Natural History Collections Working Group Newsletter

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Coordinators Column

After two very successful meetings in both London and The Hague, we have started the new triennium with a challenging programme, which is presented on page 2 of this newsletter and on the ICOM-CC website.

Collaboration will again be the keyword for success. Therefore, I hope that all of you who can contribute to this programme or just want to give some feedback will contact me or Vicky (Editor vicky.purewal@museumwales.ac.uk). We certainly can't do without you!

As you might have guessed, this is my second period as elected co-ordinator, which means that regrettably I have to step down at the triennial meeting in Delhi. Although there are still 3 more exciting years ahead, it may be wise to start thinking about my successor.

If you think the job of Co-ordinator could be of interest to you or a colleague you know, or even if you just want to know a bit more about what it involves, then please feel free to contact me. However, if you are not keen on travelling to other continents then this job might not be of interest to you…….

Finally, I hope you will continue to feed us with lots of announcements, news and ideas for the benefit of our professional community!

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Working Group Programme for 2005 -2008

I. Investigating the possibility of launching a web-based expertise network on fluid preservation.
The skeletal framework of this website could be based on the recently published decision-making model, which has been developed in the last triennial period.

II. Strengthening collaboration between national and international natural history societies.
Collaboration through working group newsletters and meetings. Joint (interim) meetings/projects with groups such as SPNHC and NatSCA.

III. Establish and improve interaction with other ICOM CC working groups.
This will increase knowledge and understanding of conservation problems related to natural history objects. For example those that contain both organic and inorganic materials e.g. efflorescence on wax models containing metals or metal based pigments, herbaria treated with metal salts, and degradation of fats and fatty acids catalysed by metal ions in fluid preserved specimens.

IV. Forum discussion about ethics in collecting and preserving natural history collections for the coming triennial meeting.

Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF):
Building an Online "Metacollection"

Larry Speers and Meredith A. Lane

Currently, many natural history collections and the scientists associated with them are struggling to justify their existence, as funding for these institutions is increasingly brought into question (Dalton 2003, Gropp 2003, 2004, Goodman 2004).

Surprisingly, the demand for the kinds of information that natural history collections can provide is at an all time high. At this present time, well documented, baseline data of species level biodiversity is essential.

Such information can address current and emerging issues including the Convention on Biological Diversity 2010 targets; for reducing biodiversity loss, the impact of climate change on biodiversity, newly emerging diseases, environmental sustainability and the impact of invasive species.

It is estimated that approximately 2-3 billion specimens, with corresponding collection data, are held within natural history collections around the world. Collectively, this massive information resource provides our most complete historical record of the biodiversity of our planet. However, any one collection contains only a limited amount of the total information, making it very difficult for potential users to take advantage of this global resource. Little of the information held in natural history collections is easily accessible to the scientific community, neither is it readily available to decision makers whose aim is protecting our natural heritage and designing and implementing programmes and policies to ensure its sustainable use.

As collections have expanded through time, the natural history collections community has yet to invest, to the degree needed, in modern information management approaches that would facilitate the documentation and utilisation of their valuable content. Fortunately, the actual costs of such investments have been coming down in recent years.

Historically, the long term growth in the holdings of most natural history collections has not been directed by any long term strategic planning process, but has depended on short term influences such as the interests of particular staff members, haphazard participation in collecting expeditions, opportunistic access to different and changing

funding sources, and the changing directions of research priorities. This approach to collections development has resulted in the temporal, geographic and taxonomic distribution of material within collections being uneven.

Without some form of easily accessible index or catalogue of each institutions' natural history collections, it is very difficult for a potential user to predict what information a collection will hold, in order to identify an institution to visit, or a resource to tap. One collection may have vast numbers of specimens of a particular species (valuable for population studies), numerous samples of organisms from one geographic area (useful in ecological modelling), or long historical series (useful for monitoring environmental change). However, it is actually the collective holdings of all collections taken together (the worldwide "metacollection") that is more likely to be able to supply this needed information.

Baseline estimates of the historic distribution of the planet's biota for geographic scales, ranging from local to global are needed to address a number of pressing societal issues, such as the effects of climate change, human disturbance of ecosystems, etc. The recent development of interoperable information systems has finally provided the tools to construct and access a core catalogue of the metacollection. These tools offer a valuable opportunity to increase the visibility and relevance of natural history collections worldwide.

Expanding on the distributed database architecture first developed by FishNet, (http://fishnet2.net/index.html) and the Mammal Networked Information System (MaNIS, http://manisnet.org/), the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) (www.gbif.net) as of February 2006, supports the indexing and discovery of more than 89 million specimen records served by 162 data providers. These records reflect the holdings of 667 various collections located in 32 different countries. To facilitate this integration, GBIF is working with several partners through its 'Electronic Catalogue of Names of Known Organisms' programme (See http://www.gbif.org/prog/ecat) to produce by 2011, an electronic catalogue of all of the scientific names of organisms that have ever been published. This catalogue will serve as the taxonomic authority file for the metacollection, and facilitate searching not only within the metacollection but across the whole of the Internet.

