development and permanence.

## **7. Educational Role of museo+UCR**

One of the primary responsibilities of museums is to educate. Museums, par excellence, are educational institutions.

A major concern at UCR has been to preserve its collections in the best possible way in order to carry out activities and programs that society can enjoy and learn at the same time. In this way, UCR would be complying with one of its principles, which is extension, particularly in the field of education.

One of the main tasks of **museo+UCR** is to diffuse the knowledge generated by its collections. For this purpose, it applies the informal education methodology; in other words, participatory, active and interactive. This type of education requires workshops, materials and tools and people who know how to educate and entertain visitors (in groups or families). The objective is to awaken the interest for knowledge, specifically, develop an awareness of the importance of preservation and respect for Costa Rican and humankind's heritage.

The educational activities carried out by **museo+UCR** will enhance the links between UCR and the community, educational institutions and the Ministry of Education (MEP, as abbreviated in Spanish). A strong articulation and coordination between elementary schools, high schools and curricular programs designed by the MEP will be required to reach this goal. Therefore, **museo+UCR** will have an Education Section to collaborate with and advise the academic units, botanical gardens, biological reserves, archives, libraries, regional museums, collections and other UCR departments.

The **museo+UCR** is defined as an entity open to the general public, which educates, preserves, researches and exhibits Costa Rica's natural and cultural heritage, as well as that of other countries or regions. In general terms, its public is

made up of the individual visitors and groups. The **museo+UCR** does not discriminate or use criteria based on an economic, social, political or religious status, or race, age, education, gender or origin to accept visitors. There is no discrimination in its educational and extension tasks either. The education programs and other activities will benefit any kind of public. For methodological reasons, the programs are designed according to age group, curricular objectives, grade, school or family group, visiting individuals or groups and special needs. In this way, the educational programs will adapt to the user's requirements.

## **8. Collections and Museums at UCR**

### **8.1. Collections at the main UCR campus (Rodrigo Facio Campus)**

The Museum will host most of the collections of the main campus (Ciudad Universitaria Rodrigo Facio).<sup>27</sup> The management, care and use of these collections will be shared with the academic units to which the collections belong. The academic units will appoint the curators or persons in charge of the collections, who will be responsible for making the collections available to the university community and the general public.

The project is based on the principle that the collections under the custody of the University of Costa Rica are the country's heritage, therefore, the Costa Rican Republic is responsible for their preservation. The state puts specialized institutions, such as the UCR, in charge of the collections; therefore, these are part of the national heritage.

### **8.2 Regional Museums**

The regional museums will continue having their autonomy and dynamics. The UCR regional campuses with collections will appoint their directors. In issues related to collections and museological policies, they will follow the guidelines

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<sup>27</sup> Appendix I includes the list of collections of the University of Costa Rica.

established by **museo+UCR**. They will benefit from the **museo+UCR**'s records, cataloging, training, exhibitions, preservation, education and any other initiative leading to the ideal management and preservation of their collections.

### **8.3. Experimental stations and farms, biological reserves, botanical gardens, laboratories, archives and libraries**

The experimental stations, biological reserves, botanical gardens, laboratories, archives and libraries are organizations associated with the Museum of the University of Costa Rica; however, they have their own autonomy and dynamics. Regarding the collections and museological policies, these organizations will abide by the guidelines established by **museo+UCR**. They will benefit from the **museo+UCR**'s records, cataloging, training, exhibitions, preservation, education and any other initiative leading to the ideal management and preservation of their collections.

## **9. Buildings of University Museums**

### **9.1. University Museums**

The designing of buildings that host museums has been an unusual practice in Costa Rica. Most experiences have been the adaptation of old buildings to transform them into museums. In the language of historic preservation, the coined term is **rehabilitation**.<sup>28</sup> The buildings that host the National Museum of Costa Rica, the Museum of Costa Rican Art, the Children's Museum and the National Cultural Center, to name a few examples, were refurbished to be used as museums.<sup>29</sup> The only exception to this is the building that hosts the Museums of the Central Bank of Costa Rica, designed and built expressly for this purpose.

