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The Biology Curator

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has shown how far ahead natural science collections are compared to other areas. Although politically the MGC may need to rank collections, they do not see this as a priority for the new scheme. Currently the idea is to have a database linked to the MGC website by the year 2000. The natural scientists on the working party are Phil Doughty, Dave Hill and myself. If you have any thoughts on this issue then please do let me know as the MGC are anxious to have as much consultation with the profession as possible.

There are many people who have worked very hard for BCG this year. I would like to thank Pat and Kath at Bolton for all their work on The Biology Curator, and Steve Garland's work for a special issue on microscope slides funded (thank you) by the NHM. Any suggestions for other 'special issues' are welcomed (preferably with some means of funding them!). We have had a number of successful meetings this year and I would like to thank Kathie Way, Steve Hewitt, David Carter and Steve Thompson for running them. Finally I would like to thank all the Committee for their hard work especially Steve Thompson and Kathie Way for keeping everything running and Helen Burchmore for ably taking the Committee minutes. We say good-bye to two Committee members, Maggie Reilly and (shock, horror!) Steve Garland. After 18 years, during which time he has served as Editor, Chairman and, latterly, doing lots of hard work leading the Biological Recording cell Steve is leaving. It just won't be the same without you!

Jane Pickering (Chairman)

Minutes of the 1998 AGM, held at the Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh on 30.4.98

Apologies for absence: Simon Hayhow, Mike Taylor, Pam Copson.

Minutes of the last meeting. Two corrections to spelling of names, Hayhow not Heyhow, and Allan not Allen. The minutes were otherwise accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

Chair's report:

Secretary's report:

Treasurer's report:

The accounts were proposed by Rob Huxley and seconded by Paul Brown.

Elections:

Two members stood down, Steve Garland and Maggie Reilly. Special mention and particular thanks were given to Steve Garland for a remarkable eighteen years service on committee, and he was wished the best of luck in standing for MA Council. Don't forget to vote for him.

Two new members were elected:

Howard Mendel (a genuine volunteer! Hip hip hooray), proposed Jane Pickering, seconded Steve Thompson.

Shona Allen, proposed Nick Goff, seconded Steve Thompson. Due to the difficulties for Scottish members

travelling to meetings, the duties of this post will in fact be shared by Shona, Mark Simmons and Steve Moran. Our thanks to them for their cooperation.

The next AGM will be held at the Powell Cotton Museum as part of the joint taxidermy meeting in April 1999. Date yet to be decided.

Secretary's Report

Committee has held four meetings since the last AGM, one more than normal due to the extra work needed for such things as the Collections at Risk Action Packs. Attendance has been good, as ever, with at least eight of the thirteen members present on all occasions.

It is fair to say that BCG continues to go from strength to strength. Our major achievement this year has perhaps been to produce the aforementioned action packs, which were launched at the NHM in October last year. Many, many thanks to Mike Palmer for the enormous amount of work he has put into this project. In the meantime, we continue to liaise with MGC and the Systematics Forum over issues of mutual concern, such as collections at risk and the recognition scheme. That our star is in the ascendant should be apparent from the fact that we have made it into the Museums Journal several times in the last year, including a major contribution to August's cover article, and that we were approached by the Sheffield Museums Trust Advisory Council to nominate a member to the council. Our nomination was Derek Lott, who attended the first meeting recently. It seems people do know we exist.

We continue to organise popular meetings, last years Vienna trip being filled and enjoyed to the full (so I am told). More than 40 people have also dragged themselves northwards into the arctic wastes once already this year, for the excellent entomology meeting in Cardiff. Many thanks to Steve Hewitt and David Carter for their work in putting that together. It makes it all the more impressive to have 60 people at this meeting in Edinburgh, and thanks to all who made it. Future meetings planned are to include another MA conference session, study trip to Dublin and Belfast at the end of this year, a meeting on geology for biologists at the beginning of 1999, a joint meeting with the Guild of Taxidermists in April 1999 and a return trip to Leiden at the end of next year. We are also intending to run a trip to St. Petersburg in 2000 (assuming the world doesn't end on January 1st).