Though GBIF is pleased by the growth of the number of records available via its data portal since the launch in February of 2004, the total is still very far from a representation of the metacollection. There are estimates (based on surveys of GBIF's existing data providers) that only about 10% of all holdings have been digitised, and that only 3.8% of institutions are contributing to the online metacollection.

Thus, GBIF through its Digitisation of Natural History Collections (DIGIT) programme (See http://www.gbif.org/prog/digit) encourages all collections to digitise their holdings (there are also benefits for collection management in doing so (Peterson & Navarro-Sigüenza. 2003)) and bring these databases online. GBIF provides links to free and often open-source software for digitisation, as well as white papers on issues of data quality and data use (see www.gbif.org/Stories/STORY1124274724). It also provides software for improving the quality of data (see www.gbif.org/Stories/STORY1128689677).

Since 2003, GBIF's DIGIT work programme has been supporting the digitisation effort through a number of seed money awards. In 2003, the DIGIT seed money programme awarded approximately $710,000 (US) to 17 projects from around the world. These awards raised an additional $2.8 million (US) in investment in the digitisation of natural history collections world wide. By the end of 2004, these projects resulted in the digitisation of more than 1,000,000 specimen records, including more than 70,000 type specimens.

In addition, 800,000 digitised specimen records were geo-referenced and made accessible via the Internet (see www.gbif.org/Stories/STORY1063920331). In 2004, DIGIT awarded a total of $737,744 (US) to 16 digitisation projects. Using this funding, over 2.6 million specimens (including more than 50,000 types) and observational records will be added to the GBIF network. The taxonomic distribution of the awards is 7 botanical, 2 mycological, and 4 entomological collections, and one collection each for slime moulds, molluscs and birds. The project investigators and their collaborators are located in 25 different countries (see www.gbif.org/Stories/STORY1103222009).

GBIF invites institutions that already have digital data to make their data available to the wider community by becoming a GBIF data provider. This is a process that is very easy. Full instructions are given at www.gbif.org/DataProviders/HowTo and the software required is free and fully supported by a free help-desk.

Joining individual collections into the metacollection increases visibility and use which is of benefit to each collection, to science, to society and to biodiversity itself.

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The South Wales Coalfield Geopark Project

Ben Evans

The South Wales Coalfield represents one of the most significant and dynamic landscapes in the United Kingdom. From its early geological past, through to the more recent industrialisation, the geography of South Wales has changed beyond recognition. The region is unique in having its geological heritage intrinsically linked to society, heritage and culture. The South Wales Coalfield Geopark Project aims to address these changes, investigating not only the science that underpins the regions development, wealth and communities but also by providing communities with an opportunity to learn about and manage their own local heritage.
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The projects' origins can be traced back several years and was triggered by the Countryside Council for Wales and National Museums Wales recognising that since the decline of the coal industry, in particular deep mining, access to much of the local Upper Carboniferous, Westphalian age geology has been lost. Fortunately, South Wales is unique in having significant surface exposure of these geological formations and research was commissioned to evaluate what proportion of the Upper Carboniferous geology was currently accessible in the field. Although it was already known that some particular formations were well represented and occurred relatively commonly throughout the coalfield, the research surprisingly revealed that over 75% of the known Westphalian succession (through borehole and mine data) could be accessed in existing field exposure. By documenting, recording and comparing many sites throughout the coalfield region it became possible to create a virtually complete composite geological section.

This level of exposure and accessibility to the rocks of this age is exceptional and unequalled in Europe, where many of the coalfields are of limited extent, range and access. The importance of the Carboniferous rocks of South Wales is recognised by the fact that the coalfield now has many Sites of Special Scientific Interest, specifically protected by statute for their national and international geological significance making it a prime candidate for becoming a Geopark.

What is a Geopark?

Geoparks are a relatively new international initiative established and endorsed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It is a label of distinction that has become synonymous with environmental protection, sustainable development and citizenship. UNESCO Geopark status is only granted to regions acknowledged as having the most outstanding geological heritage and pedigree.

UNESCO states; A Geopark should integrate the promotion of geological heritage of a region without adding any additional category of statutory protection to important natural sites. It recognises as a central principle the relationship between people and earth history as well as the ability of the site or region to serve a focus for economic development, primarily through Geo-tourism.

A Geopark is, in essence, a multi-faceted branding and marketing tool which aims to encourage regeneration, sustainable growth and co-operation between a wide-ranging network of partners. These include Environmental and Heritage Agencies, Scientific Establishments, Heritage Centres, Local Authorities, Industry, Schools and Community groups. These partner organisations will be encouraged to work together to develop the use of exceptional examples of Geological Heritage and to promote and improve access to these resources with innovative, yet environmentally sympathetic schemes.

