Peabody’s New Experimental Classroom

Thanks to a generous grant from the Stavros S. Niarchos Foundation, the Peabody Museum now has its own classroom dedicated to public programs and teacher training. The Stavros S. Niarchos Experimental Classroom will be used to train docents and teachers about the Museum’s teaching collections and exhibitions, and eventually will host public events for guests and schoolchildren.

The experimental classroom is equipped with internet-ready computers, Zeiss stereo microscopes for close-up viewing of specimens, and Olympus compound microscopes for specimens too small to be seen unaided. The room also has the latest in distance learning and videoconferencing technologies.

These teleconferencing capabilities will be critical in linking the Peabody with its collaborators at the Natural History Museum of Crete (NHMC). Last October NHMC educators and exhibition preparators visited to work in the classroom and share ideas about museum exhibitions. During 2004–2005 the Collaboration Initiative between the two museums will include an exchange of exhibits on biodiversity. To enhance each museum’s exhibition, special teleconferencing sessions will be held with public school students from New Haven and Crete, giving them a unique opportunity to learn about each other’s environments and cultures.

Connecting Greek and U.S. students

At an open house in the new classroom on October 11, 2003, NHMC educator Olga Berdiaki used the videoconferencing system to see and talk to her students and colleagues in Greece. Most exciting was the exchange between New Haven and Crete public school children, who learned about the similarities and differences between their environments, and discussed what each was doing to protect the earth’s natural resources and biodiversity.

Also participating were New Haven teachers and Peabody Fellows Dr. Marc Blosveren, Science Supervisor for New Haven Public Schools (NHPS), Waltrina Mullens (Davis Street Interdistrict Magnet School) and Karen D’Ostilio (Conte West Hills). From Davis Street Magnet School were 2nd grade students Chaslynn Saucier, Nia Clemons, Brandon Booker-Thomas and Aaron J. Brown-Ortiz. From Conte West Hills were 5th grade students Faith Kim, Diamond Dematteo, Priscilla Maldanado, Greg McDaniel and Tyjuan Smalls. The Greek students are part of an NHMC enrichment program, called Friends of the Museum, directed by museum educator Dr. Katerina Voreadou.

Through the generous efforts of Manolis Zouraris and his staff at the University of Crete, this videoconference can be viewed at www.ucnet.uoc.gr, and a direct link to the Collaboration Initiative web page can be found at www.peabody.yale.edu/exhibits/nhmcytpm/.

Distance learning opportunities for teachers

Through the efforts of researcher and Niarchos Program Coordinator Dr. Theodora Pinou, Dr. Blosveren and Ralph Valenzisi, NHPS Technology Coordinator, the Peabody and New Haven Public Schools have partnered to create training opportunities in technology for high school teachers.

On November 4, 2003, the Cyber-Scientist Program was launched when Dr. Pinou dialed into Bishop Woods Elementary School and worked with Blosveren, Valenzisi, and high school teachers Robert Marino, Santiago Berrios-Bones, Stephen Broker, Richard Sears, Christin Arnini, Karen Beitler and Timothy Coleman on how to integrate electronic content into their lessons. These teachers will continue their training with the resources of the Stavros S. Niarchos Experimental Classroom. In addition, visiting NHMC–University of Crete graduate students Georgia Mantziou, Aristeidis Parmakelis and Nikos Poulakakis experienced several strategies in distance learning that they hope to use to reach broader audiences. This April the “cyber-scientists” will travel to Crete, where they will collect field data for their research projects.