



Bulletin of the MPE

Business plan: The location problem

In the January issue of the Bulletin, we announced that the business plan was "almost" finished. In fact, all that remained to be settled were details of presentation. The five points then mentioned are still true, but we need to add the following details.

First, the expected \$300,000 in annual revenues includes only \$30,000 in grants and subsidies. The rest will have to come from ticket sales, children's activities, field trips, exhibition rentals, sales of advice and expertise, gift shop, room rental for social events, etc. In comparison, the Sherbrooke Museum of Nature and Science receives 80% of its income from the Government of Quebec and about 10% from the City of Sherbrooke. In addition, the plan indicates that we will not be able to afford more than 3 full-time employees and 3 part-time, who will in some cases have to split their time between two functions. The rest will have to be done by volunteers. As for the premises, the annual rent is estimated at \$100,000 (10,000 square feet at \$10 per square foot). Together with other anticipated costs of \$300,000/year, this would lead us to an annual expenditure of \$400,000. As a consequence: we will have to find free premises, and our borrowing capacity will be zero, which will require us to have no debt when the Museum opens its doors.

The intended location of the site at the former postal sorting station would not have been terribly expensive, but would not have been free either. However, the federal government, who heads that project (Projet du Nouveau Havre), decided that the whole project would go to the private sector, which virtually extinguishes any hope of a low-rent cultural component. Although the project is not formally abandoned, it proves financially unworkable for us and we must therefore find a new location. This is really critical: we have a superb project of \$5.3 million requiring free premises, but we have no idea where to find these premises.

We wrote in the last newsletter that the goal for this year would be the assessment of the Museum (see page 5). We now have a more pressing goal: finding a location for the Museum. If a reader of this newsletter knows a

10,000 square feet (950 m²) space available for free, he/she is begged to notify us immediately. Honestly, we have no illusions regarding the number of eventual respondents. In practice, premises belonging to a person or business could be made available to us against a charitable receipt equivalent to the usual rent. The owner would thus benefit from a tax reduction equal to half the rent. If the premises are government- or a charity-owned (therefore non-taxable) the charity receipt is not applicable. We contacted our old friends at the Montreal Planetarium with whom we have been partners in the exhibition "Dinosaurs and company." As the Planetarium is moving to a new location, we asked if we could occupy the space thus vacated, which belongs to the City of Montreal. Half of the old Planetarium building would be sufficient for our needs. However, this would lead to some problems, the most obvious being that it is a building of the 1960s insulated with asbestos. Any repair work, simply moving a wall for example, would require the removal of asbestos throughout the building. In addition, the toilets no longer meet the current standards and should be enlarged and improved. We must therefore find a venue elsewhere and it is likely that this will not be in the Southwest. We are open to all possibilities in Greater Montreal, but it seems unrealistic for us to settle in a small town or the countryside where we would be too far from the clientele.

Don't worry; the B of A does not remain idle. We are currently following interesting leads and will notify you as soon as we have solid results. Note that in the meantime, everything is not dark. We are increasingly recognized in the field of paleontology in Canada and our collection is already in good enough order to be of use to paleontological research in Quebec.

J.P. G.



New acquisitions of fossils for the Museum

Donation of the Louis Habets collection

We have received some fossil donations over the last few months, but one in particular deserves attention. Louis Habets, uncle of Frank Habets, died earlier this year. Frank Habets is one of our warmest supporters. He gave \$8,000 to our fund-raising campaign "A quickly evolving museum" at its beginnings in 2009-2010. His uncle, Louis, was an avid collector of many things including books about science, math, physics and natural history specimens. He owned a fine collection of fossils, which he naturally bequeathed to Frank who then decided to donate it to the Museum.

All continents, all biological groups and all ages are represented. Some were collected in the field, including in Quebec, while others were purchased from collectors and fossil stores. Apart from specimens of northeastern North America, the collection is somewhat heterogeneous, but this offers an advantage: we now have samples from countries and stratigraphic levels from which we possessed nothing and so we can make didactic exhibitions that would be otherwise impossible. The most remarkable specimen is a *Mesosaurus* from Brazil. *Mesosaurus* is a small aquatic reptile (~ 60 cm) from the Lower Permian. For details, see the "descriptive card" at the end of this issue. The donation also included a number of modern mollusk shells that were filed among the zoological specimens.