To many, the term Geopark suggests a fenced, enclosed Jurassic Park style visitor attraction. This is a totally incorrect assumption. Geoparks typically comprise a regional plexus of exceptional geographically clustered examples of, in this case, Westphalian age geology. Mans' influence and damaging effect on the geological environment will also be investigated through the incorporation of relevant damaged sites such as tips, landslides, acid mine drainage and mining subsidence. The Geopark is a free attraction and designated sites within the Geopark will be improved, interpreted and linked with the development of a comprehensive integrated educational strategy. The interpretation will aim to deliver wide-ranging subject areas at several interest levels with the intention of providing something for everyone.

The South Wales Coalfield Geopark will be the first National Geopark to be defined strictly by geological perimeters and will include all areas within the main coalfield district (2500 km^2). The margin of the Geopark will mirror the edge of the coalfield and run on

its southern margin through Bridgend, across Caerphilly Mountain to Cwmbran, just west of Pontypool, to Blaenavon where the Brecon Beacons National Park boundary will form the northern margin. On the western margin of the coalfield the Geopark will include Ammanford and terminate towards Kidwelly.

Initially the Geopark is being developed in a phased approach and while conceptual planning and project development work continues to be undertaken, pilot projects are being investigated and should soon be providing tangible evidence of the wide ranging benefits that the scheme can offer.

Community involvement in the scheme is ultimately fundamental to its long term success, the idea being that once established, the Geopark localities will metaphorically be handed back to local people who will continue the scheme. The Geopark concept will be marketed in local communities as a tool for regeneration aiming to improve quality of life by provision of increased access and amenity.

The Geopark will also target a national and international audience where there is considerable interest in Geo-tourism and geological heritage trails. Inclusion of some established geological based heritage sites will be crucial in disseminating information and targeting an existing market.

Geopark Interpretation Strategy

The carefully selected geological localities commonly coincide with sites of important biodiversity and industrial heritage interest, offering opportunities for the provision of a multi-layered, multi-disciplinary interpretative strategy. Schools, colleges and other educational institutions will be approached and encouraged to use geological and landscape features within the Geopark to deliver elements of the National Curriculum. It is intended that education packs be developed in conjunction with teachers and course convenors tailored specifically to the themes and concepts explored by the Geopark providing an exciting new outdoor education resource. The industrial heritage and socio-economic elements of the scheme will primarily be met by cooperating with, and the inclusion of, existing geological and industrial heritage visitor attractions.

The interpretation and education strategies used within the Geopark will vary considerably from signboards, walks-n-talks to leaflets and web based virtual tours. All interpretation will be geographically and thematically linked allowing users to follow either pre-determined routes or develop their own customised trails depending on their specific interest and level of understanding. A diverse range of media and formats will be employed to best suit the locality and its audience. Site and landscape interpretation will also be used to educate and raise general awareness of Geoconservation, Geodiversity and the roll of Geoparks in the conservation of shared Geoheritage.

Why will the Coalfield Geopark be a success?

The essence of the Geopark is to encourage greater awareness of geological heritage and science and promote citizenship and true sustainable development through geo-tourism. A Geopark would not only provide the opportunity for the general public, local communities and specialists to learn much more about South Wales' geological heritage, but also to participate in partnership in its sustainable use. A Geopark would afford a mechanism to encourage local communities and businesses to work together to support and protect important geological sites and landscapes throughout the designated territory.

The success of the Geopark scheme ultimately revolves around the people (communities) and the places. South Wales is unusual in that the natural landscape and the built environment are profoundly controlled by the underlying geology; throughout the South Wales Coalfield identifiable geological features abound, producing spectacular scenery that is

incontrovertibly Welsh. Very few regions have such strong links between their cosmopolitan communities and their local geological heritage, and these links, once emphasised and strengthened, should ensure a bright future for the Coalfield Geopark Project.

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Mould making from a fissured stone object; the Pilbara Stromatolite.

Rod van der Merwe

A description of making a first reproduction with coloured resin.

This technique was devised primarily to eliminate the need for surface paint, thus permitting both microscopic surface analysis and Museum display of the reproduction. The product also proved light enough to make international airfreight cheap.

This fossil stromatolite is from the Trendall[1] location in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. It was presented to the Western Australian Museum in September 1999 for inclusion in the *Diamonds to Dinosaurs Gallery*. The object represents evidence of some of our planet's earliest ecosystems. The Pilbara Stromatolite was prepared from fourteen pieces of rock to produce a single exhibit for the new gallery. A new mould was made to reproduce this exhibit as a single piece (1500mm in length). The reproduction was studied using morphometric analysis, by Hans Hoffman[2] and is now on display in the Redpath Museum of Montreal's McGill University.

The skills used in conserving objects and those used in the plastic reproduction of them, warrant clear distinction. Skills employed in simulating objects can become seductive diversions from the priority of those skills used in conserving the real material. Virtual realities will never replace the utterly beautiful real object, but we are compelled to pay more attention to the means of reproduction of their physical details.

The process described here is very labour intensive. This technique was devised to put maximum control in the hands of the operator and to be as frugal with this very expensive mould-making rubber as possible. The most critical phase, which is the making of the mould by this safer and more controlled method, took twenty eight days of working alone.

