

The History of the Geological Museum and the Department of Earth Sciences

Established in the mid 20th century, the Department of Earth Sciences at AUB has endured over decades of regional turmoil, wars, civil unrest, and economic instability, emerging as a resilient and forward-looking academic unit.

Its name evolved with its expanding scope: from the Department of Geology, to the Department of Geography and Geology, back to Geology, and finally to Earth Sciences.

Today, the department houses state-of-the-art equipment, a historic geological museum, and internationally recognized research projects that contribute to pressing environmental and geoscientific challenges.

Through its rigorous, field-integrated, track-based curriculum, it continues to prepare students for impactful careers and leadership in geosciences across academic, professional, and policy spheres.

1869

1873

1882

1902

1914-1918

1920

1938-1939

1949-1950

1956

Rev. H. H. Jessup donated his collection of nearly all the known fossils discovered in the region back then.

Dr. Lewis has donated nearly 100 exceptional fossil fish specimens, and has acquired over 100 foreign mineral and fossil specimens through

President Edwin Lewis was forced to resign after he praised Charles Darwin during the Commencement Speech. Before leaving, he donated his geological collection.

1900

George E. Post Hall of Science. The initiative started when Rev. H.H Jessup contributed \$20,000 in gratitude to Dr. Post for curing him on the condition that the building bears the name of George E. Post.

Post Hall was erected

Protestant College played a key role in relief efforts, with its staff aiding the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief as Beirut became a German submarine base.

The board of Regents of the University of the State of New York changed the name of the institution from the "Syrian Protestant College" (SPC) to the American University of Beirut

The Gulf Oil Company established the Gulf Chair of Geology to support the engineering program, appointing Dr. Roy A. Wilson a its first holder.

As World War II loomed, emergency measures were put in place. The university prepared by stockpiling supplies. The museum served as a storage room for 2 years worth of wheat.

Under Dr. Baramki's supervision, the ground floor of Post Hall was refurbished to be used exclusively for the Archaeological collection, while the Geology collection was moved to the Geology Department.

1959-1960

1962

1963

exchange.

1965-1966

1968-1969

1969-1970

1970-1971

1972-1973

1975-1976

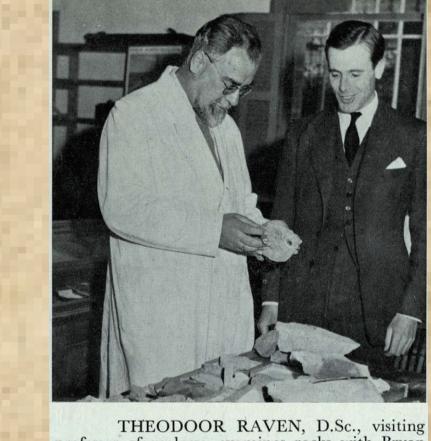
1976-1978

The State of Qatar endowed a

which started in 1978.

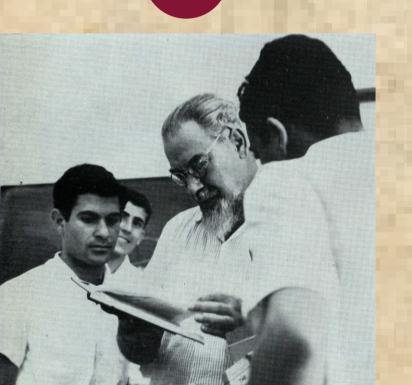
1980

AUB established the Department of Geology with support from a grant provided by the Arabian American (ARAMCO) Oil Company.



professor of geology, examines rocks with Bryan Gregor, M.A., instructor.

After a brief joint course attempt, the Departments of Geography and Geology were officially merged into the Department of Geography and Geology.



The Departments of Geography

and Geology has grown out of

the union. Two academically

distinct programs are offered,

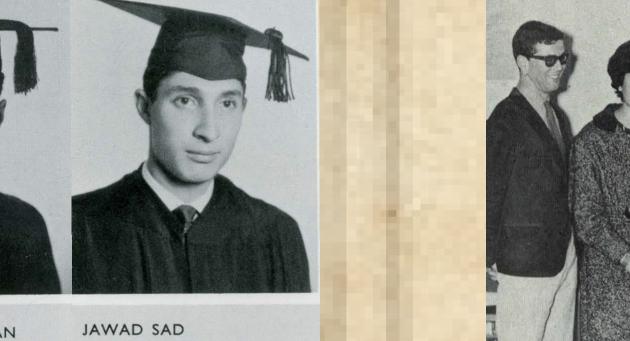
leading to the degrees of B.A.