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<sup>28</sup> Murtagh, William J. *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*. New York, U.S.A.: A Sterling/Main Street Book, 1988, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> The Juan Santamaría Cultural-Historic Museum is another case of refurbishment. It has recently annexed another building that is in the process of being refurbished to serve as museum.



Concerning university museums, this practice is nonexistent in the country. These are very complex: while fulfilling teaching, research and extension functions, they also host a great variety of collections. This characteristic, for example, generates peculiar storage conditions, according to each collection's needs (frozen specimens need a cold-storage room; the art collections require a particular kind of shelf and booth). The collections also need different temperatures and relative humidity. Two different collections cannot share the same space, and therefore, the same temperature.

A university museum presents a wide variety of topics in its temporary and permanent exhibition rooms. The university community and general public will visit the museum to find out what the institution is exhibiting, researching and preserving. Exhibitions are the ideal means to communicate to the general public the developments, knowledge and research generated by the University. In addition, the temporary exhibition rooms will be used to present its own collections or those of other local and foreign museums.

The Museum of the University of Costa Rica, therefore, entails a complex design. Many factors need to be considered. For example:

- Available land and topography;
- Financial resources;
- Spaces required to store the collections;
- Spaces required for exhibitions;
- Spaces required for teaching and research;
- Working areas required;
- Administrative areas required;
- Green zones, parking areas and future building extensions.

In general terms, the museum uses nearly 40% of the space for collection storage areas; 40% for exhibitions (temporary and permanent); 15% for working

areas and 5% for administrative areas. This percentage only includes the building; another 100% must be added for green zones and parking areas. In addition, a space must be considered for future extensions to the building.

The distribution was assigned according to the information provided by the Museum of Texas Tech University. This museum, located in Lubbock, Texas, has a total space of 62,830 square meters (206,000 square feet), including green areas and parking lots. From this total, nearly 26,000 square meters (84,500 square feet) belong to a three-floor building (8,600 square meters per floor), of which 41% are used for the storage of the collections, 42% for exhibition spaces, 14,3% for working areas and 3,7% for administrative areas<sup>30</sup>.

The following large areas have been considered for the Museum of the University of Costa Rica:

- **Administrative area:** with offices for the director, assistant director, boardroom, archives, offices for secretarial staff, administrative manager, education, registration, preservation, design and curators' offices.
- **Exhibition rooms:** permanent, temporary, exploratory (interactive room).
- **Storage areas:** collections, documents.
- **Educational area:** workshops, classrooms.
- **Working areas:** workshop on exhibitions and design, workshop on conservation and laboratories.
- **Public area:** reception and lobby, security, first aid, restrooms, auditorium, library, cafeteria, shop.

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<sup>30</sup> Information provided by David Dean, Associate Director and Assistant Lecturer of the Museum of Texas Tech University, on June 29, 2004 by e-mail [david.dean@ttu.edu](mailto:david.dean@ttu.edu).

"The total square footage of the Museum is a little over 206,000 sq. ft. right now. The % is based on that total.

\* In collections we have about 34,600 sq. ft. (roughly 17% of the available space.)

\* In exhibitions there are 35,600 sq. ft. (again about 17% of the available space.)

\* Work areas comprise about 11,120 sq. ft. (about 5% of the available space.)

\* Administration takes up about 3,180 sq. ft (1.5% of the available space.)"

- **Hallways and passages:** is 13% (standard percentage) of the building's total square meters; however, because the building will be used as a museum, this percentage must be higher.
- **Exterior areas:** include green zones and parking areas.
- **Others:** special areas, such as engine rooms, loading and unloading area.