It was important to practice the technique and the first practice run took the same amount of time as the original replica, as the technique of painting the cast from the inside outwards takes time to focus the technique. The procedure is very like the traditional sign-writer's way of painting on the inside of a shop window for the outside viewers. This was done without the benefit of being able to step outside and check the other side of the window for accuracy. Test pieces were made and and the sequences of colours were rehearsed to be sure the matches were truly representable of this complex and very beautiful stone.
The total amount of silicon rubber used for both moulds was 7.5kg.

The most critical technical choice to start with involves the release agent. The object is first cleaned and treated with the appropriate release agent and this is always done in consultation with the Curator[3] and the Preparator/Conservator[4] currently responsible for the object.

For stone and related ceramic objects the degree of integrity of the surface is ascertained and so some quite different release agents are used. For example ceramic objects would have a different release agent to that of seeds
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or bone objects. In general silicified rock with its strong impermeable surface is much less vulnerable than wooden or bone objects. However, this stone stromatolite is fissured so that the usual way of pouring the rubber over the surface would result in its loss down the many voids. When using some mould-making materials this is not an insurmountable problem as some are soluble, yet silicone swells when treated with solvents and locks into the holes that it has leaked into and filled becoming irremovable in the practical sense.

The release agent in this case was a microcrystalline wax formulation selected to very thinly treat the surface. From this, the impression was lifted and care was taken to ensure that the mould-making compounds did not adhere to the object's surface. Strict conservation guidelines were carried out throughout, and nothing was applied that could not be safely removed again later. This is so that the object remains in the same condition as it was before this procedure began. Sometimes substances applied appear to have no affect at the time of application, but over time discolouration of its ageing traces may become evident.

This simple technique of mould-making consists of a skin of silicone mould-making rubber applied over the surface of the rock by using a small brush and a number of disposable extruders. The latter in this instance were small plastic freezer bags, used as if icing a cake, dispensing 80-180gms of rubber at a time. The silicone was first catalyzed and treated with a thickener (thixotropic agent) according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Each mixed batch gave fifteen minutes or so working time. The surface of the stone was carefully covered using brush and extruder to both skirt the perimeter of the fissures and to ensure optimum penetration of the stone's surface detail. In this way the object's surface was carefully covered with a 4-6mm thick silicone skin, applied over a number of consecutive days. A backing was produced from glass fibre reinforced epoxy resin. (Storage of epoxy cast objects must follow museum guidelines, especially regarding temperature as the resin is slightly thermoplastic.)

Fig. 1. The Pilbara Stromatolite with approx scale bar 300mm; real surface detail in top of picture, photographed together with placed fragments of colour-cast replica.

The reproduction was made using epoxy resin coloured with artists quality oil paint. Colloidal silica was added to the epoxy as a thickener (with appropriate safety gear and in a fume hood), in small enough quantity to leave the resin semi-transparent so that even the glassy quartz areas in the stone were closely matched.

The cost of materials and of time taken should be considered when selecting an object to receive such intensive treatment. If there are objects which the museum has a scientific need to replicate in such fine detail, then the decision to reproduce them will be dependent on not only their heritage value but also on exactly what sort of real material they comprise.

Footnotes and references;

1 Locality named after Mr. Trendall who reported the structures in 1984.

2 Dr Hans Hofmann,
McGill University,
co-finder and director of
morphometric analysis.

3 Dr Ken McNamara, Hd. of Dept.
Earth and Planetary Sciences,
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4 Rod van der Merwe, preparator/
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Heritage Bulimia or De-accessioning as a Conservation Cure

Frank Bergevoet

The best way of achieving public interest in preserving moveable cultural/natural history heritage is to announce as a museum that you are planning to de-accession part of your collection.

Preserving something by disposing of part of it perhaps seems to be a contradiction, but as fellow-enthusiasts you will understand that amputation (because this is what it is) is sometimes necessary in order to preserve the condition of the part that remains.

Make the comparison of a collection with an organism that just keeps on growing. Organisms rarely grow consistently; a collection often grows rather like an amoeba that suddenly develops new protuberances and the profile of the collection changes.
During the course of time, there is a shift in the care and attention paid to sub-collections and parts of the collection gradually become orphaned, destined for a life of loving neglect in museum depots. As these parts of collections require both physical storage space and administrative attention, they hamper efficient business operations resulting in the rest of the collections not receiving the care needed. De-accessioning or collection-amputation can be the answer. For the record, when referring to de-accessioning this means: physically and administratively removing objects from the collection, thereby discontinuing ownership.

There are four ways of de-accessioning objects:

Donation
Exchange
Sale
Destruction

In certain cases (and these will be discussed later), de-accessioning parts of a collection gives rise to an immediate public outcry followed by letters to the newspaper. This is exactly the sort of attention that museum directors should aspire to. They should grasp the opportunity to parry this indignation by expertly presenting a well-considered de-accessioning policy. While everyone is concentrating on the museum and the collection, the director should make it perfectly clear that the objects being disposed of are second-class, duplicates, poor-quality objects in a bad state of repair, rolling stones in the collection that would be better off in another museum, or pieces that lack even the most basic details regarding their origin. The director should emphasise that de-accessioning is in the interests of preserving, revising and opening up the rest of the collection.