(Geography) and B.S.

(Geology).

Champion of Rowing in A&S.

First Bachelor of Science in Geology degrees were awarded. The graduate program in Geology was inaugurated.



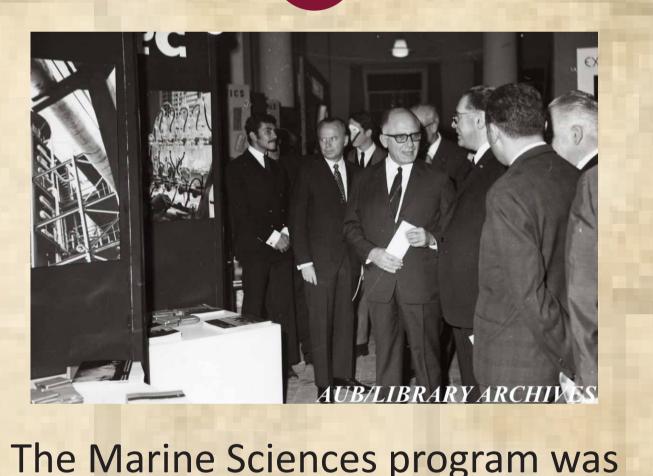
Soc. Treas., '62-'63; Second Friendship International.



The department upgraded its curriculum, awarded its first three M.S. degrees, and improved facilities including the workshop, library, and the map drawing office.

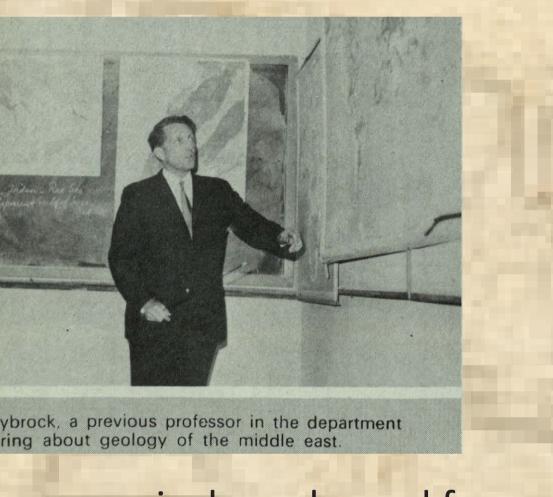


The department held its first Petroleum and Geology Exhibition at West Hall. The staff agreed to change its name to the "Department of the Geosciences" to reflect the interdisciplinary nature of modern geological work.



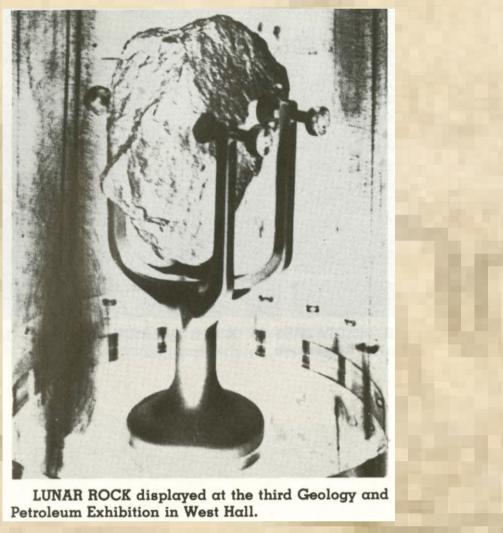
introduced, involving collaboration The new curriculum planned for between the Departments of Geology and Biology. The suggestion to change the name of the Department was submitted to

the administration. A second successful exhibition was held.

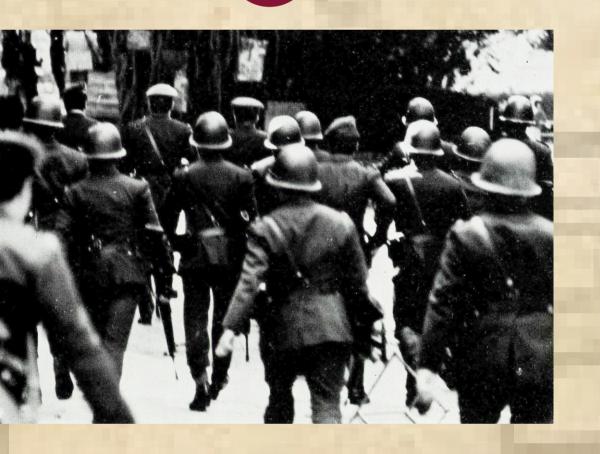


1970-71 was not implemented. Several displays were refurbished and catalogued to enable two museum halls to be open to the Students went on strike to protest

the 10% increase in tuition fees.



