

Travaux du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle «Grigore Antipa»	Vol. XLVIII	pp. 559–568	© 30 Dec. 2005
---	-------------	-------------	-------------------

**“THE SUNDAY MEETING”,
A PROGRAM OF ZOOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND
ENTERTAINMENT FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS**

AURORA STĂNESCU, ALEXANDRA ZBUCHEA

Abstract. In January 2004, the “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History (Bucharest) launched a new public program – “The Sunday Meeting”. This new project addressed and reached the most loyal visitors of the museum, the children, as well as their parents, who monthly interactively took part in various interdisciplinary activities. There also were assigned various educational projects to solve at home. The first edition of the program ended in December 2004. In January 2005 a special temporary exhibition, including several sections, presenting all the “homework” of the participants, was mounted. The items presented in each section entered a competition, the prizes being conferred during a special festivity, in the presence of the sponsors of the Museum.

Résumé. En janvier 2004, le Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle „Grigore Antipa“ (Bucarest) a lancé un nouveau programme public - „La réunion de dimanche“. Ce nouveau projet s'adresse aux visiteurs les plus fidèles du muséum, les enfants, aussi bien que leurs parents, qui participent mensuellement aux activités interdisciplinaires. Également ont été assignés des divers projets éducatifs à résoudre à la maison. La première édition du programme a fini en décembre 2004. En janvier 2005 on a présenté une exposition temporaire spéciale avec les „travaux“ des participants, y compris plusieurs sections. Les articles présentées dans chaque section ont participé au concours, les prix étant conférés pendant une festività spéciale, en présence des commanditaires du muséum.

Key words: team building.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

A wide audience highly appreciated the program from the first meeting, and it thus became a permanent public educational program of the “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History (Bucharest). Twice a month, in the last two Sundays, at 11.00 AM, some of the museum’s researchers presented multimedia lectures on topics adequate to the target-group. Those lectures were followed by various activities aiming at education in the field of zoology, ecology, etiology and sometimes ethnography. The level of retention and digestion of information was monitored by unconventional means, as identification of species, habitats and exhibits from the permanent display, competitions of all sorts as drawing contests, mime, theater improvisations regarding different species and their behavior, outfit design, models of animals made out of various materials (e.g. garments for Latin American Natives, creation of flamingos). The necessary materials were sponsored by the *Diverta* shop chain. The prizes were awarded by *National Geographic Junior* represented in Romania by *Egmont* Publishing House and by *Haribo – De Silva*.

At the end of each meeting a home assignment was designated to the participants, consisting in various projects, either individual or for teams. At the end of the 2004 season, many children presented their “homework” for a special temporary exhibition organized in order to present the results of the program to the public. It gathered various items, such as drawings, computer graphics, dioramas, ecologic manifests, interior design or even advertisements. Most of the creations

were of high quality and originality. The authors were of different ages, from 5 years old to high-school students. Home assignments aimed at stimulating and maintaining active the interest for alternative sources of information to the museum (e.g. children literature, science reviews, direct field observation, documentaries etc.).

On the 30th of January 2005, during a special event, the children's creations were rewarded – a prize for each section and a special popularity award based of the visitors' vote. The most original and scientifically correct works were also published in *National Geographic Junior*. As an involvement prize for all the children, the Museum organized a carnival, where all the participants were costumed as animals. The outfits had been created by the children's parents, while the Museum, helped by the *Help Net* drugstore chain and *Vitamina Veselă*, personalized the face-painting for each costume.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

- 1) All age children's education regarding animals and their habitats;
- 2) Children's interdisciplinary information in the fields of ecology and zoology and awakening of their interest in those topics;
- 3) Children's involvement in extra-curricular activities, in home assignments, with dead-lines, but without the reward of the classical educational system;
- 4) Development of various skills: observation, intuition, analysis and synthesis;
- 5) Association of the museum with education through game and entertainment, complementary to its image of a cultural institution;
- 6) Stimulation of children's interest in scientific literature regarding nature and ecology;
- 7) Creation of social habits and familiarization of children with public competition;
- 8) Involvement of adults in the museum's activities, as mediators between the institution and their children;
- 9) Cooperation with parents, in order to transform them from passive spectators to members of the jury and organizers of various activities included in the program;
- 10) Stimulation of parents to comparatively evaluate their own children, to test their abilities and to identify their native talents and undeclared hobbies, yet.

ACTIVITIES

1. Monthly educational meetings

Due to the high attendance, overreaching the museum's amphitheater capacity, as well as because of the participants' various ages, two meetings were organized each month starting from February. The third Sunday was dedicated to adolescents, while the last Sunday of the month to children up to 11 years old.