At left,
Eurypterus remipes,
a eurypterid or
"sea scorpion"
of Silurian age
from New York State

At right, the shell of the ammonite
Baculites (related to squids and
octopuses) of Cretaceous age
from South Dakota



Above, a pyritized brachiopod
shell of Devonian age,
from Sylvania, Ohio

At right, four
trilobites of the species
Homotelus bromidensis
of Ordovician age
from Oklahoma





New acquisitions of fossils for the Museum (cont.)

Other acquisitions

In terms of inheritances, we received a small collection from Mr. Patrick Degeyter consisting largely of modern shells and commercial fossils.

We must mention a gift from Ms. Nathalie Daoust, a member of the Museum, consisting of a collection of carpoids of the genus *Syringocrinus* from the Quebec City region. According to Mr. Kraig Derstler, professor of paleontology at the University of Louisiana, these specimens deserve a publication that would allow redefining and emending the genus *Syringocrinus*.
J.-P. G.



Specimen no. MPEP388.7: A limestone slab preserving seven carpoids (oval fossils with one "stem" at one end and one arm at the other) and one crinoid (fossil approximating the shape of a flower, hence the common name "sea lily"). The crinoid is an *Ectenocrinus*. The carpoids possibly belong to a new genus but for the moment, they are identified as *Syringocrinus*. Crinoids and carpoids are both echinoderms and are thus cousins of starfish and sea urchins. Crinoids still live in modern oceans but carpoids became extinct about 300 million years ago. Fossils on this slab are about 450 million years old and are very well preserved.



New board of Administrators

At the last annual general assembly, on April 22, 2012, some changes occurred in the composition of the Board of Administrators. In order to be hired full time by the Museum (see below: RISQ), Mario Cournoyer had to resign both from the Board and from his post as president. Michel Chartier resigned from the Board to take a sabbatical. He also resigned from his position as Head of the laboratory, which will now be held by Mario Cournoyer. Sergio Mayor and Sylvain Bélair immediately filled both B of A seats thus vacated. Sergio Mayor is a recent member of the Museum; in the previous year, he frequently attended the board meetings as a guest observer. Sylvain Bélair is known as General Director of the Laval Cosmodôme. This is the first time our B of A gains a member who has an extensive and successful experience in setting up an organization similar to the museum we want to create. His visit has generated a wave of optimism, not only because of his CV, but also because of his unwavering enthusiasm.

Concerning the membership in general, although we are barely beyond the middle of the year, we already reached a record number of full members (55). In principle, this should include only those who have renewed since the beginning of the year. In practice, it includes all those who paid their dues since the beginning of the exhibition "Montreal: a sea of fossils" last October, because many new members have joined the Museum at that time.

J.-P. G.

RISQ

As noted above, we had thought about hiring Mario full time to take the necessary steps to start the project. No, we haven't bought a bank note printing press. However, RESO has put us in contact with RISQ (*Réseau d'Investissement Social du Québec*: Social Investment Network of Quebec) who, by the way, had already provided us with a \$5,000 loan to help pay for the business plan. This time, we were looking for a loan of \$100,000 that would have allowed Mario to work for 2 years doing "canvassing." While the first loan (\$5,000) was refundable only if the project actually started, this new loan was to begin to be repaid after 24 months, capital and interest. .

Unfortunately, it was clear that within two years, the best we could hope for was to develop a financial setup. At that point, we would still be 24 months away from the opening of the Museum and the entry of the first paying visitor. As RISQ could not wait more than two years before the start of repayment, our request was not eligible. On the other hand, when we will be within 24 months of opening, it will be time to apply for a loan. Our project is simply not mature enough to be funded by RISQ. Another important point: the business plan recommends that we hire a "coaching" firm of to guide us in a major fundraising campaign. The suggested firm asked for \$135,000 in fees and miscellaneous expenses for this campaign that would enable us to raise all the money needed for the project. Here, the answer from RISQ is clear: they do not fund this kind of expenditure. We must therefore look for another source of funds or do the canvassing ourselves.

J.-P. G.



