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The project MTI put together, called Technology Foresight, was one of many submitted to the Department for Education and Employment for funding under the UK Technology Foresight Programme. The majority of projects that received funding were related to academic or scientific developments, such as halibut farming and flatter television screens. MTI's proposal, to look at improving the use of IT in the museum sector, and the training implications of that, was the only one relating to our sector, and the only one to address "quality of life" issues.

So what happened? A series of workshops was run, by MDA, around the country for museum workers, to give a flavour of the ways IT could be used in museums. This went far beyond just computerising the documentation. Each workshop included a session on writing a World Wide Web page. The workshops also provided information for an analysis of training needs in IT. A report on the state of IT in the museum sector was commissioned. A forum of key individuals took place to bring together decision-makers in the museum sector, delegates from workshops, representatives from the training sector, from computing and academic worlds and from similar sectors such as libraries.

What has emerged is that the place and role of IT in museums is changing. We are moving on from collecting data about objects to making information available, in the form of modified and interpreted data, as a product, and often in a distributed way beyond the walls of the museum. There is also a pressure to make this information re-usable and able to be shared. In other words, IT can be a very powerful tool to help museums meet their aims, especially to improve access to collections and the information about them. Already there are pilot schemes running and useful models from other sectors.

But, to make the most of the opportunities, there is a need to ensure that appropriate training is available, at the appropriate level.

The results of the training needs analysis and the conclusions from the forum will be drawn together into a final report. This in turn is informing MTI's National Training Strategy. As a result the museum sector will have a much clearer idea of how to keep its head above water in the rising sea of new technology.

But possibly most importantly, Technology Foresight could unlock additional challenge funding that can make a real impact on the IT training needs across the museum sector, and in partnership with other sectors.

## Hidden Treasures

M.H. Lazarus,

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Museum and Gallery of Wales, Cardiff.

In 1989, the Conservation Project at the National Museums and Galleries of Wales was set up for an initial 2 year period eventually being extended to 5 years. Each department was assigned a conservator to be responsible for general care and condition of their collections. One of our tasks in the Botany Department was to tackle the storeroom

which was known to hold slumbering treasures of prints and drawings but, due to the lack of staff and time, had remained, like Sleeping Beauty, unawakened.

The collection, currently totalling 9,095 includes important items such as *Banks' Florilegium*, a large collection of black and white engravings of *Flora Danica*, the Drinkwater Collection (a delightful group of 385 drawings in gouache of British plants), the Crowley Collection (a charming set of watercolours carried out by the family of sisters and aunts in Alton, Hampshire in the 1920s), 21 Nature prints by Bradbury and Evans in 1854, the Towers Collection and some recent work executed by Dale Evans (winner of the Jill Smythies Award for Botanical Illustration, 1991, The Linnean Society of London) who was employed in 1983 by the Museum to produce posters, notelets and cards. However, one of the largest single components of our holding is what we refer to as the Cymmrodorion Collection which contains an interesting and wide-ranging group of drawings. From the conservation point of view, a standard form was taken and adapted for our collection of photographs, lantern slides, wax models, wood sections and prints and drawings. In fact, although kept in old, heavy, wooden boxes (some badly damaged), the collection was in surprisingly good condition but was in need of cleaning, re-mounting onto acid-free mountboard and re-housing into acid-free solander boxes and kept in a cool, dry, stable environment.

### Historical background

In 1939, the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion — a learned group of scholars dedicated to promoting all things Welsh in the Arts and Sciences — donated to the Museum, a large collection of botanical prints believed to have been formed by Welsh sculptor, Joseph Edwards (1814 - 82).

These 760 prints revealed treasures untold: each box contained new delights. Previously they had been accessed scientifically by genus and species but now new eyes saw them with the additional exciting dimension of exquisite draughtsmanship and historical importance in the analysis of the evolution of the relationship of art and science in the history of botany.

Within the total of 36 boxes, many of the milestones in botanical history are portrayed by a selection of the most talented botanical illustrators of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This article tells the story behind the artists and their works.

### Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708-70)

*Plantae Selectae* (1772) by Georg Dionysius Ehret was one of the great European botanical iconographies, published towards the beginning of a 100 year period which might well be regarded as the golden age of European botanical drawing. It bears witness to the coming together of three vital elements: a superb artist, engravings of the highest quality by Haid, and an enlightened and wealthy patron.

Dr. Christoph Jakob Trew (1695-1769), an eminent physician and botanist from Nuremberg, was the patron who insisted that Ehret, in accordance with Linnaeus's system of classification (1737-38), should emphasise the 'sexual character' of each plant i.e. the parts of the flower. Between

1750 and the early 19th century, roots virtually disappeared from botanical art, appearing only if they were of medicinal or of economic significance. The over-emphasis of the flower reached its apex in the doomed Temple of Flora by Thornton. The engravings of the pineapple and papaya included in this publication would be the first sight that people in Europe had of the exotic fruit brought back by the voyages of discovery. In Linnaeus's home outside Uppsala, he papered the walls with Ehret's hand-coloured engravings, at least five of which we have in our collection of twenty-nine.

