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Preservation of Industrial and Scientific Material (PRISM) Fund

Administered by the Science Museum on behalf of the MGC, the PRISM Fund aims to further the preservation in the public domain of items or collections important for the history and development of technology and science in all their aspects.

Eligible Applicants include fully or provisionally Registered English and Welsh non-national museums and galleries, or charitable organisations engaged in the preservation of scientific, technological and industrial artefacts or monuments, even though they may not be eligible for Registration.

Eligible Projects include the purchase of any moveable object or group of objects illustrating history of any branch of technology or science (including natural history); the purchase of archives and manuscript material with a significant technological, scientific or industrial content (excluding books acquired for library or reference purposes); the conservation of material either on acquisition or from existing collections; and transport costs associated with purchase or conservation including, in certain circumstances, the dismantling and re-erection of structures of technological significance.

Grants Available are a maximum of 50% of the eligible costs for purchases and shall not usually exceed £20,000 on any one item. Up to 70% may be awarded for conservation projects. At least half of the remaining eligible costs must be raised locally.

Applications can be submitted at any time.

Contact the Manager, PRISM Grant Fund.
The Science Museum, South Kensington
London SW7 2DD
Tel: 0171 938 8005
Fax: 0171-938 9736 or e-mail:
prism.fund@nmsi.c.uk

Deodorising Skeletal Material

In issue 10 of the NSCG newsletter, Simon Moore commented on a method for deodorising skeletal material using perfume oil. This was a novel and adaptive solution for dealing with a smell problem with 'hands on' educational material. However before using such a method a couple of points need to be considered:

- The cause of the smell. In the case quoted, shark vertebrae, the cause of the smell is probably residual fish oils in the cartilage of the skeleton. These oils will constantly migrate out of the skeletal material for a long period of time. Removal of these oils, as far as is possible, will help reduce the smell. The rehydration step Simon used, a dilute solution of Decon 90, will aid in the removal of such oils, but care must be exercised in using Decon 90. This is a highly alkaline solution and prolonged immersion will promote hydrolysis and damage proteins. Lipids are also soluble in alcohol, and a prolonged alcohol storage step may also aid in the removal of excess oil.
- Perfume oils contain volatile organic compounds, and thus their long-term effects need to be considered.

Whilst I have no answer to Simons particular problem with the shark vertebrae, removal of the oils as much as possible should help. For use with such 'hands on' specimens it may also be worth considering impregnating with a consolidant such as primal or PVA.

As a slight aside, and not as an answer to nasty niffs in the skeletal store, there is an effective odour neutraliser available from Neutron Industries (0800 393948). This is NI-712 and can be used as a pump spray or by pouring the fluid into granule dispensers for long term effect. However this is a citrus oil terpene and hence has a volatile component. Thus it cannot be recommended for use in collection storage situations.

*Julian Carter
Zoological Conservation Officer
National Museum and Gallery of Wales*