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conservation and interpretation, the national museum, its scale of operations and international coverage, will always be a species distinct from all other museums. Our visitors come, literally, from everywhere. The strength of the small museum clearly lies in other directions: a sense of identification with a region or locality and, indeed, a local population. Even with minimal resources such museums should be able to portray a local ecology; it should be able to initiate all kinds of activities ranging from biological recording to Saturday morning clubs for children. I know much of this sort of thing is going on already.

Finally I would emphasise that obviously whatever the size of the museum the curatorial function must be the priority. Interpretation follows and here I would like to be mildly controversial. There is a tendency I think to equate natural history displays with taxidermy, and that there should be more taxidermists around. Yet, if you will forgive a mixed metaphor, birds and mammals are not the only pebbles on the beach. There are certainly not enough good taxidermists to satisfy demands so it seems to me that the small museum should logically make plenty of use of the services offered by the Area Services.

General Pitt Rivers, if he were around today would be very surprised at the many functions that museums have taken unto themselves, yet we may well have to take on even more functions to if we are to meet the need of more people with more time on their hands.

Chris Hill
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DISPLAYS AND COLLECTIONS IN A LEISURE AGE

Any attempt to make today's talk relevant to the title of the conference must involve a brief analysis of the past, present (which I am assuming to be a leisure age) and the future. Only the recent past will be examined to relate the trends which have affected the work of curators to the attitudes and priorities they have had to adopt.

The 1920's and 30's appear to have been a fairly stagnant period in the development of the natural sciences in museums. The second world war, however, left a great deal of work, with the majority of effort after 1945 having gone into displays and the rehabilitation of museums in general. A new approach to display and the relationship of the museums with the general public developed culminating in the employment of "in-service" design teams in the larger museums or in the smaller museums the involvement of external specialist bodies. This new approach,

resulting in centralised training and new techniques, tended to eclipse into a more fundamental change i. e. the growth of "museology" as a science which has affected biologists - particularly zoologists, geologists and botanists in their academic training in recent years. This was a very great pity for the change in the 1960's and 70's from straight taxonomic training to ecology, community science and physiology brought many types of people into museums who would otherwise not have been there. These ecologists have had to deal with taxonomically orientated collections although training in Universities and Polytechnics in this field had declined over the last 15 years. However, I believe that this new intake of biologists has been beneficial for it has led to a greater awareness within museums of environmental conservation.

Another fundamental change also became apparent and that was the increasing propensity to employ graduates rather than "O" or "A" level candidates at every grade from Keeper to Museum Assistant. Consequently, in the early 1970's we find a large number of graduate ecologists within the museum profession which enabled the development of the much desired Biological Records Centres in liaison with the NCC and the Naturalists' Trusts and the subsequent biological recording or monitoring of the environment. This has led to the present situation where we have an increased number of biologists employed in museums who are ecologically rather than taxonomically trained and whose skills stand them well for displays on the environment and interpretation and in dealing with records and monitoring of the environment. These have had to go hand in hand with various new roles which have been continuously outlined in the BCG Newsletter.

In total we are now asking a biological curator to

1. Run a Biological Records Centre
2. Take an active part in administration
3. To produce display and the associated text
4. To be aware of other people's requirements from their collections
5. To maintain good links locally, nationally and internationally through extensive field work
6. To conduct basic historical research and documentation on the collections and finally to restore the collections in modern systems.

With this range of work required of an individual the amount of taxonomic work one could every be expected to undertake would be extremely limited. This is unlikely to change and necessitates a brief look at the structure of museums in this country.

The science side of a museum is considered by Central Government and other bodies to be subservient to the art side. The heterogeneity of museums in the biological sphere is reflected in the number of

staff and the range of activities that can be attempted. It is up to all concerned to find a means of co-ordinating the taxonomic work, the historical work, the records centre work and the display work through centralising the activities available in different areas.

