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NSCG Newsletter

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stores – to this end, in December 2001, we installed a Hanwell system in the old building and hope to get radio linked units in each of the new stores as soon as possible.

What still needs to be done?

- We are currently compiling a paper box-by-box inventory and also slowly entering this onto our collections database as a logging method for the move.
- Deciding whether we hire a lorry for 5 months or employ a removal firm on a Monday and use their lorry (H&S advice favours use of a removal company).
- Hiring additional temporary staff to help with the move, if we are moving the collection ourselves.
- Detailed risk assessments on each type of collection, as well as on the procedures for both loading pallets and using wheeled steps. (These are not Industrial grade 1 rated).
- Checking the weight of boxes and becoming familiar with typical weight loadings by starting to weigh packed boxes and record weights.

Acknowledgements

Throughout the project, study visits have been made to a number of new facilities or museums in the process of moving and their sharing of information is greatly appreciated. Clare Valentine and Richard Sabin NHM, Althea MacKenzie, Hereford Museum, Gabriela MacKinnon, formerly of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Tracey Seddon, NMG Conservation Centre and Donna Young, Liverpool Museum have been particularly helpful recently. Rob Waller and the Canadian Museum of Nature conservation section have provided advice over many years, an internship at the early stages of the CMN new build planning and a follow up study visit in 1997, funded by MGC once they had moved in. Steve Clarke of Shropshire CC H&S has recently read the move policy, undertaken a site visit and provided useful detailed guidance.

Postscript

It a matter of much regret that John Norton, the former Curator will not be able to see the new home for the collections he built up. John sadly died in June of this year after a long struggle with ill health; it was his fondest hope to see the new building completed. He is greatly missed.

Renaissance in the Regions, Natural Sciences Conservation Group response

NSCG broadly welcomes the Renaissance in the Regions report with its proposal for funding the English museums. We hope that the monies identified for the nine Regional hubs and partnerships represent new money for the sector rather than a redistribution of existing funding.

NSCG has expressed concern in the past about the loss of specialist conservation posts as the Area Museum Services changed their roles from providers to enablers. With the closure of the conservation facilities, staff have left the sector, skills are lost, internships are no longer possible, career prospects are reduced and training courses therefore cease to offer training in these disciplines, thereby creating a chicken and egg situation. Through our links with BCG and GCG we have also noted a gradual decline in natural history curation posts and a rise in the number of “orphaned” collections. Initiatives such as the Peripatetic Geological and Biological Curator posts and the BCG Sunflower campaign were successful in addressing problems on a regional level, but have now ceased.

The proposal for regional hubs and partnerships offering facilities and services to the museums in their regions in our view offers a chance to address these problems.

NSCG would like to see in each region:

- Funding to create and resource a spacious, properly equipped and easily accessible conservation facility employing some specialist staff and able to offer space for free-lance staff. All types of collections from the region can then be worked on in appropriate climatic conditions, in safety and comfort and without compromise to the collections.
- Funding for specialist conservators to monitor regional collections regularly and long term to improve storage conditions for collections.
- A facility in each region to “fumigate” organic collections, accessible to all museums in the region.
- A disaster response unit
- Facilities for the preparation of post-mortem biological material and geological specimens.
- Specialist curation staff to cover all disciplines of the natural sciences held by regional museums. The full extent of natural science collections in the UK has been determined by the FENSCORE project, so an analysis of need would be straightforward.

Whether or not proposals for regional super stores are pursued, proper curation and conservation of regional natural science collections is crucial for the national agendas of lifelong learning and access to be fulfilled in museums. NSCG suggests that the proposals set out above would enable this to be achieved and maintained.

CALL FOR INFORMATION

Dear Membership,

You will have noticed inserts that appear from time to time in the Newsletter as part of our series 'The 10 Agents of Deterioration'. This series consists of articles written by us, the NSCG, around a specific process of degeneration. Since we have such a varied membership, this leads to an interestingly diverse set of articles yet raises points about the degradation of objects that are relevant to us all.

We have 2 agents left to cover: *Custodial Neglect* and *Physical Forces*. Please take the time to think about whether you have anything to say on either of these issues, and send me your articles for inclusion. (There is a plan for publication in the future)

Thank you,

Vicki Noble, Editor

Should We Adopt the MA Code of Ethics?

With this mailing of the NSCG newsletter, you will receive a copy of the Code of Ethics for Museums, published by the Museums Association in April 2002.

This new code replaces the code for people who work in museums and the code for museum governing bodies. It was drawn up after extensive consultation in the museum community and incorporates the new MA definition of a museum. The code was formerly adopted by the MA in October 2001 and is designed to offer ethical guidance to all who work for or govern museums in the UK.

It has been proposed that NSCG also considers formally adopting the code at their 2003 AGM. To this end, members are encouraged to study the enclosed document and to enter an informed debate on adoption of the code.

Most professional conservation and museum societies and organisations require their members to adhere to a code of conduct or ethical codes, for example ICOM, UKIC and CAC. Indeed, the MA code is consistent with the ICOM code for museums worldwide. By adopting such a code, NSCG and its members would be demonstrating commitment to ethical standards in museums.

Katherine Andrew August 2002

Please come forward with your views. This is a topical subject and one which is bound to raise questions. Anything sent to me on this subject can be printed in the newsletter and this way we can all be informed as to the issues involved as well as the opinions of the membership by the time the vote comes round at the next AGM.

- Ed.