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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Afternoon Session

Author(s): Not Listed.

Source: Not Listed. (1978). Afternoon Session. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter, Vol 2 No 1*, 10 - 12.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/1655>

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Phase 4

Second Card
Check

Magnetic
Tapes

0.05

0.05

Phase 5

Major concordance
Edits

Desired output

2.8

Total man hours/50 records = 18, or a possible achievement of approximately 4500 records/person/year (the operation can be split between Curator, Coder and computer operator.)

With the success of the project evident, Bill Pettitt went on to describe the next stage, the implementation of a 20 person M.S. C. scheme to computerise varied collections (flints, roman pots, shells, spiders, liverworts, ammonites etc) in the Manchester Museum.

A number of handouts were made available to BCG members at the meeting, including a note on the M.S. C. scheme, minutes of the meetings of NWCRU, collections data coding forms, a list of liaison officers at University Computing Centres (for links to GOS at Manchester) and a sample of raw data as input to the computer. Copies of these are available from Bill Pettitt at Manchester Museum.

AFTERNOON SESSION

This followed the lunchtime session, and a lively discussion interrupted by the occasional perambulation resulted. Graham Walley spoke briefly on the proposals put forward to the last A. G. M, and comments were made regarding the following issues:

- a) Development of conventions for the M. D. A. Natural History card. The availability of past and present M.S. C. schemes had provided biology curators with an ideal opportunity to catalogue their collections, but an essential prerequisite to this was the development of conventions regarding keywords - a control vocabulary. Undoubtedly various museums had adopted their own internal conventions, but agreed standards were required at a national level, and the view was expressed that M. D. A. should have dictated terminology to ensure compatibility of records (n.b. 1. the Editor would be pleased to receive any article relating to adopted internal conventions for the Natural History card 2. Bill Pettitt has agreed to write an article for the next BCG newsletter on this issue).

b) The production of a natural history sites catalogue and a natural history locality sheet. Considerable discussion took place regarding biological recording and in particular the relationships between BRC, the local record centres and the Nature Conservancy Council. Some concern was expressed about the role of the NCC field units, and it was felt that the present situation and future of biological recording required clarification and consultation at the highest level. The Chairman agreed to contact BRC and the Chief Scientists Team of NCC. Catalogues of sites were thought to be more useful at a regional level, and the majority of members were satisfied with the BRC 'Available habitats' card for site documentation.

c) The preparation of a register of type specimens. It was felt that this may be feasible for provincial museums, but virtually impossible for the major centres. The discussion moved into the role of the B. M. (NH) staff as peripatetic curators, but it was felt that a good deal more groundwork by provincial curators in assessing their collections was a prerequisite of more detailed study. The efforts of the North West Collection Research Unit provide a useful lesson, and indicate what can be achieved at the regional level.

d) The preparation of a 'Register of Expertise'. A number of points were raised which made such a register difficult or inopportune to compile. Particular reference was made to the swamping of referees with material and the assessment of standards of expertise. Although undoubtedly a useful aid to those biologists new to the profession, it was felt that other channels of discovering referees were available.

Other points discussed briefly related to:

Collections Survey Report. 500 copies of the report are being produced and should be available for the BCG/SBNH meeting in April 1979. Discussion took place on updating the report, and it was felt that this is another vital role of regional C. R. U's.

Carnegie grants for training in taxidermy. The trainees are to be located in Milton Keynes and Blackburn at Area Service headquarters, and it was thought desirable that at least some time should be spent by trainees in a museum environment. Some concern was expressed regarding the ability of the taxidermist in dealing with potential research material. Discussion took place on the possible formation of a 'technical division' within BCG.

International Conference, April 1979, BM (NH), and AGM of the BCG. It was decided that the AGM of the BCG will be held at 11.00 a.m. on Tuesday 3rd April at the BM (NH), to avoid clashes with the Conference programme. A detailed programme for the Conference will be found with this newsletter.

Specialist Session, Museums Association Conference. Portsmouth is this years venue for M. A. Conference, and the BCG Specialist session will be the morning only of Wednesday 11th July. One suggested theme is the links between museum and other statutory and voluntary organisations involved in countryside management and interpretation. Note that there will be no charge for attending this meeting.

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* THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING *

of

* THE BIOLOGY CURATORS GROUP *

will be held at

* THE BRITISH MUSEUM (NATURAL HISTORY) *

at

11 AM, TUESDAY 3RD APRIL

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