We are undertaking an ongoing membership drive, to attract particularly members from groups outside of the curatorial community, believing that the well being of our collections is of interest and importance to a much wider group of people than just ourselves. As ever we welcome thoughts from the membership on this and any other issues.

Steve the secretary.

Treasurer's Report

This year has seen BCG's bank balance in profit again — but only just. The Vienna study trip went against the trend of previous years by showing a small loss despite subsidy from MGC and BCG. To offset this, the 1997 AGM showed a profit, albeit not as great as that suggested by the

accompanying figures since we have not yet received the catering invoice for the meeting! The Collections at Risk initiative did cost the group a considerable amount and will continue to be supported from BCG funds since this is precisely the kind of activity we should be promoting. The interest we receive on our Midland Bank Small Treasurers Account continues to provide a respectable boost to our balance (as well as also being the only example in history of your treasurer being placed in juxtaposition to the word "small").

With regard to membership I find myself repeating my remarks of last year; the membership figure remains the same, there have been a number of resignations — but these have been replaced by new subscriptions, with a small rise in institutional memberships. We really have to try to recruit new members, our subscription is extremely low and I would like to see it continue at the same level for as long as possible; however, the increased costs associated with the new format Biology Curator may threaten this aim in the long term unless we can boost membership. Additionally, those people who always wait until halfway through the year before reluctantly parting with their £8 should bear in mind that as well as the loss of interest revenue this causes, time spent chasing non-payments is time which could definitely be more usefully spent.

Details of Income and Expenditure for the period 1.4.1997-31.3.1998

Income

Subscriptions	£3,310.09
Study Trip to Vienna	10,639.50
1997 AGM Cardiff	1,274.00
Carlisle meeting	310.00
From NHM for TBC 10 supplement	1,800.00
Interest on bank account	196.38
Sales of publications/advertising	140.00

Total income **£17,669.97**

Expenditure

Study trip to Vienna	310,741.48
1997 AGM Cardiff	429.45
1998 AGM Edinburgh (deposits)	163.61
Carlisle meeting	227.15
Collections at Risk packs/launch	1,040.89
Refund of subscription overpayments	8.00
Bank charges	12.00
Book for use by M. Palmer	15.00
BCG contribution to National Biodiversity Network planning group	40.00
Biology Curator 8	980.25
Biology Curator 9	906.23
Biology Curator 10 + supplement	2,958.81
	(1,1158.81)

Total expenditure **£17,522.87**

Income over Expenditure **£147.10**

Total at bank 31.3.1997 **£9,191.67**

Total at bank 1.4.1998 **£9,338.77**

Membership

Personal members	220
Institutional members (UK)	66
Overseas members	45
Exchanges	9
Total membership	340
Total annual income from subscriptions	£3,425.00

Kathie Way, BCG Treasurer

Members who have not paid subscriptions for 1997 or 1998 to be deleted from membership list (representing total of £262)

Vicki Bates, Queensland
James Brock, Horniman Museum
Buxton Museum
Bruce Campbell, Newport
Chris Collins, Cambridge
Margaret Crittenden, Nottingham
Gray Art Gallery & Museum, Hartlepool
Nick Moyes, Derby
Library, Newark Museum, New Jersey
John Nudds, Manchester
O. A. Williams, Ilkeston

So Many Things, So Little Time To Document Them

First in a series of articles in which Nick Goff, Documentation Cell leader, explains key aspects of collections documentation, including the requirements for MGC Registration, current standards from the MDA and the particular features of biological collections.

Most people in museums will have heard of MGC's Registration Scheme. Phase 2 is now well underway, with its enhanced requirements for collections documentation. These at first sight may seem off-putting, and a little arcane. Luckily, the Registration Guidelines point the way to a valuable source of help - SPECTRUM: The UK Museum Documentation Standard.

Let me explain a little about SPECTRUM before we go any further. It is not a piece of software or a documentation system: it is a set of standards for collections documentation that is applicable to all systems. It is published by the Museum Documentation Association (MDA), and is derived from the experience and best practices of the museum profession. It deals with all the procedures that happen to objects in museums and how they should be recorded. Each museum should use the minimum standards for these procedures to develop the documentation practices that meet its needs and aims. SPECTRUM also defines what information should be recorded in each procedure, and highlights where museums should develop policies to underpin their procedures.