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A COLLECTIONS RESEARCH UNIT FOR THE MIDLANDS REGIONS

On February 19th 1980 an ad hoc meeting of the Midlands region Natural Science Curators (together with other interested parties) agreed to establish a Natural Sciences Collections Research Unit for the Midlands. Support and encouragement was offered by the existing Midlands Area Service. This support was accepted on the understanding that other arrangements may have to be made should that Service at any time split into East and West Midland Services, in order that the Research Unit could continue to operate over the Midlands region as a whole.

The Midlands Research Unit will work along much the same lines as the established Units in the North West and Yorkshire & Humberside. The accumulated data are to be placed on file at the Manchester University Computing Centre and processed using the FAMULUS package and with Dr. Charles Pettitt responsible for data input, updating, and initial production of catalogues. The regional organisation, however, differs from that in operation elsewhere in that a panel of curators have been given the responsibility for listing all the 'minor' private, university and other collections in the region, arranging for visits to be made to uncurated collections, and vetting the input forms to ensure that entries conform to minimum standards before being passed on to Manchester. So access by record compilers to the computer will, at the initial stage, be via the appropriate panel member. The input forms will be based on those used by the N.W. and Yorks/Humberside Units but are likely to have minor modifications. Their exact layout and content will be decided at a meeting of panel members on March 18th and forms should be available, together with an instruction leaflet, soon after that meeting.

Panel membership was decided by subject speciality and geographical location; because of the size of the area to be covered there was an agreed duplication of expertise in the east and west. We therefore have a specialist geologist, botanist and zoologist for both the eastern and western counties, and a secretary/convenor making seven members in all. Each panel member will vet the input forms from compilers in his area, prepare a list of institutions, societies and individuals holding natural history material for an agreed area around his operational base; and enrol the help of subject specialists willing to visit uncurated collections.

Composition of the Midlands Panel

East	John Crossling (Derby)	Geology
	Tony Fletcher (Leicester)	Botany
	Graham Walley (Nottingham)	Zoology

West	Tristram Besterman (Warwick) Brian Abel Seddon (Birmingham) Geoff Halfpenny (Stoke)	Geology Botany Zoology
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Secretary/Convenor John Mathias (Leicester)

This achieves a fair spread of expertise throughout the region and with a division of labour along these lines we expect most of the traceable collections to be on file by February 1982. Regular meetings will be held for all contributors to sort out problems and to check progress towards the 1982 deadline.

The most difficult task initially is to make as complete a list as possible of all collections in the region. So will anyone who has experience of collections and collectors in the Midlands, particularly in the private, academic or educational fields, please contact me with the details as soon as they can:-

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