The Netherlands is a small country with more than a thousand museums exhibiting some of the strangest collections one could possibly imagine including Tax and Customs, skating, films, handbags, boilers, perfume bottles, the dredging industry, buses and agricultural machinery, all of which are taken fairly seriously …

To be honest, this urge to collect things is getting out of hand. It is slowly becoming
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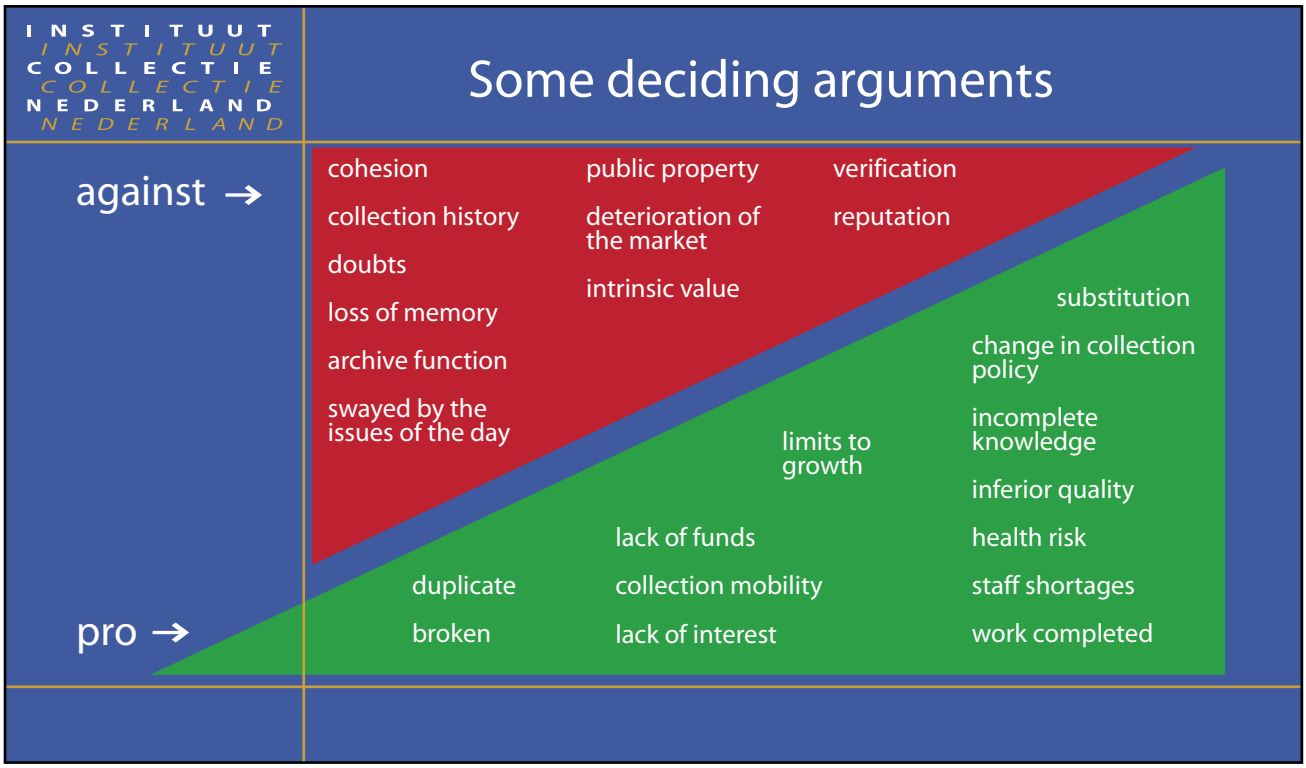
apparent that the Dutch are suffering from heritage-bulimia, something they have been aware of for the last ten years or so.
In 1990, the Dutch government launched a ten-year rescue operation to remedy the backlog in the conservation and registration of museum objects. This operation became known as the Delta Plan for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage. Halfway through the operation concern was raised as to whether all those millions of Euros were actually being well spent. Would it not be better to differentiate more and focus the attention on high-quality collections? What is the point of storing periphery collections that never leave the depot, that are never given a glance, are in a poor condition or are duplicates, in dust-proof, air-conditioned depots, packaged in acid-free boxes? What is the point of spending time registering these objects, when what you really want is to get rid of them?

These questions, and the feelings of unease they prompted, were the reason for organising the symposium 'Limits to growth' in 1999, where the 'Guide to the De-accessioning of Museum Objects' was launched and accepted unanimously by the museum field. This guideline is a manual for the responsible de-accessioning of museum objects. It does not comment on the criteria for deciding whether an object should be de-accessioned, as this is a matter for the individual museums. And we think that every professional museum can and should accept its own responsibility in this respect. Despite the headlines in the newspapers, it is nonsense to believe that this might allow museums to squander heritage. The Netherlands has no legislation covering museums and no structure by which members of the museum board can be personally held responsible for museum policy, and this has not in any way harmed the Netherlands' international reputation.