The structure of each meeting:

- multimedia / power-point lecture presented by researchers and museographers (Fig. 1);
- interactive, applied activities, organized as competitions awarded with books and sweets;
- assignment of homework, related to the topic of each lecture (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1 – Audience to our presentation.



Fig. 2 – Drawing aquatic species on the asphalt.

The dead-line for all the assignments was December 2004. The assignment was optional, each participant choosing the homework, if any, according to its interests and abilities.

Topics of the *Sunday Meetings*:

- I. *What's its name?*
Subject: Biological nomenclature
Assignment: *What animal have you created?*
- II. *Guests of the sloths*
Subject: Adaptation to various habitats – the tropical forest
Assignment: *Diorama of the tropical forest*
- III. *Between grace and awkwardness*
Subject: Bird adaptations to different environments (predator, runner, swimmer)
Assignment: *Observation and photo contest; Save the birds!*
- IV. *Travelers among sand dunes*
Subject: Adaptations to various habitats – the desert
Assignment: *Desertification – an issue of world significance; Art and sand*
- V. *Souvenirs from Romania*
Subject: Extinct habitats and species
Assignment: *Science-fiction script; Computer art competition*
- VI. *Animals – my friends*
Subject: valuable animals
Assignment: *„Genealogic tree“; the Farm*
- VII. *My home from Romania*
Subject: Ecosystems of Romania
Assignment: *Romanian habitats and species*

VIII. *All for one, and one for all*

Subject: Social animals

Assignment: *One day in the life of ...* (the species is for children to choose)IX. *Prey or hunter?*

Subject: Trophical relationships

Assignment: *Advertisements on the topic „Prey or hunter”*X. *Empty the inkpot and escape!*

Subject: Coloration and warning behavior

Assignment: *Computer graphic illustrating the attack and defense strategies of various animals*XI. *Grass-land*

Subject: Adaptation to various habitats – savanna, steppe, prairie

Assignment: *Creation of a herbarium*XII. *In the land of Santa Claus*

Subject: Adaptations to various habitats – the tundra

Assignment: *My collection for Santa*2. *Public presentation of the assignments in a temporary exhibition: “Gala of the most beautiful Sunday meetings”*

The temporary exhibition was opened in the central hall of the museum, between the 14th of January and the 9th of February. The exhibition was organized in several sections:

- ❖ Scientific papers
- ❖ Museology – diorama
- ❖ Ecologic manifest, photography
- ❖ Advertising
- ❖ Drawing, painting (Fig. 3)
- ❖ Computer graphics



Fig. 3 – *Birds* - paint made in tempera by Alexandra, a 10 years old girl.

- ❖ Interior design
- ❖ Private collections

The exhibition included over 120 items (drawings, clay animal figures, world ethnography, model dioramas, bird nests, photos, ads, etc.). Some of the participants presented a large number of various creations, referring to most of the home assignments.

To award the prize for popularity, a voting box was placed in the exhibition for the visitors to indicate the finest work.

3. *The Gala and the Carnival*

The 2004 edition officially ended with an award ceremony, when prizes for each section were conferred (Fig. 4). The jury had been composed both by museum representatives, and professionals in different fields, related to the children’s creations.

The Carnival of the *Sunday Meetings* aimed at awarding all the participants to the program.

On that occasion, each child dressed as an animal that he/she wanted to protect against human aggression and pollution. The disguise was completed by professional face-painting created by the *Vitamina Veselă* team (Fig. 5).

We highlight that for the first time in its history, the “Grigore Antipa” Museum in Bucharest organized a carnival-party in the halls of the public exhibition. This proves once again the strategy of image development of the organization, the desire to be associated not only with education and culture, but with entertainment as well.



Fig. 4 – Awarding the prizes for the most interesting home work.



Fig. 5 – Dancing at the carnival.

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY

The program is unique among the offer of Romanian museums, therefore the promotional efforts concentrated on information of a very wide public (children, parents, mass-media, teachers and educators) regarding the specific of the project. The promotional strategy included mainly advertising and public relations campaigns.

The main objectives targeted were as follows:

- Information of the public on each meeting, as well as on the entire program;
- Awakening of curiosity as to attract both children and parents;
- Reminding of the topics of each meeting as well as of the home assignments;
- Development of the relationships with mass-media;
- Relationship development with the participants to the program, and their information regarding the other programs of the museum.