### **Pierre-Joseph Redouté (1759-1840)**

Although appointed draughtsman and painter to the Cabinet of Marie-Antoinette, Pierre-Joseph Redouté managed to survive the French Revolution in 1792. Under the patronage of Josephine (Napoleon's first wife) he became famous for the two splendid works on the flowers of the gardens of the Malmaison — 'Les Roses' and 'Les Liliacés'. On a visit to England, Redouté came across the process of stipple engraving (etching by dots instead of lines) which gave particularly subtle tonal shades. Returning to France, he perfected the method and claimed to have invented this process of colour printing from a single plate, defending himself ably in an ensuing court case.

In *Traite des Arbres et Arbrustes* (1800-19), an early work of Redouté, the engravings have not been retouched by hand, which perhaps lessens the impact, but clearly demonstrates the technique of stipple engraving. It was difficult to have a dried specimen of succulents so botanists had to rely on illustrations such as in Redouté's *Plantae Historia Succulentarum* (1799-1829)

We have 40 illustrations from the above publications.

### **William Hooker (1785-1865) and Walter Hood Fitch (1817-92)**

While Sir William Hooker was holding the Chair of Botany in Glasgow, he came across a young apprentice called Walter Hood Fitch, who worked for a firm of calico designers. Fitch's training suited him very well for botanical illustration and Hooker, who was in desperate need of an accomplished draughtsman, brought Fitch to London with him when he was appointed Director of the Royal Gardens at Kew. Fitch became an expert lithographer as is amply displayed in the drawings from *Rhododendrons from Sikkim-Himalaya* (1849-51). He soon became the sole illustrator for the *Botanical Magazine* (1854) until 1877 when he quarrelled with Sir Joseph Hooker (Sir William's second son and successor.)

Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, a renowned scientist with an excellent reputation as a taxonomist and plant geographer, set off for India in 1847. In the foothills of the Himalayas, he found many splendid rhododendrons. Hooker sent home rather thin sketches with seeds and dried specimens and his father organised the publication of *Rhododendrons from Sikkim-Himalaya* by employing Fitch. The artist was said to have had marvellous powers of visualising plants as they had lived and of retaining their image in his memory. Joseph Hooker wrote 'It has been one of my purest sources of gratification to find that the fruits of my own Himalayan

journeys .....have afforded to Mr. Fitch the means of executing...a series of drawings that have been pronounced as of unrivalled excellence in an artistic point of view.'

From Lindley's *Collectiana botanica* (1821-26), the *Catasetum hookeri* collected by William Sanson in Brazil was sent to W.J. Hooker in Suffolk in 1818, placed in the stove (heated greenhouse) there where it blossomed soon after and Hooker made a drawing which he sent to his friend John Lindley in London who published it four years later in *Collectiana Botanica*. The species was named by Lindley after Hooker.

From the above publications, we hold nineteen drawings.

### **Elizabeth Blackwell (- 1758)**

In 1995, the department was successful in acquiring the two volumes of the *Curious Herbal* (1737-39) to add to our collection of 26 loose drawings by Elizabeth Blackwell. This herbal was undertaken to redeem Elizabeth Blackwell's husband from debtor's prison. She took lodgings near the Chelsea Physic Garden in Swan Walk in order to obtain fresh flowers and, encouraged by Sir Hans Sloane and various eminent members of the medical profession, she drew, engraved and coloured the 500 plates herself. Her husband, a languages scholar, translated the common names for her. On completion of the first copy, Elizabeth was allowed to present, in person, a copy to the College of Physicians who were so impressed with her work that they gave her an 'ample testimonial, in writing, of their approbation of her work.'

This herbal is important for the use of keyed details making the link between text images by labelling and distinguishing flower, fruit and seed. This was not done in earlier herbals (i.e. Gerard's). Blanche Henry states Blackwell's *Curious Herbal* has the most comprehensive collection of figures of medical plants in any British book until the publication of Wm. Woodville's *Medical Botany* (1790-5). Perhaps this partly explains its great popularity. Botanically correct but amateurish in execution, it was expanded and re-published with Eisenberg's engravings by C.J. Trew, Ehret's patron, and named *Herbarium Blackwellianum* (1754-73).

### **James Sowerby (1757-1822)**

James Sowerby, a knowledgeable scientist and talented artist, co-operated with Sir J.E. Smith, a Norwich botanist, to produce *Icones Pictae Plantarum Rariorum* (1790-93) displaying the rare plants grown in English gardens. This small, delicately engraved and hand-coloured flora was never completed. We have eight fine examples of Sowerby's work from this publication.

