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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Minutes of the Biology Curators' Group Committee Meeting, Wednesday,  
23rd November, 1977. at Merseyside County Museums. Liverpool.

Apologies for absence were received from Jim Bateman, Dave Erwin, Reg Harris, Mike Hounsome and Geoff Stansfield. Apologies were also received from members of next years committee who had been invited.

Members present Geoff Hancock, Peter Morgan, Stephen Flood, Eric Greenwood and Peter Davis.

Minutes of the previous meeting committee meeting held, Tuesday 5th April were approved and signed.

Matters arising.

1. S.A., B.C.G., G.C.G. Liverpool Conference.

Eric Greenwood reported a profit of £151.02 . This was due to the good attendance, the steady rate of V.A.T. and a lower inflation rate than anticipated. Factors had remained in our favour otherwise a small loss could easily have occurred. Agreed that EFG should return to the original working party to discuss allocation of the profit. One suggestion forwarded was the establishment of a fund which the BCG could keep as a conference sponsorship fund, if the SA were agreeable. The Systematics Association were taking 500 offprints from the Museums Association, summaries of the Conference being published in the December Museums Journal. EFG to finalise the accounts and to contact SA and GCG.

Action  
EFG

The committee expressed on behalf of the membership sincere thanks to EFG for the organisation of the conference which had fallen almost entirely on his shoulders. The smooth running and success was very pleasing in this the first major B.C.G. Conference, details of which will appear in the B.C.G. January Newsletter.

2. Record Centre Guidelines.

SF reported that the draft guidelines had been published and circulated. Comments had been invited and the draft was also to be discussed at the Monks Wood Conference next week. It is hoped that the N.C.C. will publish the final guide next year which will then be of benefit to the Museums' Association Working Party on Record Centres. Discussion then centred around the proposed single environmental cards but it was thought that more detailed discussion would occur elsewhere and that the matter could be raised again and in the newsletter. The importance of obtaining information from existing collections in museums was discussed. The Liverpool Conference had proved this point and it was felt that more should be done to combine both current site data and collection data.

EFG felt that not enough thought had been given to the level of data required by different users and that a more thorough investigation of users needs was essential. Agreed that EFG and SF prepare a statement for discussion on these issues relating level of recording and users requirements.

Action  
EFG & SF

Matters arising.

3. Museums Association Bradford Conference.

PJM reported that the specialist session although attended by only twenty one people had been judged very successful by all and that it was felt by the conference generally that specialist sessions should be continued. G. Stansfield had reported back to main conference with three recommendations for the Museums Association one of which suggested affiliation to the I.U.C.N.

Action PJM As far as PJM was aware this had not be discussed at Council but this was to be checked. SF reported that it was uncertain whether the specialist session summaries were to be included in the M.A.'s Conference publication

Action PJM although the two speakers had submitted papers. PJM to check. Details were not to be included in the B.C.G. newsletter as JABurton had reported that a recent conference in Geneva had altered some of the legislation. He was therefore writing a new report for BCG including the amendments.

Action PJM & SF

Officers and Committee 1978

PJM reported details of the new committee, the required number of nominations having been received for places available. Details of the committee would be contained in the annual report. Every Area Council region now had a curator on the committee but shortage of expertise was felt in two areas, Botany, and Technical/Taxidermy. Agreed to suggest to AGM that Peter Lambley and Eric Greenwood be coopted and Ray Ingle of the B.M.(NH) who had been suggested by Reg Harris during the previous week. It was felt that close links should be maintained with the Taxidermists Guild. R. Hendry to be approached to serve on committee. It was generally felt that the new committee would allow far more work to be dealt with and improve the efficiency of the BCG.

Action PJM

Newsletter production and content.

Agreed that it was essential that the newsletter should be produced by offset litho giving a more professional aspect with good quality. It was felt that only by this means would more advertising be attracted adding to the groups funds. Although a risk was recognised it was decided that it must be taken but that the AGM would decide. M. Hounsome had reported a price of £6 per 1,000 sheets for a questionnaire, full details to be obtained by the AGM.

