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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Title: A possible problem with preservation of insects in alcohol

Author(s): Hancock, E. G.

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4. Will freedom from political constraints (ie. county and district boundaries) give 'alternative' databases an advantage over some LBRCs, in terms of a coverage based upon geographic, and biological criteria?

At what rate Micro computer facilities are adopted, and in which direction they lead are matters for speculation, however, LBRCs clearly need to be aware of and very responsive to present developments .

#### A possible problem with preservation of insects in alcohol

There is a rather enigmatic statement in the latest issue of Antenna (Bulletin of the Royal Entomological Society) 8(4); p.201. In a report on the results of tree fogging a statement is made to the effect that "some Diptera in particular may deteriorate irretrievably after preservation in alcohol for more than two years". The large numbers of adult (and larval insects) collected by fogging in tropical rain forests does obviously present a problem of curatorial nature. It will inevitably be several years before material can be sorted beyond the order level, except in the odd family a particularly keen taxonomist is interested. In the meantime evaporation, bleaching, etc., can take its toll.

Peter Cranston of the BM(NH) kindly responded to my enquiry and states (in litt., 4 Dec. 1984) that in his area of interest (principally chironomids) specimens lose colour and are difficult to macerate after a period of a decade or more. Two to three year old material in his experience were still suitable for making good slide preparations. He knew of no published accounts of this phenomenon.

Here we have another example of a lack of apparently necessary research by conservation scientists in the field of natural history in museums. They are almost to a man employed on the human history side of things.

E. G. Hancock  
Bolton Museum