## 9.2. Proposal for the museo+UCR Building

The initial proposal is to build a four-story building of approximately 1250 m<sup>2</sup> of construction each, distributed in four large activity areas: first is the Natural History area. According to this design, this area has nearly 1005 m<sup>2</sup> of construction, divided into a permanent exhibition room and 10 storage areas; secondly, the section of socio-cultural contents, with a space of approximately 695 m<sup>2</sup>, divided into a permanent exhibition room and a storage area; the third area will be dedicated to common spaces of approximately 2234 m<sup>2</sup>, hosting 3 permanent exhibition rooms, 4 temporary rooms and one exploratory room (interactive room), an educational subdivision with two workshops and two classrooms, a working area for two exhibition workshops, two preservation workshops and five laboratories. In addition, it will include 10 offices (work zones) for curators, a lobby with a reception area, security office, first aid section, restrooms, and finally, the common area will include an auditorium, a cafeteria and a library. The fourth floor (approximately 125 m<sup>2</sup>) corresponds to the administrative area, with offices and conference room. An additional 13% must be added for the circulation zones (hallways, staircases, etc).

**Chart N°. I: Size of the Museum of the University of Costa Rica**

<i>Summarized Chart Museum of the University of Costa Rica</i>			
Natural History Area	Total Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	From total	<b>Total Area Museum of the University of Costa Rica  4667,75</b>
	1.005	22%	
Socio-Cultural Area	Total Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	From total	
	695	15%	
Common spaces	Total Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	From total	
	2.234	48%	
Administrative spaces	Total Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	From total	
	125,75	3%	
Circulation Zones	Total Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	From total	
	608	12%	

SOURCE: Institutional Committee for Collections

**9.3. Initial Investment in Infrastructure**

According to the previous chart and parameters established by the UCR Office of Investment Planning (OEPI, as abbreviated in Spanish) for buildings with similar characteristics, investment costs in infrastructure amount to approximately \$3,000,000.

This investment concept includes the building’s air conditioning costs, fire prevention systems, high voltage electrification, electric plant, alarm systems and the information transmission network for the entire building.

The cost of the land was not estimated in the initial investment as the University of Costa Rica will contribute with the space for the project.

**9.4. Initial investment in equipment and office furniture**

The initial investment in devices and office and laboratory furniture, in addition to other equipments, was estimated in approximately \$1,300,000. This

estimation was based on the disclosed needs of equipments or furniture for each individual collection diagnosed by the Institutional Committee on Collections.

Reported equipment costs are appreciations based on the market price, after quoting with companies dedicated to selling laboratory equipment. The cost estimation for the concept of “*other equipment and storage furniture*” was made by the Institutional Committee on Collections, based on the costs of equipping a museum with similar characteristics<sup>31</sup>. These investment concepts amount to a total of necessary resources of approximately \$1,250,000.

As regards the office furniture, the estimations of investment needs amount to approximately \$50,000. This information is summarized in the following chart:

**Chart No. 2: Other necessary resources**

<i>Office and laboratory equipment and furniture</i>	
Laboratory tools, storage furniture and other equipments	\$1,250,000
Office furniture	\$50,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,300,000</b>

SOURCE: Institutional Committee on Collections

In this way, the initial investment in infrastructure, office furniture and equipment sums approximately US\$4,300,000.

## 10. Museum Sections

The **museo+UCR** will function with the following sections that will report directly to the Director:

- Administration Section
- Design Section
- Conservation Section
- Education Section

<sup>31</sup> This information refers to the recent extension of the *Museum of Texas Tech University* at Lubbock, Texas, United States.

- Collections Registration Section

### **10.1. Administration Section**

This section includes Administration, Finance, Maintenance, Security and Personnel. The person in charge of this section must be knowledgeable in administration, finance and administrative processes within the University of Costa Rica.

Some of the responsibilities are:

- Manage the **museo+UCR**;
- Ensure the supplies for the museum;
- Museum's cleaning;
- Museum's maintenance;
- Administrative records;
- Hiring and training personnel;
- Manage security personnel;
- Staff training.

