

The scope of the Museum was enlarged in the "Act to make better provision respecting the Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada and for maintenance of the Museum in connection therewith", of Apr. 28, 1877. In that Act the Survey was instructed "to study and report upon the flora and fauna of the Dominion" and "to continue to collect the necessary materials for a Canadian museum of natural history, mineralogy and geology". As early as the Act of 1856, the Geological Survey of Canada had been authorized "from time to time" to distribute publications relative to the Survey. From this authority developed the Museum's celebrated series of scientific bulletins presenting the researches of its staff.

The Act of 1877 established the Geological Survey and the Museum on a continuing basis and permitted the appointment of specialists in connection with natural history research. John Macoun was appointed to establish the division of biology in 1882. He was an eminent botanist who had accompanied the expedition of Sanford Fleming to explore Western Canada in 1871. Macoun's report of 1874 laid the groundwork for the establishment of western Canadian agriculture. He also published a catalogue of Canadian birds. In 1895 under the third Director of the Geological Survey, George M. Dawson, the Museum entered the field of Canadian anthropology.

Prior to 1880, the Museum occupied several buildings in Montreal but that year the Geological Survey moved to Ottawa, occupying the former Clarendon Hotel on Sussex Street. Construction of the Victoria Memorial Museum building was started in 1904 and the Geological Survey moved in in 1910. The Museum began an expanded program of research and exhibition under the direction of R. W. Brock, then Director of the Geological Survey of Canada. Unfortunately this program was curtailed during World War I because the burning of the Parliament Buildings, in 1916, forced Parliament to occupy the Museum building until 1919. Later, expansion of the exhibition halls was handicapped by the Museum sharing its building with the National Gallery of Canada and the Geological Survey of Canada.

However, in 1927, the Governor General in Council gave authority "to designate the museum branch of the Department of Mines as the National Museum of Canada". In 1950, the National Museum of Canada was transferred to the Department of Resources and Development (now the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources) and in 1964 it was transferred to the Department of the Secretary of State. Since the end of the Second World War, particularly after the appointment of Dr. Frederick J. Alcock as Chief Curator, the Museum has increased its research, education and exhibition staff in order to play a more important role in the cultural life of Canada and perform the tasks properly assigned to the National Museum of Canada. A new National Museum building will be constructed in the heart of Ottawa within the next few years.

The responsibilities of a great museum include the collection, preservation, storage and study of objects related to the various disciplines that fall under its purview. The next step is the undertaking of research by specialists in those fields and the publication of their findings to increase the total knowledge of their subjects. Typically, museums exhibit items from their collections as intrinsically beautiful displays and also to teach the public the scientific background to the subjects. This leads to the educational program of museums which usually includes lectures, workshops, guided tours for children and activity groups, travelling exhibits, loans, library service, and radio and television programs.

The National Museum of Canada is now organized to present all these facets for the enjoyment and education of the people of Canada. It is divided into two Branches—the Human History Branch and the Natural History Branch. The Human History Branch contains the Divisions of Archaeology, Ethnology and Folklore, and History, together with the Canadian War Museum and the National Aviation Museum. The Natural History Branch contains the Divisions of Zoology, the National Herbarium, and Geology and Palaeontology. Services common to both Branches are concerned with exhibitions, educational, technical and administration functions. In 1964-65 the staff