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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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2. Smith, E., chairman, (1977). Taxonomy in Britain. Report by the Review Group on Taxonomy set up by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. HMSO.

Biology Curators Group

Geological Curators Group

November, 1983.

(The joint statement then followed with an appendix describing the collections, staffing levels and services provided by the museums in question).

Natural Science Curators' Course

New Course at Leicester

NATURAL SCIENCE CURATORS' COURSE

30 April - 5 May 1984

This one week course will look at the special characteristics of natural science museums and aspects of the practice and collection management in them.

Planned in consultation with the BCG, GCG and with the generous co-operation of Leicestershire Museums, this will provide a refresher course for those concerned with natural science curatorship and be particularly useful for Museums Association Diploma students taking natural science as their special subject.

Course Tutor: Geoff Stansfield

Course Fee : £152 plus accommodation

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
DEPARTMENT OF MUSEUM STUDIES

Natural Science Curator's Course Monday April 30th - Saturday May 5th

Timetable

Monday	0930	Registration
	1000	Introduction to the Course
	1015	The present state of natural history museums - an overview - to include brief history, organisation, functions, present trends followed by discussion.
	1100	Coffee
	1130	Collection management
		1. Collecting policies, legal and ethical considerations, Codes of Practice, policies according to type of administration, research v exhibition
	1300	Lunch
	1400	Collection management
		2. Overview of existing collections. Nature of collections (Dry, spirit, freeze dried etc), distribution within museums, standards of care and documentation, geographical origins, how acquired, staff provision.
	1530	Tea
	1600	Visit to Leicestershire Museums to see stores, documentation etc
Tuesday	0930	Collection management
		3. Documentation of collections. Special requirements of natural history collections, identification, habitat recording, site recording, review of progress in the computerisation of collection data.
	1100	Coffee
	1130	Collection management
		4. Housing collections. Environmental requirements, security, storage, handling, packing and transport, fumigation.
	1300	Lunch
	1400	Collection management
		5. Problems associated with older collections. How to assess importance, status of collectors, species coverage, geographical coverage.

Tuesday 1530 Tea
Continued 1600 Collection management

6. Research existing collections, biological research, Collection Research Units, watermarks, handwriting, etc.

Wednesday Visit to British Museum (Natural History)
Biologists to Entomology, Botany and Central Services
Geologists to Ron Croucher and P. Embry

Thursday 0930 Collection management

7. Theory of preparation, preservation and conservation in two groups

Biologists Methods of killing, fixing, relaxing, preservation to include spirit collections, freeze-drying, preparation of study skins, identification and treatment of conservation problems

Geologists Preparation and development of techniques, thin sections, peels, treatment of pyrite rot etc.

1100 Coffee

8. Practical demonstrations of preparation and conservation techniques in two groups

Biologists Herbarium mounting, fluid preservation, osteological preparation, skinning and making cabinet skins, casting techniques, genitalia preps

Geologists Development of fossils, consolidation techniques, treatment of pyrite

1300 Lunch
Practical demonstrations (continued)

1530 Tea
1600 Project on exhibition at Leicestershire Museum

Friday 0930 Exhibition - policies and practices
Long term, short term and travelling exhibits, Exhibition policies, exhibition techniques

1100 Coffee
Exhibition - policies and practices (continued)
Live exhibits, nature trails, excursions, visitor centres.

1300 Lunch
1400 Environmental recording and Environmental Record Centres
1530 Tea
1600 Liaison with other bodies
To include ITE, NCC, County Trusts, Planning Depts, Natural History Societies, learned societies, universities, etc.

Saturday 0930 Natural History Museum publications
1100 Coffee
1130 The literature relating to natural history
museums
1300 Lunch
1400 Discussion
1500 Mock practical for Diploma Students

COLLECTIONS AS BEQUESTS

Occasionally over the years I have been told by keen amateur naturalists, "I don't know where my insect collection should go when I am no longer here. I suppose it ought to go to the Natural History Museum".

Now I know well enough that the BM(NH) has far more British macrolepidoptera than it needs and will not receive another collection with great enthusiasm. I was recently sounded out about a collection of British butterflies built up over many years, with many named varieties, in immaculate condition. As they are mostly from the south of England they are not of primary interest for our Zoology Museum here which already has about 150 drawers of Lepidoptera. I was not able to offer any suggestion as to the best home for these insects.

Recently I was reading in the current 'National Trust' publication an article on the National Art-Collections Fund. I was most interested to read the following:

"So often a collector is not sure where to leave his precious possessions, and the museum he knows may only be interested in some of his works of art. The NACF through its contacts with museums throughout the country and the Trust can advise where the objects would best be placed and appreciated".

This suggests the possibility that the BCG could set up an informal system which would not only help collectors find a final resting place for their treasured collections, but also give museum natural history departments the chance to publicise desiderata and draw attention to under-represented sections in their own collections. As a start, could anyone suggest a good home for the Lepidoptera referred to above?

Mrs. M. J. Morgan
School of Animal Biology, University College of North Wales, Bangor, Gwynedd.