Assessment of the collection

As explained in the January newsletter, the estimated value of the Museum's assets presented in the business plan is as follows:

Cash balance:	\$8,616
Fossil collection, library and equipment:	To be determined by a recognized expert

To obtain maximum leverage when negotiating a financial setup, it will be necessary to have in hand the most accurate possible assessment of the financial value of the MPE. First, the collection must be well organized for a potential donor to realize its educational and scientific value and the rarity of some of its pieces. It is the goal of the cataloguing now in progress and of the work we are currently doing on the database. Then, we must add financial values. For the equipment, it is not too difficult: the most valuable are the metal cabinets. Microscopes, especially that given by the Canadian Geological Foundation, are the second largest element. Then comes the furniture, the bookshelves and the map cabinet. Computers depreciate very quickly and are therefore not of great value.

Publications are evaluated based on the original selling price in the case of periodicals and on the second-hand market prices for documents such as books, geological reports, etc. For reprints, especially older ones, it can be difficult, especially as some are autographed, which could create a rarity value. Here, we will probably have to refer to an outside evaluator.

The real challenge is with our favorites, that is, our fossils. A fossil can be evaluated to issue a tax receipt, or for insurance purposes, or as here, to make a general assessment. For the income tax as well as for the general assessment, we proceed in the following way, which will be inscribed in the conservation policy we prepare: for specimens having a value of \$1,000 and less, we assess ourselves. Between \$1,001 and \$10,000, we request an evaluation by an expert who is independent from the Museum as well as from the donor ("arm's length relationship"). Above \$10,000, we ask the advice of two independent external experts.

These rules are consistent with the recommendations of the Canada Revenue Agency. In all cases, if a fossil proves difficult to assess, we can seek a second opinion. To evaluate a fossil ourselves, we refer mostly to the numerous transactions on EBay and on fossil resale websites. We emphasize: we do not refer to the prices asked for on EBay, because these are in many cases fanciful, but to the prices at which sales have actually been concluded. The result is the price we would pay to buy these fossils if we did not have them, not the liquidation value. Our goal is to get a good estimate for our collection, but one even slightly too high would lose all credibility. This leads us to be somewhat conservative.

Work is already quite advanced, given the size of the task. One would think that the biggest problem would come from the immense number of very low value small specimens. However, all these small brachiopods and pelecypods are often very repetitive and can be evaluated fairly quickly once the values of the most common species are known. The work is never finished due to the fact that new specimens are continually added to the collection, but at current rates, we believe we will have in hand a realistic assessment by the end of the year.

J.-P. G.



Exhibition for rent

Having been a success, the exhibition "Montreal: a sea of fossils" is now available to anyone who wants to borrow it.

As it consists of separable parts from a thematic standpoint, we can lend portions of exhibition that are nonetheless consistent in themselves. For example, one can focus on the history of the St. Lawrence Lowlands. Or else, on the main fossil groups, with the possibility of cutting back a few. In short, we can make a presentation in accordance with needs and available space of various institutions.

"Montreal: a sea of fossils" is currently reserved by the Centre Culturel de Pointe-Claire (Stewart Hall) for an exhibition to be held there from October 20 to November 18, 2012, in a part of the library designed for children. Two afternoons of activities are also scheduled. Topics covered will be the major fossil groups and a brief introduction to fossilization.

J.-P. G.



The exhibition "Montréal: a sea of fossils" attracted 1200 visitors in the fall of 2011 at the Centre culturel Georges-Vanier. It is now available for rental.

2012 summer student

During the summer of 2010, we received a grant from the Canada Summer Jobs to hire a student for 10 weeks. In that case, the lucky winner was Vanessa Jetté. In 2011, the process was disrupted by the federal election, but we still got enough money to hire a student (Fannie Dubois) for 8 weeks. This summer, we can hire a student for seven weeks. With a donation from Jean-Pierre Guilbault, the period of employment has been extended by one week. We have not done interviews as in years past, but we hired one of our members, Alexandre Guertin-Pasquier, who met all the requirements. We need to reassure everyone: Alexandre temporarily resigned from his position on the Board and from his duties as secretary, otherwise it would have been illegal to hire him. Sergio Mayor acts as secretary in his absence.

The 8 weeks that Alexandre spends at the laboratory (employment ends in mid-July) are very busy. We must resume cataloging where Emeline Raguin had left it in 2010. Many specimens have arrived in the lab since then and many of them have not even been cleaned. Many more books have also been donated. Finally, we must assess the collection, as explained above. In short, Alexandre is very busy.