### **10.2. Design Section**

This section prepares the program of permanent, temporary and traveling art exhibitions, as well as their set up. It prepares exhibitions together with the collections' curators, according to the type of exhibition to be designed. It will work with the regional museums, experimental stations and botanical gardens for their own exhibitions. Some of its main responsibilities are the following:

- Prepare the temporary and permanent exhibition calendar each year.
- Coordinate the organization, set up and carrying out of exhibitions with the curators.
- Coordinate the organization of exhibitions with other UCR departments.
- Prepare exhibition proposals (scripts)

- Manage the personnel and conduct exhibition workshops
- Prepare the publicity of the **museo+UCR** activities
- Corporate image management
- Web page design and maintenance.

### **10.3. Conservation Section**

The Conservation Section is in charge of protecting and preserving all of the collections of the University of Costa Rica. Some of its responsibilities are the following:

- Prepare, together with the curators, a diagnosis of the collections' conditions and their conservation needs;
- Prepare conservation and restoration plans;
- Carry out the necessary conservation and restoration treatments;
- Train the personnel in charge of the collections on basic preventive conservation;
- Prepare, together with the curators and the Collection Registration Office, emergency plans in case of disasters.

### **10.4. Education Section**

This section is in charge of the coordination and execution of all educational activities (formal and non-formal) carried out by **museo+UCR**. Some of its responsibilities are the following:

- Prepare the educational programs for visiting groups;
- Prepare didactic materials that will be available for the public;
- Coordinate the museum's volunteer and University Community Service (TCU, as abbreviated in Spanish) programs;
- Prepare educational programs on the collections for other organizations related to the museum;

- Coordinate the educational aspects of the collections with the Design Section.
- Train staff in charge of educational aspects of organizations related to the museum.

### **10.5. Collections Registration Section**

The responsibilities of this section and the person in charge are, among others:

- Process all new objects, artefacts, specimens and collections using a computer Registration system.
- Assign a password to all of the collections entered in the computer system;
- File and maintain all of the information related to the registered collections;
- Look after the legal aspects concerning the entry of new collections (donations, purchases, legacies, transfers, etc);
- Maintain the documentation concerning discarded collections (destruction, transfer, destructive analysis);
- Provide advice to the curators and persons in charge of the collections in the cataloging process;
- Train the personnel who works in collections;
- Supervise and participate in the process of lending collections.<sup>32</sup>

## **11. Proposal for the organic structure of museo+UCR**

The Museum of the University of Costa Rica will have its own regulations establishing its organizational structure, its functioning, relation with the institution as a whole, and particularly, with the academic units and other departments that share the collections' responsibility. In addition to these regulations, the Museum

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<sup>32</sup> For further details on the responsibilities and duties of the person in charge of the Registration, refer to: Buck, Rebecca A.; Allaman Gilmore, Jean (editors) *The New Museum Registration Methods*. U.S.A.: American Association of Museums, 1998, pp. XIV-XV.



will have its Mission, Vision, Objectives, Code of Ethics, Collections Policy, Collection Registration Manual and Corporate Image Manual.