The increasing involvement of ecologists and conservationists has meant that one has become far more aware of the value of past collections in interpreting the environment which has meant that we require even more collections to complete the picture. Although display is important our priority must be to complete the background work on collections and plan for the future development and acquisition of material. Nowadays, the majority of collections are collected by Universities and Polytechnics and those obtaining research grants, unlike previously when most were collected by museum personnel and large collectors dealing in small taxonomic areas. An examination of the holdings of Universities and Polytechnics gives rise to disquiet for one begins to realise how much information is missing and how much we could lose in the future. Collection orientated work must come first and display the spin-off. Taxidermists should have group practices thus rationalising equipment and centralising the expertise in different areas, thus reducing the amount of curatorial input, such as is happening in the British Museum (Natural History). We must direct ourselves to interpreting the environment rather than to producing large scale habitat groups. In so doing we will encourage the public to explore the environment themselves. One could also produce planned displays upon small topics to circulate the country, i. e. bats - their biology and ecology and the fact that some are endangered. It is impossible to ask a curator to design large displays continuously on an organised basis with proper display teams when there are other external bodies who could give an input other than museums, using museums as venues where material could be exhibited.

This would then allow museums to carry out what I see as their proper role i. e. the continued collection of two dimensional environmental information, but more importantly, the collection of three dimensional specimen material for use by researchers. Most museums now have a collection policy, the ethics involved in natural history being fairly well defined in laws. The EEC legislation will also impose other restrictions both on transfer and collection. However, material is being collected on a vast scale and it is this material which we have not been and are not equipped to deal with at the present moment which provides the future resources for museums in this country. Curation, storage and more importantly, documentation techniques will have to be adequately developed if we are to accept this material from Universities and other bodies. The planning and the scale of the programme must be implemented as soon as possible. If museums are to be depositories for this material in the future then there is no doubt that there must be a radical change of emphasis by the Museums Association and in the Government funding of museums. The way in which the finance is used is critical. Rather than being spent on purchase and display it must be channelled towards storage and documentation to avoid a build up of a backlog of work. I

would argue that museums in the biological sphere should no longer be seen as receivers of three dimensional material through purchase but as field collectors, actually collecting the material and data which could be useful for analysis and then help in conservation. I believe that it is crucial that museums should not be synonymised with the adage "Better dead than alive". We do wish to store dead material collected by Universities or any other body in support of research on the environment but this must go hand in hand with a knowledge by the museum of field work even to the extent of being able to commission its own. If only a small proportion of the finance available for the purchase of pictures and other objects was available to the biological sphere we could indeed plan storage, computerise quite easily and employ people to undertake the technical work. Museums have seen a growth of the social industrial field over the past few years due to the increased awareness of man's own heritage and relationship to the environment. They have exactly the same problem - it is not the purchase of material which is the problem but the conservation of the material which is more difficult in their case since they are dealing with large objects. We are not dealing with vast objects but we are dealing with vast numbers. If a collection of 20,000 insects in alcohol comes to a museum then it must be documented and conserved and any enquiries relating to the collection must be able to be answered quickly. This in the future will require a great change in the storage methods and staff. It is true to say that there is no museum in this country which at the moment has the capacity to store or collect any large amount of material affected by pollution, whether it be atmospheric or oil pollution. Modern trapping techniques and the effects of culls and pollution produce large numbers of zoological specimens at one time and we must be equipped to deal with this sort of challenge. It is no good one or two museums trying to deal with it in isolation. There must be a fundamental policy change augmented from the top. In this connection I would recommend that in the report back to the Museums Association we should ask for an inquiry into methods of funding, the operations of the natural history sections of museums, future policies be examined and determined and that some plans be made for the future in terms of staffing and of the links with NCC, Universities and other bodies.

In this sense, therefore, and in connection with the title of this talk, I would suggest that the present leisure age refers to the majority of people in this country and their use of the environment. In order for us to play a proper role in the conservation of that environment we must make certain that the background data to ensure the proper conservation is always available in the terms of two, and more importantly, three dimensional material. The present will certainly not be a leisure age for zoological and botanical curators. Our main commitment lies primarily with our collections and any display commitment should be towards small scale interpretive units or cases or to specific projects outlining endangered species thus encouraging people to explore and

conserve the environment for themselves.

P. Morgan
Keeper of Zoology
National Museum of Wales

BEWARE MR. SHORHOUSE!

FULL NAME - MERVYN P. SHORHOUSE

AGE - c. 30

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES - INJURY TO HANDS AND WALKS
WITH A STICK

HOBBY - EGG COLLECTING

RECENT PLACE OF ACTIVITY - BM (NH) TRING

RECOMMENDED ACTION - KEEP WELL AWAY FROM EGG COLLECTIONS

NOTE- BEWARE ALIASES!