J.-P. G.



Our student, Alexandre Guertin-Pasquier, is cataloguing the rocks and fossils collected by Allen Petryk on Anticosti Island in the late 1970s. This collection was given by the Geological Survey of Canada.



“A quickly evolving museum“ fundraiser

Even though, as of July 12, 2012, the MPE fundraiser reached \$42,405 bringing us very close to our goal, we notice a marked slowdown in regard to contributions. Is this a sign of the times or is the economy slowing down? Or is it that our fans lose some of their interest in this campaign that seems to last forever? Nevertheless, we continued to receive donations this winter including one of \$2,600 (!), from our President Mr. Jean-Pierre Guilbault. These donations were a major leap towards our goal. There is only \$2,595 left to raise. We cannot do otherwise than invite you, once again, to contribute to this campaign and make it a resounding success.

M. C.

Here is a list of the persons who donated since the last issue of the Bulletin (Dec. 22, 2011):

Ms. Suzie Nantel, Mr. Pierre Richard, Ms. Claire Guiot-Pagé, Mr. Jean-Yves Pintal, Ms. Fannie Morland, Mr. Alexandre Guertin-Pasquier, Mr. Stéphane Perron, Mr. Lawrence Yates, Mr. Luc Pelland, Mr. Jean-Pierre Guilbault, Mr. Jacques Letendre, Mr. Pierre Bédard, Mr. David Rudkin, Ms. Madeleine Poulin, Ms. Anne Costisella, Ms. Nathalie Daoust, Ms. Ha-Loan Phan, Ms. Ginette Miller, Mr. Edward Patrick (older brother of the late Allen Petryk), Ms. Véronique Poirier, Ms. Ingrid Birker, and the contributions received during the outing at La Prairie (see below).

All are cordially thanked.

24 heures de sciences

On Saturday, May 12, 2012, the MPE organized a fossil search for the general public at the Hanson quarry at La Prairie. This activity was held as part of the annual event "24 heures de science" (literally: 24 hours of science). This event is held each year in the spring, over a period of 24 hours (this is to say that there are activities even at night). It aims to introduce science to the general public. This event is organized by "Science pour tous," a private, nonprofit organization that brings together groups working in the field of scientific and technical culture (www.sciencepourtous.qc.ca). This year's edition was the seventh.

On the appointed day, the sun was there as well as the public. Thirty-five people attended, including MPE members, people who visited our exhibition last fall as well as members of the public who had seen our ad on the

"24 heures de science" website: www.science24heures.com

J.-P. G. et M. C

Young and old, expert and beginners, all took part in this first event organized by the Museum for "24 heures de science," last May 12th.





Descriptive card of the specimen

Specimen number:	MPEP537.1
Identification:	Nearly complete specimen
Genus and species:	<i>Mesosaurus brasiliensis</i>
Age:	Lower Permian
Geologic formation:	Irati
Locality:	Southern Brazil
Donation:	The late Louis Habets
Date:	February 2012

This small reptile (length: 64 cm) was living in Brazil during the Lower Permian. The first reptiles, which were the first vertebrates fully adapted to life out of the water, appeared in the Upper Carboniferous. *Mesosaurus* was adapted to aquatic life thanks to its long tail serving as a propeller, its hind legs that seem to have been webbed and its nostrils placed at the top of the nose. It is the oldest example of a land vertebrate that

became readapted to aquatic life. It indicates rapid evolution and deep specialization within a relatively short period of time. *Mesosaurus* is found only in southern South America and in southern African regions that were adjacent to it at the time of the Gondwana super-continent. Alfred Wegener used the distribution of *Mesosaurus* as an argument to show that Africa and South America formed a single landmass before being separated by continental drift. *Mesosaurus* lived towards the end of the Late Paleozoic ice ages. Its living environment was no longer glacial, but was still rather cold.



Memberships

Just as at the beginning of every year, we wish to inform you that your membership must be renewed. Attached to this newsletter, you will find a copy of the membership renewal form. Remember that you can also make a donation; the Museum is a charitable organization duly registered with the Canada Revenue Agency (No. 890282445RR0001) and therefore authorized to issue receipts for income tax purposes.

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