



Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro
Museu Nacional

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Dr Ana Casino
Executive Director
Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities / CETAF

Dear Dr Casino,

You are most certainly well aware of the tragedy occurred in our institution on September 02nd. The Department of Invertebrates, which I represent, was not as devastatingly hit by the fire as others in our Museum, but nevertheless, we lost four laboratories (Arachnology, Carcinology, Echinodermatology and Malacology), as well as the entire (or nearly so) collections of Arachnology and Malacology, and thousands of samples of Crustacea which were on the process of cataloguing.

As a representative of this unique consortium, it occurred to the team at Department of Invertebrates that you might know ways to transform willingness to help, as expressed by leaders from many European taxonomy-friendly institutions, into concrete actions. No matter the size of each initiative, it is the gradual accumulation of these, together with our strong will to overcome the tragedy, which will ensure the reconstruction of another museum for the entire Latin American continent to be proud of. Among the European signatories of a widely circulated letter of support for the Museu Nacional are Bruno David (Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle), Johannes Vogel (Museum für Naturkunde), Edwin J.F.B. van Huis (Naturalis Biodiversity Center), Peter C. Kjærgaard (Natural History Museum of Denmark), Sir Michael Dixon (Natural History Museum London) and Camille Pisani (Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences).

Not intending to interfere on your own criteria and priorities, it just appeared to us that a few suggestions on how to help might be welcome. For this reason, we list some ideas we have debated recently.

1. Donation of literature on Arachnology, Carcinology, Echinodermatology and Malacology.

Despite the fact that there are many online resources enabling access to digitized literature, still, these are frequently incomplete, of unsatisfactory quality, or simply do not substitute one's preference for dealing with printed science. Our specialists in these disciplines all would like to rebuild their laboratories' specialized libraries.

2. Second hand equipment for microscopy and histology.

Laboratories spared from fire are providing access to these materials to colleagues who lost theirs, but available resources are insufficient to keep projects going for a long time.

3. Short term fellowships for graduate students and the department's staff to come and visit European Taxonomic Facilities as a part of their theses or ongoing projects.

This is urgent for students who lost their theses' materials, but also important on the medium and long run, as a way to assure that our Museum's graduate program is well evaluated by its pairs in Brazil, which translates into more fellowships, more resources, and more flexibility to manage these. It would also be important to our graduate program that Belgian students visited our collections. Speaking for invertebrates, we still have rather large collections of Cnidaria, Crustacea, Echinodermata and Porifera, in the case of the latter, representative of the coast of the entire South American continent.

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