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NSCG Newsletter

Title: Fund Raising Workshop, Cambridge Conference 23.08.1996

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Source: Hughes, D. (1996). Fund Raising Workshop, Cambridge Conference 23.08.1996. *NSCG Newsletter, Issue 4*, 16.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/761>

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Fund Raising Workshop

Cambridge Conference 23.08.1996

This workshop titled 'Strategic Philanthropy and the Global Village: Tactics for funding Natural History Collections' was presented by William F. Vartorella who works for Craig and Vartorella Inc., a company in the U.S. who advises museums on gaining outside funding. William's approach was educational, very informative and also entertaining as he illustrated his experiences of successful funding projects.

To be successful in raising sponsorship, on whatever scale or size of project, we have to investigate prospective funders fully. Sounds obvious, but valuable time and effort is wasted pursuing companies whose goals do not match the criteria of our work. So firstly we have to understand the needs, goals and desires of companies and foundations which are our potential donors. A place to start could be something as simple as looking through the glossy ads in the Sunday papers. Many companies use, in the currently fashionable sense, images of the natural world to illustrate the 'caring' and 'global' context of their industry or product.

The workshop strongly emphasised the need for us to have an understanding of business culture and, where relevant, a society culture, e.g. when dealing with the Japanese where there are definitely certain ethical rules to follow. Experience has demonstrated how the board of a company/trust will want to know how the board of the requesting organisation works, and what moneys individuals on the board themselves are willing to invest in their own organisation.

Advice was given on how to know which non-profit making funder could be your potential donors, such as finding someone whose mission statement complements your own, and which has a track record of achievement in delivering both services and in grantmanship. When putting together a request for funding it is important to be professional and William went through his ten rules for constructing a proposal. It has to be noted that William's 'rules' have been successful in securing millions of dollars from companies and foundations around the world and I think all of the delegates left this workshop enlightened and inspired by a very dynamic man.

Donna Hughes

National Museums and Galleries of Merseyside, Liverpool

Job Advert

Proposed Geological Conservation Opportunity (3 week contract)

Kate Andrew expects to be returning to Whitby Museum in late April and early May to complete conservation work on a case mounted *Teleosaurus* and several fossil hand specimens. One additional conservator with some geological expertise will be required to assist and interested parties should telephone Kate for further details on 01584 873857

Are We Relying too Heavily on Computers?

This is quite an old chestnut for many who work in museums but experience has shown this question to be vindicated many times over. A Canadian Institute of Natural Sciences had their entire data of more than several years entirely erased overnight by a time delay computer virus. This meant that both hard discs and backup discs were completely erased since the virus only became active six months after it had entered the system and back-up discs had become infected as well as the mainframe.

Bearing this in mind and the fact that I'm not a computer Luddite, is it wise to adopt the attitude of a certain speaker at the Manchester (1989) one day conference that we should log all known specimen data, including DNA fingerprint, into a computer and then chuck out the specimens? This suggests that old-fashioned visual taxonomy is a dead duck and that new characteristics which are still being discovered, would not be able to be compared with older specimens! How can the expert-in-the-street/field identify specimens by using DNA alone? Another curator in an internationally renowned museum outside of Europe maintains that labels should only be computer written/printed. Considering the problems with suitable papers and, especially printer inks that have only stood the test of time for a few years - is this wise? I remember Paul Hilyard's excellent poster at Cambridge and the problems of 'alphabet soup' relating to computer-printed labels. I still use my trusty, albeit crusty, rapidograph to record accession numbers on the backs of computer-printed labels.

Any news views on this subject should be submitted to me by March 1st 1997 and please let's hear from you!

Simon Moore

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