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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Collections Research - is there a market?

THE REGISTER OF NATURAL SCIENCE COLLECTIONS IN YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE was published in August 1987. It represents the culmination of eight years work by the members of the Yorkshire and Humberside Collections Research Unit, and contains 343 pages of catalogue arranged by collector's name with indices to subject and associated collectors.

Surprisingly, of the 300 printed only a modest number have been sold after fourteen months. Very few have gone outside the Yorkshire and Humberside region, in spite of circulars sent out with BCG and GCG literature. Most of the museums in Britain with natural science curators do not have a copy. Overseas sales are nil.

What is the problem? Are we too parochial in outlook or too poor? Are we too busy or just disinterested? I would like to think that none are true, and that each museum with a practising naturalist would require this and the complimentary registers of the other collection research units.

Please support the collection research initiatives if you are able. The Yorkshire and Humberside Register is available for £18.00 plus postage and packing (£10.00 plus postage and packing to members of the Yorkshire and Humberside Council).

Orders and enquiries to: Mrs J Platt, Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council, Farnley Hall, Hall Lane, Leeds LS12 5HA. Tel 0532 638909.

Tim Riley  
Sheffield City Museum



ASC to hold workshops on Collection Management and Preservation; Education of Systematists

The 1989 Annual Meeting of the Association of Systematics Collections will be held at the University of Nebraska State Museum, Lincoln, Nebraska, on May 18-20, 1989. The meeting will feature a workshop on collection management and preservation on May 19-20. The purpose of the workshop is to bring together elements of the natural history community who are responsible for the collections to explore common problems from different perspectives. Collections managers, curators/researchers, and museum directors will be given an opportunity to share views. Some innovative collection assessment and preservation programs at natural history museums will be reviewed. Representatives of funding agencies such as NSF and the Institute for Museum Services and representatives of organizations such as the National Institute for Conservation (NIC)

will discuss strategies for funding and successfully completing collection assessment and preservation projects. The workshop is co-sponsored by the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections.

A second workshop at the ASC meeting will discuss education of curators/systematists. Many people feel that universities are educating fewer systematists, and manpower needs will become acute in the next ten years. The state of the academic discipline of systematics, university programs in systematics, university-museum consortia, and curriculum needs will be discussed.

For a list of speakers and registration information, contact ASC, 730, 11th St NW, Second Floor, Washington, DC, 20001, (202) 347-2850. Hotel reservations can be made directly with the Lincoln Hilton at (402) 475-4011 or 800-HILTONS. Discount air fares are available from Goodlife Tour and Travel, Lincoln, NE 800-635-0204.

[NB The Editor has the provisional programme and application form for this meeting. If any BCG member would like further details please contact John Mathias at Leicestershire Museums, tel: (0533) 554100.]

The latest ASC NEWSLETTER (Vol 16 no 6, Dec 1988) is mainly concerned with reports from the survey and seminar in 1988 on 'Collections Resources for the 1990s'. The aims of the seminar were to evaluate progress made by ASC in the past 10 years and to map out directions for development over the next decade. As a starting point, all major holders of systematic collections were circularised with questionnaires to update information on size, funding levels and staffing over the past 10 years as well as a current perceived needs; a second questionnaire was sent to managers of collections in each major taxonomic discipline; a third was sent to workers with an identified interest in, or knowledge of, computer programmes associated with systematic collections and institutions.

Returns from the surveys were entered into a computer and form an updatable data base. They also formed the basis for discussion on the three days of the seminar: 'Institutional Needs'; 'Collections Resources as seen by the Taxonomic Disciplines'; 'Computers and Networking'. The major result of the workshop was a manifesto for action that went a long way to unify the systematics community and the administrators of collections.

The manifesto for action cannot be reproduced here, but it makes essential reading for anyone working with biological collections.

On reflection, this seems to be a preferable way to approach the dissemination of information resulting from a large scale survey to the one adopted in the UK. Here the whole survey was published in a report which is expensive, indigestible and