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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: The Collections of the University of London

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Source: Mathias, J. (1989). The Collections of the University of London. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter*, Vol 5 No 3, 31.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/900>

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proportion of the combined Kings and Chelsea College collections have been lost through disposals to other collections and destruction. Today, only one biological collection within the University, the Museum of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy at University College, is in its original home. Yet, in spite of this transformation, it is remarkable that such a significant amount of historically and scientifically important material survives.'

The report also includes a recommendation, because of the scale of the overall holdings, that a single university museum collection for biological material be created to provide appropriate care for specimens of 'suitable quality and value'. This would appear to be a sensible course of action, especially in view of the UGC University Biological Review which is currently in progress and which may well recommend the rationalisation of the teaching of biological disciplines in the London Colleges anyway.

The BCG Committee, through Rosina Down (Curator of the University College collections) has been keeping a watchful eye on these collections, particularly when some were under severe threat; members will be kept informed of any developments arising from the publication of the report.

John Mathias
Editor

USES OF BIOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS - BCG SURVEY

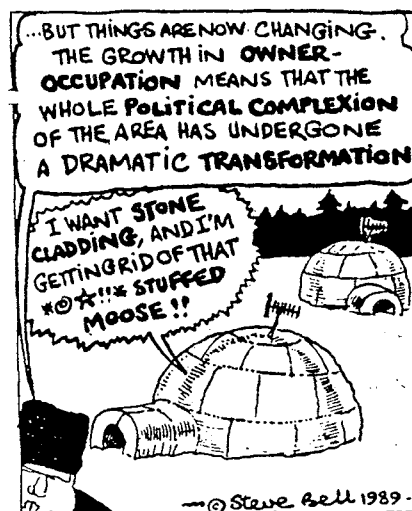
Charles Pettitt at the Manchester Museum is still accumulating information on the many and varied uses of biological collections. One very useful response has arrived from Dr Elaine Hoagland, Executive Director of the Association of Systematic Collections based in Washington quoting US references for published data on this theme.

The importance of Charles' survey was brought home to me at the recent meeting held at the Museums and Galleries Commission on their response to 'Biological Collections UK'. A repeated request from the non-biologists present (and these included most of the people who control money which could be made available for the maintenance of biological collections) was - what is all this stuff used for? We can of course answer this question in general terms, but it is becoming much more important politically to be able to quote facts and figures on these occasions.

This is why it is so important to respond to the survey. When Charles has sufficient data he will prepare a paper for publication. Using the data in a simpler form, BCG can produce a leaflet for general distribution on the value and uses of the collections we spend most of our working lives maintaining. The committee feel that this subject is so significant that a session will be devoted to it at next year's AGM meeting on the Isle of Man.

So please get your acts together and send to Charles Pettitt at Manchester Museum, The University, Manchester M13 9PL, information (facts and figures if possible, if not your impressions and stories) on who uses your collections and what for - serious or trivial, all comments are valuable.

John Mathias
Editor



Interesting note on disposal of biological collections in the Guardian (Steve Bell's If cartoon strip).

RESEARCH INTO SCOTTISH UNIVERSITY COLLECTIONS

The Scottish Museums Council has announced details of a major research project into museum collections owned by Scottish Universities.

There are over 100 collections which were used or are still used for teaching in Scotland's eight universities. A Research Unit has been established to identify and record each collection, assess its importance and recommend possible improvements in its running.

An experienced Project Officer, Laura Drysdale, began the research in October