The Geology Students Society, supported by the Department of Geology, organized a highly successful Geology and Petroleum Exhibition, attracting over 8,000 visitors and featuring major oil companies and a lunar rock secured by NASA through the US Embassy.



Onset of the Lebanese Civil War. The number of Geology faculty members remaining in Lebanon was reduced from 5 to 1. The staff positions became vacant.

Chair for a multi-disciplinary SCANNING ELECTRON MICROSCOPE Petroleum Studies program RESEARCH LABORATORY involving six departments, aiming to offer a B.S. degree,

> A Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM), first of its kind in Lebanon and the Middle East, was purchased out of a grant from the Mobil Foundation and installed in the department.

1982

1983-1984

1985-1993

1994

1998

department's library was named

in his honor to commemorate

his remarkable contributions.

1999

2000-2013

2014

2020

2023

2024

2025

Major remodeling of the museum. The inner hall, which became dedicated to teaching and research, was shut off from the outer museum displays.

The tower of Post Hall received a direct hit during the February shelling, destroying the departmental dark room and its photographic equipment and caused severe damage to the roof of the Geological Museum.



The Department of Geology steadily expanded its student enrollment and academic offerings. The Geological Museum saw repairs and reorganizations despite limited resources and regional instability.



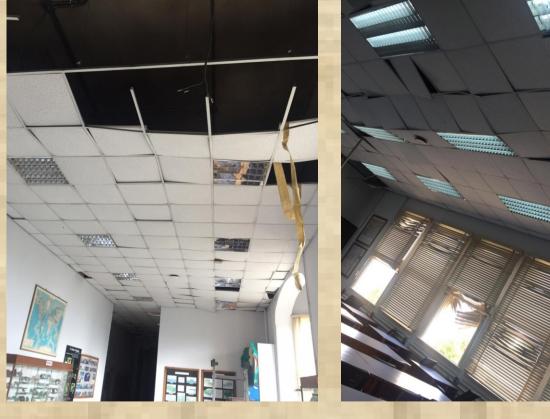
Emeritus Professor Ziad Beydoun was awarded the William Smith Medal and named a Knight in the Lebanese Order of the Cedars in recognition of his distinguished

Mrs. Muntaha Saghieh-Beydoun A minor in Geology was approved. (Dr. Beydoun's wife), donated his bibliography collection. The

The department acquired new equipment, welcomed annual school visits, and hosted several educational seminars.

The Bachelor of Science in Petroleum Studies was renamed to the Bachelor of Science in Petroleum Geosciences.

> The Beirut Port explosion on August 4, 2020 dislodged numerous roof tiles, shattered windows, and severely damaged doors and glass panels. The Master of Science in



Geology was frozen.



establishment of a Geological

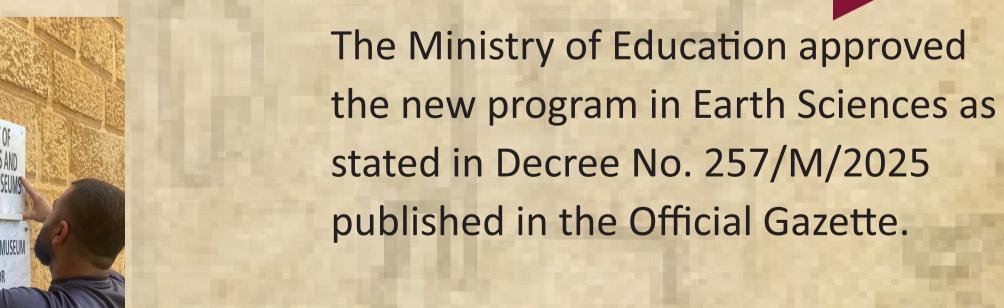
Dr. Ziad Beydoun's library was

fully catalogued, digitized and

integrated with Jafet Library.

Museum in Akkar.

The department signed an MOU The Board of Trustees with the UNDP to support the first approved the name change of geological trail (geotrail) across Department of Geology to the the Lebanese mountains and the Department of Earth Sciences, with major changes in the curriculum.



Research and compilation were carried out by Dr. Alexy Elias Bahnan (Department of Earth Sciences, 2025).

Sources include archival material from Jafet Library, Presidential Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, Annual Reports of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and issues of the university's Yearbook.

