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It was stressed that efforts would be made to redeploy staff where possible, and that some posts might become available under the Tyne and Wear regime. However, there are no guarantees.

As yet the full details of the new staffing arrangements are not known, leading to concerns about the levels of curatorial care, the lack of continuity of care, a reduction in technical expertise and a loss of the computerised documentation systems.

The rationale behind the proposed change results from a projected deficit in the University's accounts of £1m. The £215,000 the Hancock Museum costs to run each year is deemed to be excessive, and a substantial saving needs to be made. In addition, the Hancock, despite its renowned collections and scholarly connections, is regarded by the University as having no relevance to teaching or academic research. An alternative scheme for the Hancock's future, which relied on a major fund-raising exercise to raise capital for expansion, (and hence reduce running costs) was shelved on receipt of the Tyne and Wear option. The Council of the University asked that the budget for the Hancock be reduced to c. £70,000 per annum (a saving of £145K), an unrealistic figure for the smallest of museums! The projected saving under the Tyne and Wear option falls far short of that demanded by Council - a saving in the region of £60,000 is rumoured. So the Hancock Museum has been 'saved' - or has it? - and at what price?

Letters

Dear John

I recently received a request from Liz Hill, of the BBC Wildlife Magazine for a listing of 'Beetle-down ...' events. She is responsible for compiling the 'Whats-on' section of the magazine. I explained that there is no national 'Beetle-down ...' events listing available as each museum does its own thing.

If anyone wishes therefore to advertise an event in BBC Wildlife they should notify Liz direct at the address below. She stresses that she cannot guarantee a mention for all 'Beetle-down ...' events but will be happy to do so where space permits.

Liz Hill, BBC Wildlife Magazine, Broadcasting House, White Lady's Road, Bristol BS8 2LR

Best wishes
Paul Richards
Sheffield City Museum

Book Reviews

The Herbarium Handbook

edited by **Leonard Forman and Diane Bridson**

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 1989, pp 214.

ISBN 0 947643 20 6

This modestly priced handbook, paperback and vinyl-bound, is obviously intended for bench use. The foreword explains its origins as course documents provided by numerous Kew staff for their 'International Diploma Course in Herbarium Techniques'. It intends to deal with only the technical side of herbarium work and excepts the 'science of taxonomy itself'.

The book is neatly organised into an introduction followed by 39 numbered chapters in five sections - The Herbarium Building, Collections and Materials, Herbarium Techniques and Management, Additional Techniques, Collecting, and the Herbarium in a Wider Context. A five-page index and about 100 bibliographic references are also given. I appreciated the itemised, almost checklist style of each chapter, facilitating quick reference, together with many line drawings.

Generally speaking, the longer chapters are the best, those on herbarium techniques and management being the most comprehensive. Here, many line drawings are given showing the right and wrong ways of mounting and labelling, administering loans, visitors, etc. We are, however, still urged to place labels on the bottom right of a sheet, where fire and water damage will exert their first effects.

While the book attempts to be fully comprehensive quite often the chapters are very short, sometimes of only one page, and may convey little beyond the title. For example, computers are pretty well dismissed in chapter 28 an 'Introduction to computers' which is two pages long, and spends 40% of this space spelling out the disadvantages of using them! The single page on photographic copying of herbarium