All objections to de-accessioning museum objects will be answered now with appropriate reasons for doing so, along with a few extra motives.

Far too many objects have been lovingly neglected in museums. This is one of the biggest misconceptions about museums as an institution. Most people think that once an object finds its way into a museum, it has been 'rescued'. There are numerous examples where this is not the case. Conversely, it is also a misconception to assume that an object that



has been de-accessioned will be lost forever; it might disappear from the public domain… but lost forever?

A few years ago, a large quantity of museum objects were sold at auction in Sotheby's. The private buyers and collectors who eventually bought these objects will take better care of them than the museums that were disposing of them. It is now under discussion to consider the feasibility of separate museum auctions.

The way forward is de-accessioning (under the motto of quality rather than quantity) as a means of preserving collections.

The taxonomic necessity of collecting a series of specimens and the far-reaching international-level agreements on defining the boundaries of research and collection policy, in order to prevent collection overlaps is acknowledged and understood, however the so-called archive function of the natural history museums as an excuse for holding on to absolutely everything should be avoided.

More and more objects are being added to these collections and nothing is ever discarded. Even archaeologists are inclined to keep the contents of every cesspit they encounter. This kind of collection fever leads to collections that have to be measured in terms of cubic metres of boxes. Numbers of this kind soon turn into anonymous quantities that defy our imagination. They become physically impossible to manage or open up and we completely lose sight of their sense of history.

How many museums have defined the optimum maximum size of their collection? How many museums have made allowances for the numbers of staff and the means for conservation at their disposal? And how many museums can say: "We have finally got rid of the conservation backlog; all that is left is the annual maintenance"? Bringing collections into line with the size of the organisation is a better way forward in terms of maintaining valuable collections, than the traditional practice of harping on about more funding and more staff.

Volunteering an opinion on de-accessioning is one thing; doing it is another. During the past few years, a small group of museums in the Netherlands has had the courage to start de-accessioning objects. The amount of attention paid to the museums of art was quite extraordinary. In this country, nobody will object if you close a museum housing 5,000 scientific instruments, sell a sub-collection of dental curiosities or simply throw away post-war maritime heritage. And some time ago, the de-accessioning of an extensive geological collection hardly caused a stir. If a museum of art decides to dispose of a painting everyone starts whining about the sorry waste of our heritage. This is a worrying situation. Firstly, because there is never any public debate about de-accessioning scientific instruments and natural history objects. Secondly, because the emphasis put on de-accessioning pieces from museums of art distorts the image of the process. This focus on the museums of art might give museums housing other types of collections cold feet.

Perhaps now is the time for the natural historians to suggest de-accessioning a stuffed giraffe and just imagine the after affects when they do!

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The Conservation Treatment of Canterbury Museum's Blue Whale Skeleton.

Sasha Stollman, Melinda Bell, Sebastian Denize, Bettina Lutzke, Dennis Kelles-Krause
Records of the Canterbury Museum, 2005, Vol. 19: 35-60

Full text of this article available from the notice board at http://www.conservators.org.nz

The 26.5-metre-long blue whale skeleton was retrieved in 1908 from the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island. It has been exhibited at the Canterbury Museum for 80 years outdoors, under shelter. Environmental conditions have contributed to the gradual deterioration of the skeleton, its mount structure and previous repair materials. The skeleton's significance as one of the largest articulated animals in the world, and its unique history of local importance, has prompted the development of a major conservation treatment and rearticulation project. Following examination, research and testing, the skeleton was de-installed to stabilise it in preparation for a new exhibition.
Conservation treatment included superficial cleaning, consolidation of embrittled portions of bone, removal of the previous invasive mount and repair materials, pinning and adhesion of detached bone sections, and filling and inpainting the wide variety of voids resulting from the original mount design and repairs. The organic polymer selected for consolidation, adhesion, filling (mixed with glass micro-balloons) and inpainting (mixed with dry pigments) was Paraloid B72 dissolved in acetone. Detached bone portions were pinned with carbon fibre tube. The skeleton is anticipated to be rearticulated for installation in a new atrium.