Promotional means:

1. *Logo of the program* – Branding of the program was very useful in order to faster promote it and to develop a global image of the event. The logo of the program was present on all the promotional materials related to it as well as on the associated documents (such as press-releases or diplomas).

2. *Posters* – the program had its own poster. It was posted in schools and high-schools, as well as in public spaces where parents and children go often (such as malls, super-markets, toy shops).



Fig. 6 – The poster of the Gala made by a 7 years old girl.

3. For the final exhibition another poster was distributed, personalized for the event. The image used for the later poster was one of the drawings of the participants (Fig. 6). At the award ceremony the original of the poster was given back to the little girl who created it, in order to thank her for the contribution and participation to the program.

4. *Leaflets* – for each meeting 1,000 personalized flyers were distributed, mainly in schools. They had the same general design, but the color, information and images used varied according to the topic of each lecture. On one side information regarding the next meeting was printed, while on the back the list of the remaining meetings, so as the public to plan their participation to the program.

5. *Press-releases* – each month press-releases were made public for the upcoming *Sunday Meeting*. Those press-releases were sent not only to the press and press agencies, but also to the mailing list of the museum.

6. *Internet* – on the museum web-site (www.antipa.ro) the entire program was presented in detail on the home page. Those interested in additional information could find out updated data on each meeting and on the home assignments.

7. *Information on zoology, ecology and natural heritage of Romania* – on the museum's website, in the section entitled "Do you know..." little known and attractive scientific information related with the topic of the following meeting had been presented. Two objectives were targeted: public's education and its attraction to the museum's program.

8. *Internet links* – on the sponsors' website, as well as of other organizations (www.clopotel.ro, www.magicland.ro) short presentations of the program and links to the museum's site were posted.

9. *Advertising in "Șapte Seri"* – every month the most popular information review, *Șapte Seri*, published ads personalized for each meeting. Special ads have been published for the home assignments, for the final events (the gala and the carnival) as well as the temporary exhibition related to the program.

10. *Information on the program during various cultural TV shows or in specialized columns of different reviews: Șapte Seri, B24FUN, UNU & UNU, TVR Cultural, TVRM.*

Sponsors and collaborators of the program were:

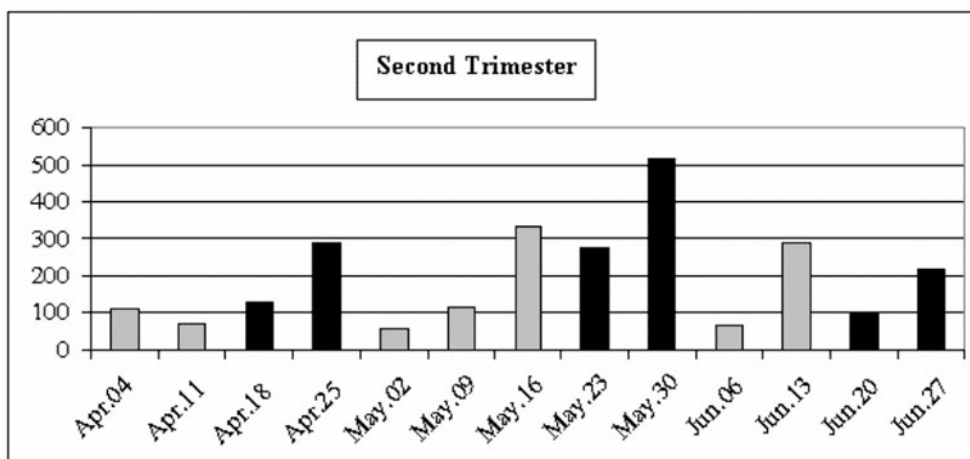
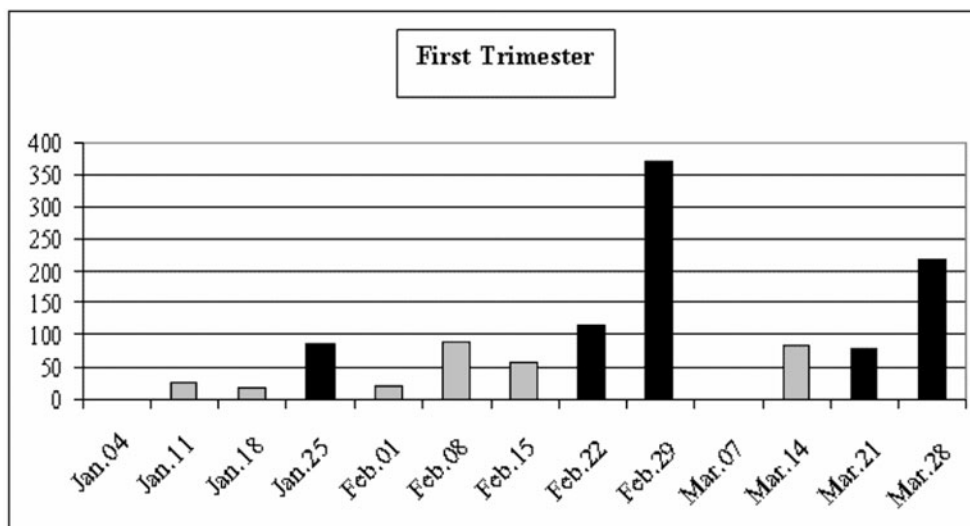
- *National Geographic Junior*, represented in Romania by *Egmont Publishing House* (prized in reviews, books and encyclopedia for each meeting).
- *Diverta* shopping chain (sponsored with the necessary staples for the activities included in the program).
- *Haribo – De Silva* (prizes in sweets and toys)
- *Șapte Seri* (media partner)
- *Help Net* drugstore chain in cooperation with *Vitamina Veselă* (face-painting)

