

2005

## No endowment and no dinosaurs

### Discovering the “must-haves”

“In late 2005, with funding from NUS and American entrepreneur Frank Levinson, five staff visited successful American museums to understand what it takes to make a natural history museum work. Three ‘must-haves’ arose from this trip: good corporate governance; a good endowment plan; and dinosaurs! So much for the theory. While NUS is a well-governed establishment, it certainly had no endowment and no dinosaurs. A new natural history museum? No way.” — Peter Kee Lin Ng

2005.1



2005.1

Photographs from a series of visits to learn about the “must-haves” for a successful natural history museum. The three photographs of the façade, elephants and dinosaur are taken at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. The dinosaur is ‘Sue’ the *Tyrannosaurus rex* ♣2006. The photograph of the backlit display is taken at the American Museum of Natural History in New York

In 2005, then-Ambassador-at-Large Dr Tommy Koh suggests the setting up of a natural history museum that is based around the Museum's collection. Funding from entrepreneur Frank Levinson and the National University of Singapore allows for a visit to half a dozen natural history museums in the USA. Following their return, the then-director of the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research, Peter Kee Lin Ng concludes that there are three "must-haves". Ng also surmises that with only the first of them already a reality, a natural history museum is not possible at the time. Nonetheless, the information that is gathered in the white paper the team produces means that the Museum is ready to seize the opportunity when it comes 🌱2009. The visit begins on 7 September 2005.

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🌱 2005



2012

## Our very own Singaporosaurus

### Diplodocid dinosaurs

“My interest was piqued by the recent news that Twinky, the Republic’s first fossil dinosaur skeleton, had finally touched down from Utah. Could having our very own Singaporosaurus help to fire the country’s youth with passion for dinos that lasts a little longer than mine did? I’d love to think so. After all, I still remember the sense of wonder I felt when my parents took me to see the 26m-long replica diplodocus skeleton at London’s Natural History Museum. ... Of course, Singapore is not London. Just because prehistoric skeletons are a hit in Britain, it does not mean people here will necessarily take to dinosaurs. When the Republic’s new natural history museum announced it intended to raise \$12 million to buy dinosaurs, some questioned why it was wasting money importing the ancient bones to a country which has no history of finding them on its own soil. Could the funds be better spent on exhibitions celebrating the island’s rich past? ... Singapore has long been one of the places where people from around the region go to access the latest in global culture, whether it’s theme parks or Formula One. Dinosaurs are no different. They are a scientific treasure, an international industry and a symbol of childhood wonder and fascination with the unknown. The Republic may not have been blessed with its own sauropods or velociraptors, but it is giving kids a chance to experience something magical. Personally, I can’t wait to introduce my inner seven-year-old to Twinky. Who knows? Perhaps it’s not too late to resurrect my dino obsession.” — **Joel Cooper**

2012.1



An earlier visit to successful natural history museums in the USA leads to the idea of the three “must-haves” 🍀2005. By early 2011, two of the three are in the bag: good governance and a good endowment plan. The third—dinosaurs—is elusive. Then in April 2011 the opportunity presents itself and another round of fund-raising, independent of that for the new building, ensues. The funds are raised successfully and for the second time, the Museum is involved with dinosaurs 🍀2006. This time as the owner of three! The first of them, “Twinky”, arrives in Singapore on 18 April 2012.

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2012.1

These two cut-outs are used to mark the wooden crates in which the three dinosaurs are shipped to Singapore

2012.2

Two views of the three dinosaurs in the Museum's gallery



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2013

## A dream come true

### A ground-breaking development at the Museum

“The National University of Singapore drove the first pile for the \$46 million purpose-built Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum yesterday, on grounds where the school’s estate office once stood. When ready in the second half of 2014, the 8,500 sq m, seven-storey ‘green’ building will house not just three real dinosaur fossils, but also a priceless collection of some 500,000 specimens of vertebrates and invertebrates. It is, in the words of the honorary National Heritage Board chairman, Professor Tommy Koh, ‘a dream come true’. Prof Koh, who was the guest of honour at yesterday’s groundbreaking ceremony, recalled how his visits to New York’s Natural History Museum, Washington’s Smithsonian and later the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research (RMBR) had convinced him that Singapore should have a purpose-built museum showcasing South-east Asia’s flora and fauna.” — **Tan Dawn Wei**

#### 2013.1

This rock is collected in about 2013 from the site at 2 Conservatory Drive where ground is broken to build the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum. In 1977, the exact same site is mooted by the university administration for the Zoological Reference Collection 🌿1988



Ground is broken for the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum 130 years after the foundation stone is laid for the Raffles Museum building 🍀1884. The site that is chosen for the new Museum building immediately creates a sense of déjà vu in those who are involved in the project. In 1977, the same site is initially mooted for the Zoological Reference Collection 🍀1988. One circle is closed when the first pile enters the ground on 11 January 2013.

2013.1



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