### **Robert John Thornton (1768?-1873)**

*The Temple of Flora* (1799), an impressive, folio-sized book attempted to illustrate, explain and promote the Linnean method but in fact was closer to the florilegium tradition of emphasising the beauty of the plant rather than the scientific content. There was little value scientifically in this sumptuous book and, contrary to normal botanical practice, Thornton set the plant portraits (of which we have seven originals) against romantic landscapes. For example,

Thornton has set the Night-blowing Cereus (called *Cactus grandiflorus* by Thornton), a native of Jamaica and Cuba, in a very English moonlit background which makes a dramatic but rather incongruous picture. In his efforts to make this 'the most magnificent botanical publication ever produced', Thornton enlisted eminent painters and engravers to execute his original and unique conception. Sadly, this gorgeous book ruined Thornton financially. Although modern critics treat Thornton almost as a figure of fun because of his rather flowery and overblown prose, it must be remembered that it was popular at that time.

**John Sibthorp (1758-96) and James Edward Smith (1759-1828)**

**Ferdinand Bauer (1760-1826)**

In A.D.512, the classical Greek scholar, Dioscorides who was a doctor in the Roman army, wrote the most influential herbal for fifteen centuries called *De Materia Medica*. As a result of his interest in the plants recorded by Dioscorides, John Sibthorp, Sherardian Professor at Oxford arrived in Vienna in 1784 to study the manuscript in the National Library. There he met Ferdinand Bauer, a remarkable botanical illustrator, and persuaded him to join in his botanical tour of discovery round Greece. *Flora Graeca* (1806-40) is the result of this labour. It consists of 10 large folio volumes, comprising 966 plates after drawings by Bauer. In 1811, Thomas Martyn, Cambridge Professor of Botany, spoke of the *Flora Graeca* by saying "In short, the whole execution of the work is deserving of the highest praise"

Sir J.E. Smith (1759-1828), an eminent doctor of medicine and also the man responsible for bringing the collections and library of Carl Linnaeus to England in 1784, edited some of the volumes of *Flora Graeca* before his death in 1828.

**William Roxburgh (1751-1815)**

*Plants of the coast of Coromandel* (1795-1819) is another of the botanical books produced as a result of the scientific investigation of foreign lands. It is an important work relating to Indian botany which Roxburgh studied on several voyages to India and during his appointment as assistant surgeon on the East India Company's Madras establishment. To quote Professor Stearn, "Wm. Roxburgh spent more than thirty years of his life in India, an eminent botanist and a meticulous if rather arid artist his *Plants of the coast of Coromandel*, must rank among the most impressive publications of the age, though his plates, which were engraved from some of his large collection of drawings by native Indian artists, are often rather marred by a heavy and wiry outline." We have copies of eleven of these illustrations.

It has to be said that the collection has been fairly stable for the last 57 years and in our efforts to care for and conserve it, we may cause damage by handling and moving the drawings. In order to avoid over-handling, we have instigated a rolling programme with the Photography Department to supply us with slides and photos of the original work. The collection has been entered into the computerised Collections Management System (C.M.S.) to

make data easily available. The preparation for a major exhibition in October 1997, mean even more disruption with mounting, framing and exposure to light but it is time our exquisite and illuminating collection was brought back to life: we must take care our kiss is not the kiss of death.

## Accreditation for Local Record Centres

Bill Butcher

Somerset Environmental Record Centre, July 1997

**Comments on Steve Garland's (Bolton Museum & Art Gallery) suggestions for LRC accreditation, as published in The Biology Curator, 6, July 1996 and NW Recorder User Group Newsletter 1996.**

### General Comments

The emphasis of a successful Local Records Centre must be on providing a high standard of service to users, rather than collecting information for its own sake. This means that the centre's policies should be "user-led" rather than "provider-led". My main concern is that the suggestions that Steve Garland makes for accreditation appear to be rather "provider-led".

It is imperative to avoid over-burdening ourselves with resource-intensive administrative systems that could tie LRCs up in unnecessary bureaucracy and make it impossible to provide a fast, up-to-date and reliable service for users. The danger is that, while each suggestion may seem to be harmless and desirable in itself, taken together the requirements may be impossible within realistic available resources.

There are many aspects of accreditation that are omitted from SG's paper. In my view accreditation should also cover subjects such as management structure (for example, a commitment to local partnership working; statutory agencies, NGOs and local authorities should all be represented) and priorities for data collection, processing and provision (e.g. a commitment to using methods that will contribute to surveillance and monitoring of local and national biodiversity action targets). It may be necessary for management of key datasets to be obligatory. The words "habitat" and "site" do not appear in the paper.

Part of the problem with SG's paper is that some of the terms are used ambiguously. For example, is "collecting" in item 1 referring to information collecting or specimen collecting? (both phrases are used later).

### Comments on specific numbered points

My principal concerns are these:

**8. Security.** As written this would close every LRC down. There are several aspects of confidentiality to be considered — wildlife abuse risk, landowner sensitivities, data provider sensitivities and intellectual property rights. LRCs cannot