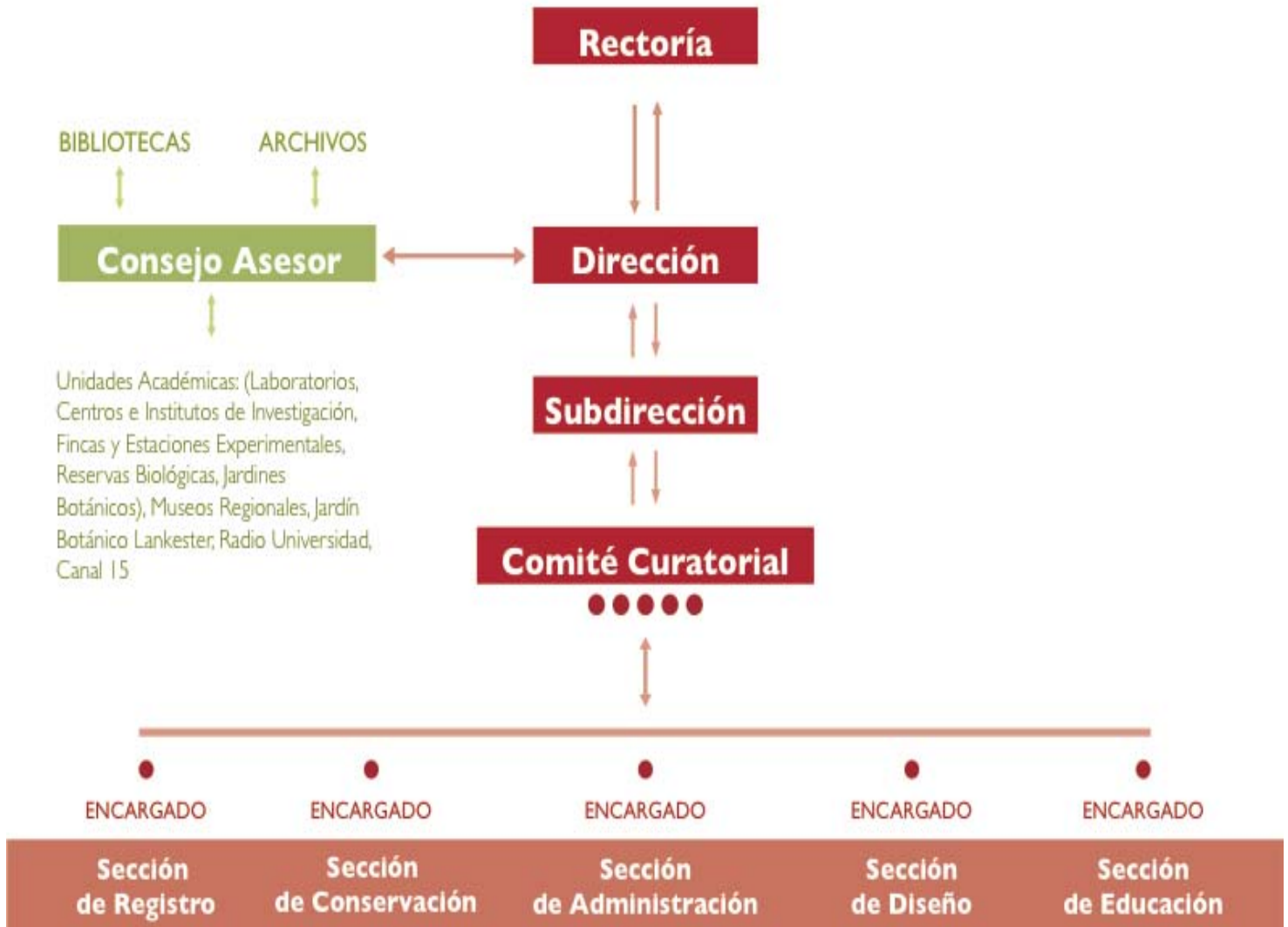
The organizational structure of **museo+UCR** will include the Institutional Committee on Collections, a Director, an Assistant Director, an Advisory Board and a Curatorial Committee. The Administration, Design, Conservation, Education and Collection Registration sections will also be part of this structure. The Curatorial Committee will be made up by the heads of the aforementioned sections and the Advisory Board will be composed of representatives from laboratories, research centers and institutes, experimental farms and stations, biological reserves, botanical gardens, regional museums, archives system and libraries system that have collections.

The Museum of the University of Costa Rica will depend directly on the Office of the Rector; therefore, all of its plans, budgets, reports and approval of policies, activities and initiatives will be submitted to that Office.