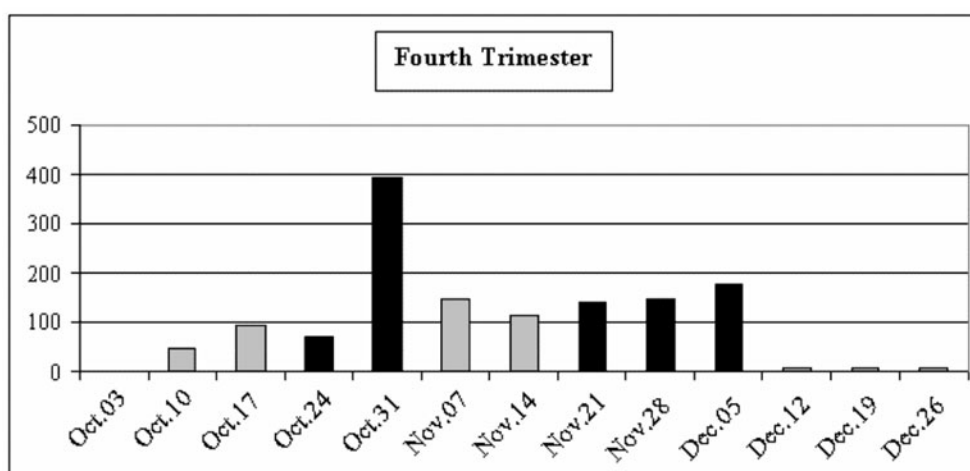
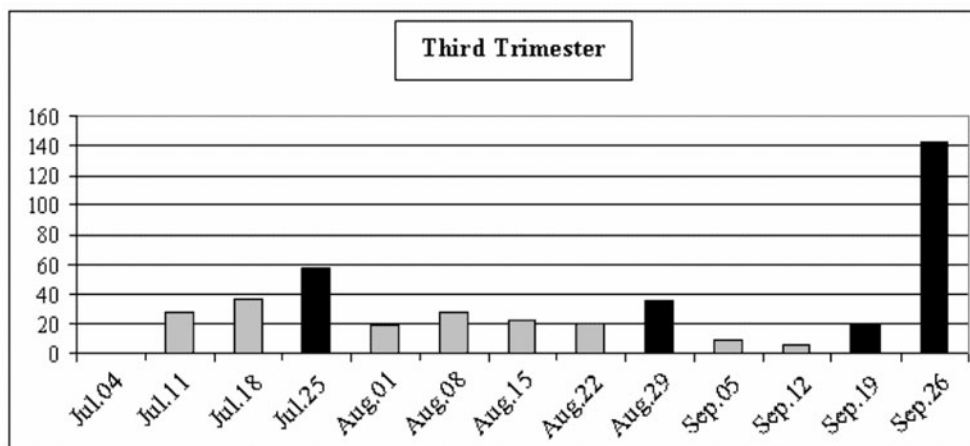
RESULTS

Promotion of the program as monthly event led to frequent contacts with press representatives as well as with the loyal participants to the program. At the same time a wider public got used to access the museum’s website often to find out updated information on all the museum’s programs. Thus the number of the daily visitors of the museum’s website increased from 110 to 150-175.

The public also got used to reserve places for the program. This facilitated a more efficient plan of the activities (in terms of space, necessary materials, human resources, number of prizes etc.).

