

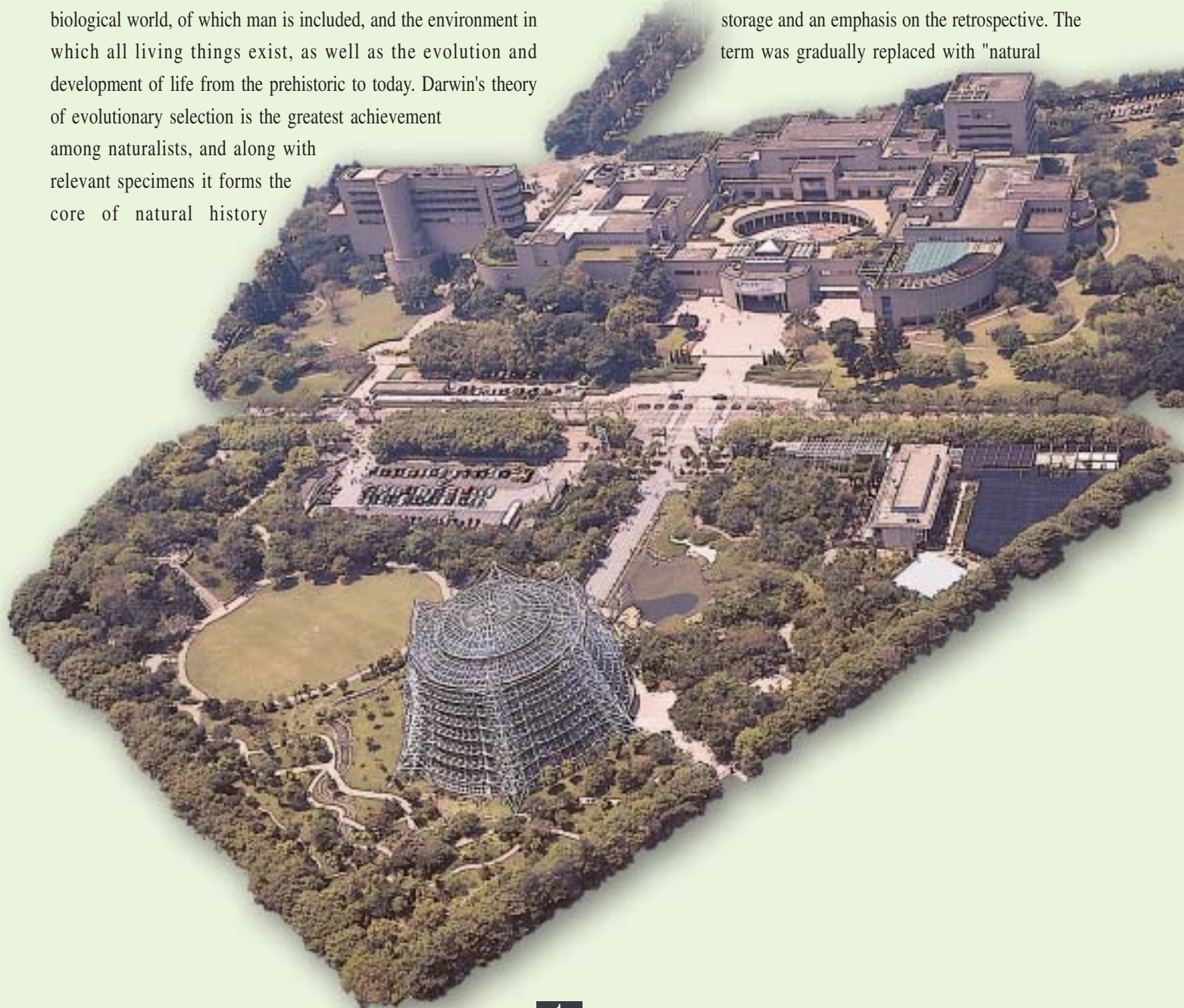
# Background

## Missions and Objectives of the Museum

Every civilized country in the world has several well-established science museums. A science museum is not only a reliable record of scientific development and a mark of scientific progress, but is also a place where people come to seek knowledge and recreation. In the U.S. and Europe, science museums generally fall into one of two categories: natural history or science and technology. The former focuses on life science, meaning the biological world, of which man is included, and the environment in which all living things exist, as well as the evolution and development of life from the prehistoric to today. Darwin's theory of evolutionary selection is the greatest achievement among naturalists, and along with relevant specimens it forms the core of natural history

museum exhibition concepts. In addition, discoveries of and research into ancient man and dinosaurs have generated interesting exhibits, and heightened public interest in natural history museums.

After World War II, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) was established to promote the development of museums all over the world. At that time, there was a consensus that the term "natural history" was no longer appropriate, as it implied specimen storage and an emphasis on the retrospective. The term was gradually replaced with "natural





science", which expresses a positive and progressive approach to serving society, as well as emphasizes educational functions. Natural history stresses the mutual influences of existence and environment, and presents the unique lifestyles of different peoples. An understanding of different cultures can help people to become aware of the positive and unique values of their own cultural traditions. Thus, the trend among natural science museums has been to increase educational activities, specifically regarding local, ethnological and social issues, in addition to pure academic activities such as research and collection, to round out museum function and to extend them to include education.

During the 1970s, the energy crisis prompted the world to place more importance on the environment. The younger generation appealed to museums to increase public awareness of nature and ecology, and not to compromise this public service for the promotion of industrial achievements. Academics of the time also made efforts to explain the importance of ecological conservation, and stressed that man is a part of nature. Natural science museums increasingly became seen as positive and essential institutions, and small and medium-sized natural science museums began to be established with increasing frequency to meet local needs all over the world.

The National Museum of Natural Science emerged under the background of this period, with many difficult and complex missions to fulfill.

This museum must serve as a traditional natural history museum, collecting and investigating natural specimens and anthropological relics. In many other countries, large-scale natural history museums usually have collections of more than 10 million specimens, making them centers for research in life science. However, more than a decade ago, collection and research of

natural specimens began to be gradually overshadowed by natural resources surveying work. The survey of natural resources is not only important academically, but also provides the government with valuable basic information about the development, use and conservation of natural resources. NMNS has implemented a detailed plan to complete a basic survey of Taiwan's resources, collect a large number of specimens, and provide a research base for the museum. We have collaborated with domestic research units, making the best use of the museum's specimens and providing natural science researchers with valuable information.

In the area of education, the museum's missions are to raise public knowledge of science, cultivate reasoning and independent thinking and encourage people's curiosity of natural phenomena. With widespread knowledge of science, Taiwan will be able to close the gap with advanced countries.

Through its exhibits, this museum emphasizes the concepts related to "man and nature". The exhibits are advanced technologically, and are supplemented by progressive explanatory methods. Science has been studied since man's existence, in an attempt to uncover nature's secrets. Nature is the environment which man depends on for his very survival. Therefore, we should strive to understand, from every angle, man and the mutual relationships between man and nature.

After many years of hard work, the original construction and development plans of the museum have been completed. However, in the face of changing operational trends and rapid development of the world's museums, NMNS' sense of mission has grown. In this new era, we must have closer contact with the local public, and our operational concepts and methods must be modified. In coordination, with the completion of the 921 Earthquake Museum of Taiwan, NMNS is poised to become the most important natural science museum in the East Asian region. It must also steadily but rapidly move toward its objective of becoming a first-class museum worthy of taking its rightful place on the international stage.