

THE NEW APPROACH TO THE SCIENTIFIC MUSEUMS: THE "MUSEUM ORIENTEERING"

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The Fersman Mineralogical museum RAS due to its scientific and educational profile together with the academician status is considered as "difficult" and therefore it is less known to the general public. However each year it becomes more and more popular. The one of the world-class largest mineralogical collections with 300-years history attracts the visitors with the beauty of natural stone, masterpieces of famous lapidaries, laboratory-grown crystals and meteorites.

We always would like to make our museum closer to the public without changing the scientific concept of the exhibition, and to show our visitors the world of stone – economically significant and aesthetically attractive part of Nature, to make their visit captivating and informative.

The project "Museum puzzles" comprehending 7 natural history museums in Moscow and supported by ICOM Russia and Moscow government was launched in 2010, October 9–10, within the "5th Science Festival in Moscow". The project aimed to attract the visitors with the gaming guidebooks which enable people (mostly children) to plan the visit themselves and to make it more sensible.

Two types of the guidebooks were developed: for the youngest visitors and for the schoolchildren. The former guidebook or the "stickers" game, named the "Fersman Rainbow", is represented by a sketch map of the museum with the certain display cases numbered – on the one side, and a field with 18 questions on the other. The number of a question corresponds to the number of the case marked. The player has to navigate himself to the destined display case, using the map, find an answer to the appropriate question and put

the sticker in the answer field. The final task of the game is to compile a "rainbow" of the minerals been seen. The latter, "big" guidebook, the "Fersman Rebus", combines together a mini-tour in the museum, questions for quick wits and attention, and also impart orienting skills. Using the compass and the map, along with the guidebook itself, every visitor would feel himself a real naturalist, a researcher, even in the museum interiors; and at the end of the game will have his own guidebook – the compiled mineral handbook – as a gift. There are five different routes in the game. En route the players have to solve puzzles using tips & signs, and navigate himself from stop to stop in order to obtain 7 letters for the rebus: 1–2 from each route. The final task is to compile a word from 7 letters collected. Also, there is a crossword game at the end of all the guidebooks, where the players have to fill the template with the mineral names they collected en route; it is a team game to be played in schools.

The games "Museum puzzles" were held at the museum since October 2010 and will continue till May 2011. During the 3 months period (October–December 2010) the number of visitors to the museum increased significantly: more than 400 people chose the sticker game and over 50 groups of 20–30 people signed in to play the "Fersman Rebus" game.

We do hope that the Moscow project "Museum puzzles" started with the Fersman Mineralogical Museum would stimulate the population of all ages to learn more about different aspects of nature. With such an application a visit to the museum will no longer be a boring trip to the "storehouse of dusty exhibits", but an opportunity to come closer to a real science.