



<http://www.natsca.org>

The Biology Curator

Title: So Many Things, So Little Time To Document Them

Author(s): Goff, N.

Source: Goff, N. (1998). So Many Things, So Little Time To Document Them. *The Biology Curator*, Issue 12, 3 - 4.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/439>

NatSCA supports open access publication as part of its mission is to promote and support natural science collections. NatSCA uses the Creative Commons Attribution License (CCAL) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/> for all works we publish. Under CCAL authors retain ownership of the copyright for their article, but authors allow anyone to download, reuse, reprint, modify, distribute, and/or copy articles in NatSCA publications, so long as the original authors and source are cited.

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remarks of last year; the membership figure remains the same, there have been a number of resignations — but these have been replaced by new subscriptions, with a small rise in institutional memberships.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.

Anyone who has seen SPECTRUM will know that it is thorough, comprehensive, and not an easy bedtime read. Don't let that discourage you. To meet the Registration requirements, there are only eight procedures to worry about. When you have more time, or need them for a specific purpose, you can think about the other twelve. The Registration Guidelines list the different types of record museums should keep and relate these to the eight "primary" procedures in SPECTRUM. So you know where to start.

There are two more sources of help available once you do start. Standards in action: A guide to using SPECTRUM, recently published by the MDA, is a guide to implementing SPECTRUM. It makes clear the link between SPECTRUM's

Now Hear This!

EC regulation No. 338/97 prohibits the acquisition or use of a range of protected species, listed in that regulation, for activities associated with commercial gain. However, article 30 of regulation 939/97 allows museums to apply for a one off exemption certificate, which will be granted automatically to any MGC registered institution.

It would appear from the response at the recent Edinburgh meeting that many curators feel that this does not apply to them, as they do not operate for commercial gain. BEWARE! If you have entrance charges, special exhibition charges, sell publications or run any sort of shop or cafe, receive grants or sponsorship, this may well be considered as commercial gain. This means you!

Application is very straightforward, but make sure you have your registration number to hand. It also costs nothing, so every museum with biological material should apply as a matter of course, just to be on the safe side. To date there have been no more than a handful of applications.

For application packs (sounds complicated but it is about five questions on a single side of A4) contact Roy Queralt, Global Wildlife Division, Room 8/22, Tollgate House, Houlton Street, Bristol, BS2 9DJ. Tel. 0117 987 8010 / 8202 / 8749 / 6165. Fax. 0117 987 8206.

E.mail global.wildlife@gtnet.gov.uk

Website <http://www.open.gov.uk/gwd/gwdhome.htm>

Study Trip 2000

In 2000, we are intending to go to St. Petersburg. This will require a considerable amount of work and it is not yet clear who will be involved, but there is the possibility of running it as a joint trip between ourselves and at least GCG. Costs will probably be similar to those for trips that we have already run. I would be grateful for feedback from people as to whether they would like to attend, so that I can get an idea of what to cater for. Don't be shy. Thanks. Steve T.

standards and Registration, as well as answering some real-life museum questions, and includes self-diagnostic tools for assessing your museum's documentation. To back that up the MDA has unveiled its team of SPECTRUM Advisers, museum professionals with extensive experience in collections documentation, who are available at the end of a phone to answer queries about SPECTRUM. Your correspondent is one of the SPECTRUM Advisers. Although the intention is to have regionally-based Advisers, it is worth noting that I am the only Adviser with a background in natural sciences. To contact the SPECTRUM Advisers, call 01223 366097.

In subsequent editions of The Biology Curator I will explain the "primary" procedures, how they can be implemented, how they can help your museum meet its aims and objectives, and some of the particular requirements and peculiarities of biological collections.

Next time Do It While You Can: Object Entry

Biological Recording Cell Report

*Steve Garland, Bolton Museum
National Biodiversity Network*

The NBN project is still awaiting a decision by the Heritage Lottery Fund. How the project develops in future will depend on this. Discussions are ongoing with the Natural History Museum concerning the future managing of national taxonomic checklists. The development of Recorder's replacement (now referred to as Collect & Collate Software) is on track. They are about to decide on a software developer, so work will start soon. I believe that they hope to be trialing a stand-alone version of the package by early next summer. There is little decided about the package yet, except that it will run on Windows95 (or 98 by then!). Various databases are being considered, including MSAccess.

The only other thing to report is that the number of Museum-based LRCs is steadily dropping. Sheffield Museum has been surgically separated from the LRC as a result of the creation of the Sheffield Museums and Galleries Trust. The LRC remains within the City Council. It would be interesting to know how many are left; other non-museum LRCs that were once in museums include Rotherham and Bristol and LRCs under threat include Derby, West Yorkshire and some in Scotland.

These changes bring into question whether museums will be a major player in this field in future. However, the BCG's involvement with the NBN is still important because of issues relating to archive management, voucher specimens, environmental sampling and identification/ verification of records. We must ensure that biological recording does not become divorced from collections and that manuscript records are not lost. Many non-museum LRCs do not see either of these issues as important, merely as an extra cost and an inconvenience. This attitude is a worrying extension