## 11.1. Organic Structure of the University of Costa Rica



**11.2. Organic Structure of the Museum of the University of Costa Rica (proposal)**



## 12. Sustainability of museo+UCR

According to information included in the pre-feasibility study, “*Estudio de prefactibilidad Museo de la Universidad de Costa Rica*”, one of the museum’s sources of income is to charge an entrance fee. Based on an entrance fee of \$1.25, the amount collected during the first year is estimated to be \$135,320.00. This amount would gradually increase during the following years.

Other sources of income could be contracts for the sale of services (for example, setting up exhibitions, talks and training workshops, consultancy services, restoration and identification of specimens), donations and sponsorships of private enterprises. In addition, **museo+UCR** will have a shop to sell articles related to the collections. An Association of Friends (Asociación de Amigos) will play an important role in supporting **museo+UCR** in the collection of funds. Finally, another possibility is to receive financial support from the Ministry of Education and international organizations that are related to the development of educational programs mainly for the benefit of public elementary and secondary schools.

Nevertheless, as **museo+UCR** will be a non-profit entity, its sustainability will not depend solely on external funding. The University, therefore, is required to provide strong financial support to cover the museum’s operational costs.

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## **14. Appendixes**

### **14.1. Appendix I**

#### **Collections of the University of Costa Rica**

##### **School of Anthropology**

- Collection of the Archaeology Laboratory, “Carlos H. Aguilar Piedra”.
- Collection of the Ethnology Laboratory, “María Eugenia Bozzoli Vargas”

##### **Central American School of Geology**

- Collection of minerals and rocks
- Collection of palaeontology

##### **School of Biology**

- Herbarium of the University of Costa Rica, “Dr. Luis A. Fournier Origgi”
- “José María Orozco” Botanical Garden
- Museum of Zoology
- Ecological Reserve, “Leonelo Oviedo”

##### **College of Fine Arts**

- Historical Archive of Music
- Collection of Fine Arts
- Picture collection of Central America

##### **College of Microbiology**

- Entomology Collection
- Collection of historically valuable obsolete equipment
- Collection of blood smears and transparencies
- Collection of Serum of the Clinical Analysis Section
- Collection of the Section of Anaerobic Bacteriology Laboratory
- Collection of the Section of Medical Arthropodology
- Collection of the Section of Medical Bacteriology
- Collection of the Section of Medical Helminthology
- Collection of the Section of Hematology
- Collection of the Section of Food Microbiology
- Collection of the Section of Medical Mycology
- Collection of the Section of Medical Protozoology
- Collection of the Section of Medical Virology

### **Sede Regional del Atlántico (Atlantic Regional Campus)**

- Collection of animals preserved in humidity
- “Omar Salazar Obando” Regional Museum

### **Sede Regional de Occidente (“Occidente” Regional Campus)**

- Library Rare Books Collection, “Arturo Agüero Chaves”
- Collection of Section of Biology Laboratory
- Demonstrative and Recreational Natural Complex
- Regional Museum of San Ramón
- “Alberto Manuel Brenes” Biological Reserve
- Botanical Garden of Tacaes Regional Branch

#### **In addition:**

- “Rafael Obregón Loría” University Archives
- Beans Germplasm Bank
- *Pejibaye* Germplasm Bank
- Collection of Phylogenetic Resource Germplasm
- Collection of insects that attack stored grain
- Collection of post-harvest pathogens
- Wood and paper collection of the Forest Products Laboratory
- Photography and transparency collection, Architecture Library
- Rare books collection, College of Law Library
- Rare books collection of “Carlos Monge Alfaro” Library
- Rare books collection of “Eugenia Fonseca Tortós” Library
- Collection of “Rafael Lucas Rodríguez”’s Illustrations
- “Fabio Baudrit Moreno” Agricultural Experiment Station,
- Fraijanes Experimental Farm
- “Clodomiro Picado” Institute
- Lankester Botanical Garden
- Museum of Insects
- Radio Universidad
- Channel 15 Video Library



## 14.2. Appendix 2

### **Published Documents and Studies**

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