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BIOLOGICAL RECORDING CELL REPORT

Steve Garland - Bolton Museum, Art Gallery & Aquarium

The Millennium bid has unfortunately failed, as announced to the bid team on the 4th of February. Every BCG member should have received a copy of the latest summary of the LRC section. In the period up to then, most records centres have taken the opportunity to discuss possible consortium structures with other organisations. Rather than establishing new stand-alone LRCs in each county, most seem to be looking at networking existing resources. Now that the Millennium Bid is no more, it is up to organisations such as the BCG and NFBR to try to develop some of the ideas further.

The Internet is still a rather slow and unreliable way of networking information, but the continuing development of better telephone lines (including ISDN links), faster modems and faster computers will result in steady improvements. The political implications of establishing new LRCs or centralising existing resources are significant. The key to the successful development of biological recording nationally is networking at a local and national level. A major benefit of a successful bid would have been the addressing of universal problems relating to such things as Data Quality, Copyright, Accreditation Standards, standards for access to data, charging policies and software compatibility. These are still vitally important issues which will need resolving before any real national or regional networking can take place.

Local Agenda 21 and Biodiversity issues are a strong lever to support LRCs. In the North West of England there are discussions continuing at several levels about how to approach biodiversity. Many Boroughs are developing Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs), but most are realising that a county or regional perspective is necessary for many aspects. Most counties are approaching BAPs at that level, but a North West Biodiversity Steering Group has been formed to take a regional view. This will be especially important for organisms which are poorly known. It may be impossible to assemble meaningful data at a county or borough level. Everyone is quickly realising that LRCs provide the best hope of collating the vast quantities of data needed. BAPs are not a 'one-off' thing, but require monitoring and adapting continuously. LRCs are vital for this development and should capitalise on the opportunities presented. Co-ordination of LRCs and national data sets would help to provide a complete picture of the current knowledge of our fauna and flora.

The BCG meeting in Nottingham was well attended and a number of interesting presentations examined biological recording and its relationship with collections. Graham Walley will present more details in the next Biology Curator. BCG will be working with NFBR to drive forward several museum LRC interests. The meeting agreed a resolution for BCG and NFBR to pursue creation of an Advisory Board to supervise Biological Recording - more on these developments in future issues.

If you are discussing developments in your county, please let me know what is happening; even if it is just a short letter, fax or e-mail. I want to try to develop a clear picture of museum LRCs and developments nationally. In the North West we have set up a NW Recorder User Group, which already seems to be discussing issues wider than just the use of Recorder. Has anyone else done the same thing?

Although there will be no Millennium funding, I think that the excitement that the Bid generated in the field of biological recording must be harnessed to ensure the future development of a national network, by some means.

BRISC

BIOLOGICAL RECORDING IN SCOTLAND CAMPAIGN

FROM David Mellor, Chair of BRISC.

Dear Pals

Following the news of the NBM bid's demise and taking into account our organisation's desires to be treated as (more) equal partners in any future initiatives I am writing to make the following points.

1. Between them, our organisations contain a substantial, if not complete, representation of LRCs. It is essential that we collectively help to catalyse the formation of an organisation that does properly represent LRCs as soon as constitutionally possible. This point has been endorsed by BRISC and, I think, by the membership of the other organisations. The role of the CCBP should be examined as part of this.