ORIGIN

✓ 1897 - World Fair (Palace of the Colonies)
✓ ‘Musée du Congo’ founded in 1898 by King Leopold II
✓ exhibition of scientific objects and studies
✓ promotional activities
✓ initial project much more complex
✓ 1960: Royal Museum for Central Africa
Inauguration of the museum building by King Albert I
30 April 1910
MISSION STATEMENT

The Museum is a world centre in research and knowledge dissemination on past and present societies and natural environments of Africa, and in particular Central Africa, to foster – to the public at large and the scientific community – a better understanding and interest in this area and, through partnerships, to substantially contribute to its sustainable development.
Federal scientific institution

ACTIVITIES

- Collection management
- Research (anthropology, history, biology, earth sciences) and valorisation of results
- Public services
- Dissemination of knowledge / exhibitions
- Sensitisation
- Reinforce national capacities in Africa
Some figures

- 250 members of staff
- 60 volunteers
- 85 scientists
- 150 PhD students and trainees
- Budget of 17 mio euro/year
HUMAN SCIENCES
Cultural Anthropology and History
Culture & Society
Archives & collection management
History & Politics
Heritage Studies

- 125,000 ethnographic objects
- 8,000 musical instruments
- Archives of H.M. Stanley
- 1,000,000 photos and films

Collection management: only 1% on display
Linguistics and ethnomusicology
Scientific Research – HUMAN SCIENCES

Collections of the RMCA: *Exploring Africa with ancient maps & Virunga. Archives et collections d’un parc national d’exception*

Field Manual of African Archaeology

*Africana Linguistica*

“Provinces” project: *Kasaï*
Natural Sciences
Biology
Vertebrates
Invertebrates
Wood biology
Biological collection and data management

- 10,000,000 zoological specimens
- 56,000 tropical wood samples
Scientific Research – BIOLOGY

Exploration and conservation of the invertebrates biodiversity of the Monts Nimba, Guinea – Taxonomy and distribution of spiders
Tracing of wood growth in DR Congo, Luki
MEMO: Monitoring of Exotic Mosquitoes in Belgium
African Biodiversity Information Centre visits
NATURAL SCIENCES
Earth Sciences
Geodynamics and mineral resources
Natural risks
Surface environments
Collection management
PROMINES

✓ 15 000 rock samples and minerals
✓ 300 000 aerial photographs
Early warning system

Virunga volcanoes

The combined use of Ground-Based and Remote Sensing techniques as a tool for volcanic risk and health impact assessment for the Goma region

(North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo)
The RMCA conducts scientific research in several African countries
COFFRET EN BOIS CONTENANT 150 FILMS TOURNÉS AU CONGO ET EN RUANDA-URUNDI ENTRE 1912 ET 1960

DIGITISATION
TMS, GNOSIS, DEKKMMA, Cartography, photographs
DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Educational activities
Cultural activities
Website
Publications
Temporary exhibitions
Dissemination of knowledge

Publications & website
BETWEEN 130,000 AND 300,000 VISITORS
30,000 CHILDREN / SCOLARS IN WORKSHOPS
Partnerships with African Institutions

• strengthening national capacities
• conservation of cultural and natural heritage
• scientific collaboration
• educational workshops
• training
• sharing of data and documentation
• D4D Prize
WHY RENOVATION IS NECESSARY?
THE RENOVATION PROJECT

“Belgium brings civilization to Congo”

Permanent exhibition still has colonial spirit
THE MUSEUM AS WE KNOW IT
IT HAD TO CHANGE ITS SCENOGRAPHY
Multicultural society:

- The RMCA is the most important ‘lieu de mémoire’ for Belgium’s colonial past.

- The RMCA must become a window to contemporary Africa and its history.

- The RMCA must become a meeting point for Belgians and members of the ‘source communities’ whose patrimony is found in the RMCA.

New role for the RMCA: redefinition.
HOW?
New role for RMCA: process of redefinition
Exit Congo (2001): origin of collections
New role for RMCA: process of redefinition

Memory of Congo. The colonial era (2005)
New role for RMCA: process of redefinition

Commitment Source Communities

Indépendance! (2010)
Congolese stories about 50 years of independence
Commitment Source Communities

Creation of **COMRAF**

**READ-ME** (Réseau européen des Associations de Diasporas et Musées d'Ethnographie)
- projects / colloquia / exhibitions

**RIME** (Réseau international de Musées ethnographiques)

**SWICH** (Sharing a World of Inclusion, Creativity and Heritage)

**Groupe des six**
OBJECTIVE

The RMCA is a dynamic museum equipped with all modern facilities. It encourages the interdisciplinary knowledge of people, cultures, societies, history and natural resources in Africa as well as the sustainable development in the region.

Ambition: 250,000 visitors per year
Modernize, restore and adapt to the 21st century
New reference exhibition / floor -1
New reference exhibition / ground floor

> focus on Central Africa
> from a contemporary perspective
> thematic
More modern than ever
More authentic than ever
A renewed permanent exhibition (focus on contemporary Africa - culture)
Scenography – Diaspora
New permanent exhibition
Doubling public spaces
Complete accessibility
Energy saving
Multilingual
New temporary exhibition halls with climate control, and auditorium
Systematic use of audiovisual media
Contemporary Art