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sheets lists four methods but doesn't mention Xerox! The chapter entitled 'Checklists' is not what you would think; it tells you how to construct one, not which ones to use. Actually, nowhere in the book are we recommended checklists. 'Essential Herbarium Literature' in two and a half pages, contains just the briefest of lists, but over one page tells us how to read Roman numerals. Most chapters end with few or even only a single reference.

The book seems to assume that the herbarium contains two types of staff, and frequently makes the distinction between 'technical staff' and 'trained botanists'. However, the choice of chapters rather confuses this. For example, we have chapters of a very introductory nature such as 'What is Taxonomy' and 'The Types of Herbaria', followed by chapters which I consider rather esoteric, such as 'Dissection of Floral Organs' and 'Collectors, Itineraries, Maps and Gazetteers'. I am not sure who the otherwise excellent 21-page chapter on 'collecting' is intended for especially as there is no companion chapter on literature for identification. Are herbarium technicians normally expected to collect material for others, presumably the 'trained botanists', to identify? In practice, I expect that most users of this book will be active botanists who happen to maintain a herbarium. However, this section is actually very comprehensive and valuable, though it lacks reference to algae.

The attempt to be exhaustive results in many curious but just about relevant statements. For example, the section 'The Herbarium Building' tells us what kind of building we should choose and particularly to 'avoid areas liable to flooding or adjacent to flammable building or vegetation'. Throughout the book there is a tendency to state a problem but not supply its remedy. We are told that temperature control, humidity, ventilation, decontamination, etc., are necessary but not why we need them, how to implement them or where to get advice. However, Kew's own freezing method for decontamination is extensively dealt with on page 17-19. In fact, the chapters on pests and treatments are especially good, even giving drawings of insects, though they are not listed in the index. Similarly good are the chapters on materials and what not to use, though I could use more details on papers, their weights and finishes, acid-free treatments, etc. Glues are given very cursory treatment, only 'Evostick' is mentioned by name, despite the numerous other adhesives available, some modern PVA formulations being acid-free. In fact, there is no information given anywhere to answer my commonest herbarium enquiry 'what should I use and where can I buy it?' My copy arrived with a page of errata for inclusion from the editors.

So, while the book is certainly a herbarium handbook and at least mentions just about everything relevant, it is very short in essential detail in many areas. Rather uneven, it is, nevertheless, about the only comprehensive book of its kind and should be valuable to all curators, not just botanists.

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Natural History Museums - Directions for Growth

edited by Paisley, S. Cato and Clyde Jones.
Texas Tech University Press, Lubbock, Texas, 1991.
256 pp. Price \$25.00. ISBN 0-89672-240-6.

This monograph is made up of 18 of the 22 papers presented at a symposium 'New Directions and professional standards for natural history museums' organised for the joint meeting of the Mountain-Plains Museums Association and the Midwest Museums Conference in Kansas City in 1988.

The arrival of a review copy of this monograph when the reviewer was in the process of editing the 'Manual of Natural History Curatorship' was a cause for some alarm. Had someone beaten us to it? Was the Manual no longer needed?

It was with some relief that the monograph was found to be focussed almost exclusively on American practice and experience and that most of the papers are descriptive rather than philosophical and do not attempt an international approach.

The papers are grouped into four sections - roles and functions (3); collections (6); exhibits and education (5) and the future (4).

In the section 'roles and functions' the papers serve to emphasise that the museum world in the United States is very different from that in other countries. Humphrey looks at the problems facing university natural history museums and questions why so few scholar-curators in university museums are members of the American Association of Museums. Laerm and Edwards survey the 23 State Museums of Natural History, 13 of which are administered by state agencies, nine are within universities and one is private. An appendix provides details of the stated mission; relative importance of roles; organizational structure and funding for each of the institutions.

Shropshire and Shropshire describe the creation of the Mississippi Museum of Natural History to serve the needs of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.

Included in the 'collections' section are papers by Rose who addresses the problems associated with the preservation of collections and in maintaining the integrity of research specimens, emphasising the need for better documentation and more research into preservation methods. Silvey and Cato look at collections care in a small natural history museum (Brazos Valley) and describe how by preparing written policies and carrying out an assessment of the state of collections care it was possible to develop a long range plan. Simmons looks at the problems of fluid-preserved collections. This paper was written before the publication of the papers from the Manchester seminar on the Conservation of Natural History Collections. It raises similar issues but has few solutions apart from the need for more research, better documentation and a more rigorous approach. Cato and Schmidly look at policies for the management of ancillary vertebrate collections (photographs, slides, stomach contents, tissue and blood samples, sound recordings, hair samples and frozen preparations). These issues are seldom addressed and this is a useful short paper as is the appended Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection Policy. Shelton looks at changes which have taken place in the management of vertebrate palaeontology collections. She suggests that greater awareness of the problems is leading to improved support and management. Bohnert and Surovik-Bohnert highlight the need (and make some suggestions) for guidelines in the destructive analysis of archaeological collections, a subject which most European natural history curators will be surprised to find in a volume with this title. It nevertheless raises the issue of whether the separation of biological and geological collections from anthropological collections is logical or desirable.

In the 'exhibits and education' section, De Mars traces the evolution of exhibitions in a natural history museum based mainly on his own experience at Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History. He discusses the impact which new technology in production methods, the growing interest in learning theory, concern about conservation, and the evaluation of audience responses have had on exhibitions and concludes that they have led to a more professional approach. Deisler-Seno and Reader describe the development of curriculum-orientated programs at Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History. Few details are given of the state mandated curriculum but

the solutions adopted make an interesting paper on the subject on which little has been published. In the same way, Patton's paper which discusses natural history loan materials for the classroom is a useful addition to the literature. Tirell describes the use of travelling exhibits to raise the profile of a university-state museum (Oklahoma Museum of Natural History), and Gottfried, Smith and Dacus discuss the role of natural history museums in improving science education in rural schools (New Mexico Rural Science Education Project).

The last section devoted to 'the future' includes papers by Choate on sources of funding for natural science museums including a description of the work of the Foundation Center. Denton considers the American phenomenon in which physical anthropology has traditionally been included in the remit of the natural history museum and questions whether natural history museums have a role in anthropology in the future. Porter considers the nature of natural history in the 20th century, and presents a short historical survey of the evolution of natural history and its impact on museums. The final paper by Lintz asks whether we are going in circles and find evidence for a cyclical approach to museum exhibition.

It is important to recognise that this monograph is based on the papers presented at a meeting of one of the regional Associations of American Museums. It does not attempt to present a picture of the natural history museum movement in North America but is intended to be of relevance mainly to the museums in the Mountain Plains region. Most of the papers presented are short and many are restricted to a few pages with very little opportunity for exploring subjects in any depth. Some papers have extensive lists of literature cited (but with few from outside the United States) and others, disappointingly, have none. These restrictions make it a rather disappointing volume with few papers addressing those issues which are of current concern to the international natural history museum community. The volume serves to emphasise the rather parochial nature of natural history museums at a time when there is an overwhelming need for a concerted and integrated international approach. To be fair, however, this is perhaps the only monograph to have been published on natural history museums since the special issue in 1969 of the Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington 'Natural history collections; past, present and future' and as such it is very welcome. It is also relatively modest in price.

Geoff Stansfield
January 1992