Evolution of the tickets sold during the Sundays when the meetings took place (black) compared with those when there was no special program (gray)





The program increased the number of Museum's visitors. Due to its success to the public, the program continues in 2005. Many parents and even children who took part in the program send emails, called and gave various signals of appreciation of the program and solicited its continuation. Even if the program addressed to the parents and their children, it became popular among teachers too, who came with part of their classes.

Media impact

Most of the participants found out about the program from the information reviews *Şapte Seri* and *B24FUN*, as well as the *România Liberă* newspaper, publication that presents special cultural programs that take place in Bucharest during the week-ends.

Shortly after the first *Sunday Meeting*, television channels and other mass-media became interested in the program and, because of its success, in other

educational projects of the museum. Among the television channels that informed on the program, we mention *TVR Cultural*, *Alpha TV*, *BITV*, *TVRM*. The newspapers that allocated a wider space for the program were *România Liberă*, *Libertatea* and *Tribuna Învățămintului*. Various radio channels, such as *Radio România Tineret* and *Radio România Actualități*, also presented the program and opinions of the organizers as well as of the participants.

Other benefits

1. For the first time, the Museum initiated a data base containing visitors and persons interested in the activity of organization. The members of this list have been and are informed on a regular basis on the *Sunday Meeting* as well as other public activities and programs of the museum.

2. The increased media attention determined by the program in 2004 made possible better relations with reporters and augmented their attention for all the museum's activities.

3. The database discussed above also includes partners and collaborators, sponsors and possible sustainers of the museum, who showed interest in the development of its public programs.

4. The intense promotion of the museum, due also to the advertisements for the *Sunday Meeting*, familiarized various persons and companies with the public programs of the museum and its high ability to develop unique projects for its visitors. The development of the museum's public image also determined increased awareness to the museum's needs and a higher level of positive response to the collaboration requests and proposals for organization.

Credentials

The program was developed and coordinated by the Department of Marketing, Public Relations (Dr. Aurora Stănescu, Alexandra Zbucnea). The monthly lectures were presented by some of the museum's scientists, specialized in various animal groups (Dorel Ruști, Alexandru Iftime, Dr. Angela Petrescu, Rodica Serafim, Oana Popa, Dr. Aurora Stănescu, Dr. Iorgu Petrescu, Gabriela Andrei, Cristina Ban, Dr. Melanya Stan). The promotional strategy and materials were designed by Alexandra Zbucnea.

“ÎNTÂLNIREA DE DUMINICĂ”, UN PROGRAM DE EDUCAȚIE ZOOLOGICĂ ȘI DIVERTISMENT PENTRU COPII ȘI PĂRINȚI

REZUMAT

Muzeul Național de Istorie Naturală „Grigore Antipa” (București) a lansat la începutul anului 2004 un nou proiect – „*Întâlnirea de duminică*” – program interactiv și interdisciplinar dedicat copiilor și părinților lor.

În ultimele două duminici ale fiecărei luni, cercetătorii muzeului au susținut diferite activități prin tehnici neconvenționale de transmitere de informații din domeniile biologiei și etnografiei mondiale. La finele activității susținute de cercetători, verificarea cantității și calității informației transmise participanților s-a făcut prin aplicații practice diferite. Fiecare întâlnire a anunțat și o temă pentru acasă.

Temele au avut ca scop stimularea și suscitarea interesului pentru sursele de informare care completează cunoștințele transmise în cadrul întâlnirilor de duminică (literatură pentru copii, reviste de specialitate, observații directe în teren, filme documentare etc.) Lucrările depuse au fost organizate pe secțiuni într-o expoziție deschisă publicului bucureștean.

Ediția 2004 a programului s-a încheiat prin acordarea de premii lucrărilor prezente în expoziție, premiul de popularitate fiind acordat pe baza voturilor vizitatorilor. Toți participanții la program au fost recompensați pentru participare, printr-o petrecere-carnaval. Tot atunci au fost distribuite materiale cu privire la tematica întâlnirilor pe anul 2005.

Rezultatele programului:

1. programul a generat un număr record de apariții media ale muzeului;
2. obișnuirea publicului cu informarea constantă și periodică vis-a-vis de activitățile muzeului;
3. promovarea muzeului ca loc de educație, cultură și divertisment;
4. constituirea primei baze de date cu peste 800 de nume de persoane de contact;
5. atragerea de noi sponsori.

Received: May 11, 2005

Accepted: May 27, 2005

Muzeul Național de Istorie Naturală „Grigore Antipa”

Șos. Kiseleff nr. 1, 011341 București 2, România

Aurora Stănescu e-mail: auroras@antipa.ro