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Report of the Fourth meeting of FENSCORE, the Federation for Natural Sciences Collection Research.

FENSCORE committee met on 22 October 1981 at Manchester University. Present were representatives of the regional Collection Research Units and representatives of the following institutions: British Museum (Natural History), Biological Records Centre, Institute of Geological Sciences, National Museum of Wales, Manchester Museum, Royal Scottish Museum.

The Secretary reported that an updated security copy of the database had been deposited with MDA for safe keeping. The now widely published note requesting information on collections in private hands was meeting an encouraging response. A manual, MANDATA, How to obtain information from the Manchester Museum databases, is being distributed, and includes a section on the Natural Sciences Collection Register.

At the beginning of October, the Collection Register database contained 3253 records, made up of contributions from Midlands CRU (439), North East CRU (75), North West CRU (1221), South West CRU (91), Scottish CRU (78) and Yorks & Humberside CRU (1349). In addition, over one thousand more input sheets had been received since the start of October and are being added to the database. Multiple copies of cross indexed working catalogues for each CRU were distributed to their representatives, to enable them to monitor progress.

Some operational changes are being made at Manchester Museum in the CRU data handling system, to increase efficiency. The principle effect that may be visible to curators is an apparent delay in correcting notified errors - this is because editing work is to be done in larger but less frequent jobs.

The reports from each of the CRU's showed all to be active, and that the inflow of records could be expected to increase over the next few months; several units were hoping to obtain the use of Manpower Services CEP schemes to assist the work. A common thread to the reports was the firm backing the Units were getting from their respective Area Services/Councils; notable here is the appointment by the Yorks and Humberside Area Service of a peripatetic curator for three months, to complete the work of the YHCRU.

The report of the FENSCORE working party on a register of type and figured specimens held in collections in the British Isles was discussed and confirmed. It was decided that the compilation of such a register was desirable and technically feasible; the major difficulty would appear to be the satisfactory refereeing of data supplied for inclusion in the register. To investigate this problem a pilot study of between one and two thousand specimens was to be done by the NWCRU, with the objective of permitting the Working Party to submit to the FENSCORE meeting scheduled for June 1982, firm proposals for the compilation of the register. To assist this work the Museum Documentation Association offered to computerise the pilot study data without charge, an offer readily accepted by the FENSCORE committee.

The Chairman reported on meeting of the Museums Association Working Party on Collections, and also gave advance information on the conference entitled "A National Plan for Systematic Collections" to be held in Cardiff from 6 to 9 July 1982, and being jointly sponsored by the Biology Curators Group and the National Museum of Wales.

Charles Pettitt,
Executive Secretary.