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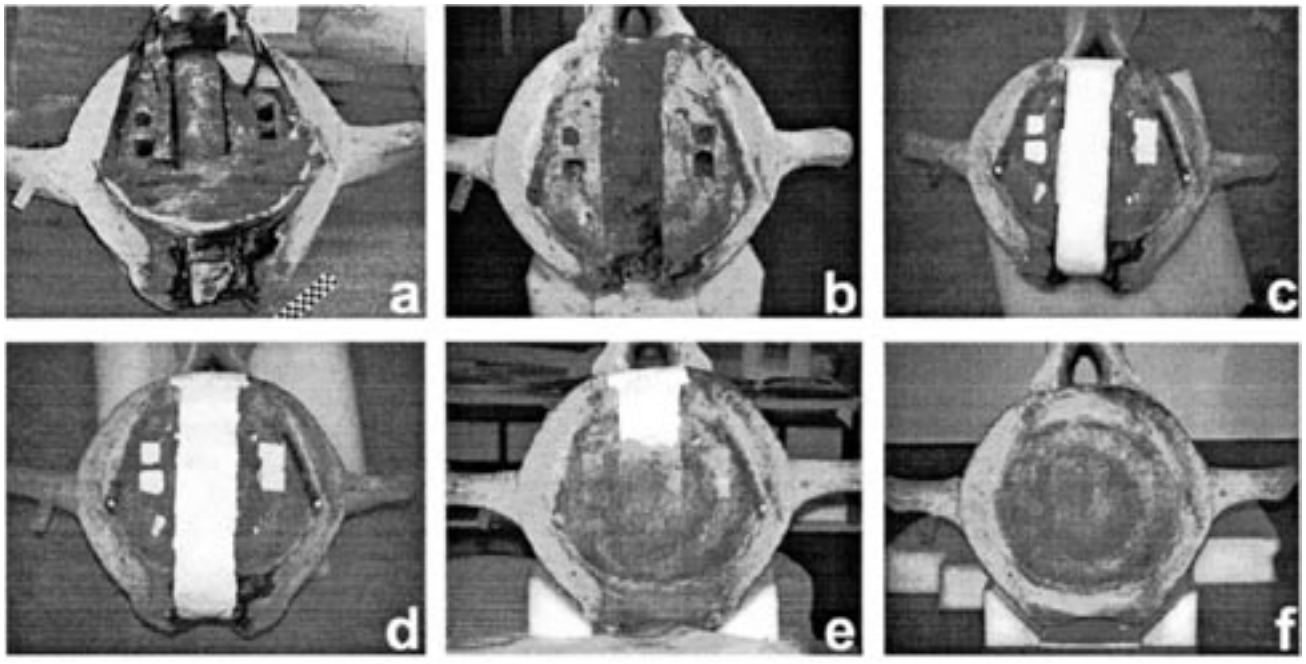

A First Caudal Vertebra before, during and after reatment: a – Vertebra before treatment with remains of corroded steel mount structure and deteriorated wooden disc; b – previous components removed; c – Ethafoam block adhered; d – fill surfaced with putty; e – fill partially inpainted; f – inpainting completed. (see paper for full description of materials and process) Analysis of skeletal material was undertaken prior to beginning treatment.

Canterbury Museum's Blue Whale Skeleton as installed in the central courtyard 1976-94

Joint Annual Meeting of SPNHC and NSCA 23-27 May, 2006 Albuquerque, New Mexico

"The Road to Productive Partnerships"

Please join us in scenic Albuquerque, New Mexico in May for the second joint annual meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections and the Natural Science Collections Alliance. The meeting site is at the Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town, located in the heart of Albuquerque's historical district. Pre-conference field trips include your choice of one full-day excursion to either Santa Fe, the Valles Caldera National Preserve, or the Sandia Mountains, or one half-day trip to nearby Petroglyph National Monument. Museum tours of the University of New Mexico Museum of Southwestern Biology, Geology and Meteoritic Collections, and Maxwell Museum of Anthropology will be available. The Ice Breaker reception will be held at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science and we hope you join us for a casual evening of dining and dancing (with live entertainment) at the Banquet.

Our plenary speakers include two distinguished scientists, Dr. Peter Raven, Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, Missouri, and Dr. Jorge Soberón, Researcher at the Institute of Ecology, National University of Mexico. The two-day conference will include oral and poster presentations, as well as several themed sessions on border and permit issues, data sharing and bioinformatics, issues involving Federally-associated collections, and training the next generation of collections care personnel.

We are offering a selection of half-day workshops and one full-day workshop that will highlight recent advances in biodiversity

informatics. Planned half-day workshop topics include methodology and best practices for digital imaging, cleaning and improving your museum data, and an overview of Arctos, an evolving web-based data model for museum partners. The full-day workshop is a technical session on becoming a GBIF provider. Workshops will highlight developing features and provide instructional presentations. Check the meeting website for additional information.

Questions? Contact Cindy Ramotnik at ramotnik@unm.edu or (505) 277-5369.

Dates to remember:
Deadline for submission of abstracts:
March 15, 2006
Deadline for early Registration:
March 24, 2006
Conference rate cut-off date for Hotel Albuquerque: April 23, 2006

http://www.msb.unm.edu/meetings/SPNHC-NSCA2006/

NatSCA
Natural Sciences Collections Association

The Natural Sciences Collections Association

NatSCA is the UK's organisation for representing Natural Science Collections and associated museum staff and for communicating all relevant developments and news pertaining to our purpose.

We exist to promote natural sciences collections and their appropriate use and care, and our aims include acting as an advocate, providing training, and promoting best practice within the network of our colleagues and affiliated institutions. These are pursued through three principal areas of activity: meetings & events, publications, and campaigns.