Action MH & PJM

It was felt that with an Editor and Assistant Editor more articles would be forthcoming, but that next year every committee member should guarantee articles from regions allowing time for refereeing and editing.

Subscription

PJM reported that the group was still in credit but that if all outstanding bills due were paid the group would be in debt. Newsletters were costing £55 each in production and postage allowing little for surveys and other costs. Hidden subsidies had helped a great deal during the year but that next year we should plan to cover all costs. Agreed that it be recommended

to the AGM that the subscription be increased to £2. PJM reported that it would be essential to obtain more advertising revenue and assistance with surveys to balance the accounts in 1978. Agreed to recommend that Institutional subscription be £3. It was hoped that the new Treasurer could obtain more Institutional memberships especially from museums without natural history curators but with collections during the forthcoming year.

Action  
K.Boot.

Standing Commission Report.

PJM reported that the report had been favourably received. A great deal of interest had been shown in the findings and agreed that the BCG should produce a report for publication and Sale. Full details of costs to be obtained after PJM, EGH and EFG had produced the manuscript. The probability of a loan to assist in production to be investigated. Agreed to publish by June with MSS ready by the end of January. Dept of Museum Studies to be approached to ascertain their degree of interest in this project.

ACTION  
PJM, EGH,  
EFG. MH.

EGH reported that following this report and the Liverpool Conference a collection research unit had been established in the North West the Area Service acting as a secretariat with a copy of all information. Agreed that details should be published in the newsletter and recommended that ad hoc groups be established in each of the area service regions to provide detailed information on collections in their area.

Action  
PJM

Details of information required would include numerical assessment, assessment of condition and conservation needs, assessment of importance especially of the smaller collections and origin of collections i.e. collectors.

PJM had reported an interest of several groups in university material which had both taxonomic and museum importance, a subject dealt with at the Liverpool Conference. Agreed that the BCG should undertake a survey of research and Museum material held in Zoology and Botany depts of Universities in Great Britain. Details to be determined by M. Hounscome, P.J. Morgan. E.F. Greenwood and other parties which could contribute.

Action.  
MH, PJM  
EFG.

Professional Groups Committee of the Museums Association

PJM & SF reported details of the last meeting which differed in some respects from the official minutes. Agreed PJM write to Brenda Capstick outlining the areas of difference. Agreed to suggest full M.A. Conference on reserve collections not only one day M.A.G. meeting, This would ensure discussion amongst Directors and Councillors of collections in several disciplines.

Action  
PJM

M.A. Edinburgh Conference

The BCG had agreed to arrange the specialist session which would be a full day in 1978. EGH to organise and contact Ian Lyster and Geoff Swinney to arrange the programme. BCG to reinforce view that day attendance fee for conference be waived allowing more curators to attend.

Action  
EGH  
Action  
PJM

Council for Nature.

PJM reported that the BCG had taken over liaison with the Council for Nature's Natural History Societies Committee following the introduction of membership

fees. Janet Chamberlain to continue to represent BCG whilst preparing a section on the use of museums by societies. Agreed to publicise. PJM ACTION reported a membership fee of £7. Instructed to approach M.A. with a view to PJM obtaining some assistance or full payment if possible.

BIB.SOC./G.C.G./ B.C.G. Conference 1979

Action PJM to write and ascertain exact state of preparations. Agreed S. Flood  
PJM represent BCG at any coordinating meetings.

A.O.B.

a. Job Creation Personnel

EGH reported that some concern had been expressed at the first meeting of the North West Collection Research Unit that Job Creation personnel were being employed to work on museum collections in natural history when no curator of natural history was employed there. It was regarded as potentially dangerous in the light of discussions held at the Liverpool Conference and it was thought advisable that the JCP people should spend some time being trained in natural history curation before working on collections. The separating of specimens and data or even of moving specimens had been causing trouble in many collections over the past few years to historical and taxonomic researchers. ACTION  
EGH. Agreed to contact MA.

b. Central Register of Type Specimens in Provincial Museums.

Action Graham Walley had raised this point for committee discussion but unfortunately PJM time was too short to consider all the ramifications. Agreed that the issue be fully discussed at the AGM on 3rd December.

Peter Morgan  
Hon Secretary.  
24th November 1977