'NatSCA News', our newsletter, and the NatSCA web-site will be the focus for advertising and reviewing conferences and seminars, airing member's views and for disseminating all manner of other museological news relevant to Natural Sciences Collections.

Dates for your diary Annual Conference & AGM

'Selling Natural Science: Developing concepts and ideas for galleries and other public resources'

To be held at World Museum Liverpool. 27 - 28th April 2006

Natural Science Collections have a fundamental role to play in promoting the understanding of natural science and creating an increased awareness and fascination of the natural world. How do we use our collections to do this?

What issues and subjects in the 21st century are we best placed to address?
The conference will aim to explore new ways in which we can communicate scientific ideas to the public and will provide an opportunity for an increased sharing of ideas, experiences and expertise.

There will be ample opportunities to view the innovative new galleries and hands on areas within the museum, including a new look Natural History Centre and Discovery Centre. Behind the scenes tours of the collections and new storage and study areas are also planned. We hope to see you there!

For more information, or to make suggestions or discuss presentations at this stage then please contact Jo Hatton
jhatton@horniman.ac.uk
http://www.nhm.ac.uk/hosted_sites/natSCA/

Useful web/email addresses

ACGIH
American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists
http://www.acgih.org/home.htm

ACS
American Chemical Society
http://www.chemistry.org/portal/a/c/s/1/home.html

AIC
American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
http://aic.stanford.edu/

ALCA
American Leather Chemists Association
http://www.leatherchemists.org/

ANSI
American National Standards Institute
http://www.ansi.org/

ARCC
Association of Regional Conservation Centers
http://www.rap-arcc.org/index.php

CDC
Centre for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov/

CHIN
Canadian Heritage Information Network
http://www.chin.gc.ca/English/

Conservation distribution list
consdist-request+consdist@lindy.stanford.edu

Cool
Conservation on Line
http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/

DHHS
Department of Health and Human Services
www.hhs.gov/

English Heritage
http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/

EPA
Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives
http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/index.htm

GCG
Geological Curator's Group
http://www.hmag.gla.ac.uk/gcg/

HSDB
Hazardous Substances Data Book
www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/hsdbfs.html

Historic Preservation Fund
http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/hpf/hpf_t.htm

ICCROM
International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property
http://www.iccrom.org/

ICOM
International Council of Museums
http://icom.museum/

ICOM-CC
International Council of Museums
Committee for Conservation
http://icom-cc.icom.museum/Home/

ICON
Institute of Conservation.
This institute was created in 2005 by the merging of the following organisations: the Care of Collections Forum, the Institute of Paper Conservation (IPC), the Photographic Materials Conservation Group, the Scottish Society for Conservation and Restoration (SSCR) and the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (UKIC). Convergence was fostered by the National Council for Conservation-Restoration (NCCR), which has now been

disbanded.
http://www.icon.org.uk/

ICS
Institute of Conservation science
http://www.instituteofconservationscience.org.uk/

IIC
International Institute for Conservation of historic and artistic works of art
http://www.iiconservation.org/

IMLS
Institute of Museum and Library Services
http://www.imls.gov/

IRUG
The international Infrared and Raman Users' Group
http://www.irug.org/

ISO
International Organization for Standardization
http://www.iso.org/iso/en/ISOOnline.frontpage

MRS
Materials Research Society
http://www.mrs.org/s_mrs/index.asp

NAERG
North American Emergency Response Guidebook 1996,
www.accesskansas.org/firemarshal/azmat/manuals/NAERGMan.pdf

NatSCA
Natural Sciences Collections Association formerly BCG (Biological Curator's Group) and NSCG (Natural Sciences Conservation Group).
http://www.msb.unm.edu/meetings/SPNHC-NSCA2006/

NCCR
National Council for Conservation and Restoration (See ICON)

NCPTT
National Center for Preservation Technology and Training.
http://www.ncptt.nps.gov/

NHCOLL
The Natural History Collections List Server
http://www.spnhc.org/nhcoll.htm

NIOSH
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
www.niosh.com.my/

NISO
National Information Standards Organization
http://www.niso.org/

NPO
The National Preservation Office (British Library)
http://www.bl.uk/services/npo/npo.html

NSCG
Natural Sciences Conservation Group (see NatSCA)

OEHHA
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
www.oehha.ca.gov/

OSHA
The Occupational Safety and Health Administration
www.osha.gov/

RTECS®
Registry of Toxic Effects of Chemical Substances.
www.cdc.gov/niosh/rtecs.html

SHNH
The Society for the History of Natural History
www.shnh.org

SPNHC
The Society for the Preservation of Natural History Specimens.

http://www.spnhc.org/

The Textile Conservation Centre
http://www.wsa.soton.ac.uk/ttccontent.htm

Tribal Preservation Program
http://www.wsa.soton.ac.uk/ttccontent.htm

UKIC
United Kingdom Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (see ICON)

UNESCO
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/

USEPA
United States Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/

WHO
World Health Organisation
www.who.int/en/

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