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## NSCG Newsletter

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## Conservation Project Reaches Milestone

In 1992 a project was launched to conserve the Roylean herbarium held at Liverpool Museum. John Forbes Royle amassed the core of the collection between 1823 and 1831 when he was superintendent of the Saharanpur Botanic Garden in India. There are also examples of material from as early as the 1760's. Most of the specimens were gathered in the Himalayas but later Royle added plants from South Africa, Siberia and Chile.

Royle's widow donated the herbarium to the Liverpool Royal Institution after his death in 1859. However, it was effectively lost to science until it was rediscovered among the remnants of the Institution's museum in 1952. In the 1990's it was decided to launch two projects to conserve and document this important historical collection.

The collection was in very poor condition. Conservators from the Paper Section of NMGM and curators collaborated to arrive at a method in which to proceed with the project. This successfully combined the knowledge and standards of paper conservation with the techniques of plant mounters and the requirements for use by researchers.

At the outset of the project it was thought that there were a possible 100 Type specimens within the collection. After intensive re-curation, following conservation, it is now estimated to contain over 600.

In the first week of September this year the 10,000<sup>th</sup> specimen was conserved (the collection possibly contains 13,000) by Aileen Collis, Assistant Conservator. To celebrate this milestone, an event was organised to re-unite all the staff, past and present, who have worked as conservators or curators on the collection. The local press were invited to view the 10,000<sup>th</sup> specimen (*Cyperus corymbosus*) along with other parts of the collection.

Details of the methods used in this project can be found in:

**Walker, N. & Hughes, D. (1994)** The Royle Herbarium - a Conservation Approach, in Child, B. (ed) *Conservation and the Herbarium*. The Institute of Paper Conservation: Leigh. ISBN 0 9507268 6 9

Donna Hughes

## New Publications

### Pest Management in Museums

The Museums & Galleries Commission (MGC) has published *Integrated Pest Management*. The aim of the book is to provide practical, safe and cost-effective advice on the prevention and control of pests in museums.

*Integrated Pest Management* explains how a museum can protect its collections, furnishings and buildings from harm by pests. It describes how to prevent infestations and how to control them should they occur. The book also includes lists of useful addresses, suppliers and publications.

Peter Winsor, Collection Care Officer at the MGC commented: "*Integrated Pest Management* is an illustrated book which clearly outlines how to devise and implement a non-invasive, ongoing IPM system. The IPM approach has considerable advantages regarding health and safety, and is less harmful to both humans and the environment."

*Integrated Pest Management* is available from MGC Publications priced £6.00 plus £1.25 p&p (UK), £2.50 (Overseas). Cheques should be made payable to the Museums & Galleries Commission and all orders should be sent to: MGC Publications, 16 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9AA. Alternatively, e-mail [n.poole@mgcuk.co.uk](mailto:n.poole@mgcuk.co.uk) or telephone 0171 233 4200.

### Cost/benefits Appraisals for Collection Care

MGC has also published *Cost/benefits Appraisals for Collection Care - A practical guide*. This publication demonstrates how museums can move away from collection care decisions based solely on cost, towards a more equitable assessment of the benefits of different decisions. This tool is designed to help balance the cost of collection care with the need for a commitment to the long-term survival of museum collections.

The publication features two case studies, the first is an analysis of the appraisal carried out by English Heritage on options for the conservation of the Chiswick Tables, and the second shows how Worcester City Museum Service used this tool to decide on suitable premises to re-house its reserve collection. After the cost/benefits appraisal, English Heritage was subsequently awarded 75 per cent funding for the conservation of the Chiswick Tables by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Heritage Lottery Fund now recommends that museums carry out a cost/benefits appraisal as part of their business plan.

May Cassar, MGC Environmental Adviser and author of the publication, commented: "The purpose of *Cost/benefits Appraisals for Collection Care* is to draw museums' attention to the wider issues and consequences of decisions which are frequently being made using solely financial criteria. *Cost/benefits Appraisals for Collection Care* is an invaluable guide for everyone involved in prioritising resources in museums."

*Cost/benefits Appraisals for Collection Care* is available from MGC Publications priced £12.00 plus £1.25 p&p (UK), £2.50 (Overseas). Payment details as above.

*Note from NSCG Editor:*

*The reports given on these publications have come from the MGC themselves. If any of our members have obtained these publications and would like to review and comment on their practical application the Editor would be most grateful. Reviews of any new publications concerning the care and conservation in any area of natural science collections are invited.*



*The two new publications from the Conservation and Collection Care section of the Museums & Galleries Commission are reviewed here by Kate Andrew.*

**Cost/benefits appraisals for Collection Care by May Cassar  
ISBN 0 948630 64 7 price £12.00**

May Cassar spoke on her work in developing and testing cost/benefits appraisals for collection care as the keynote speaker at our 1997 AGM and joint meeting with the Biological Curator's Group. This new publication will clarify those notes scribbled in the dark and complete the half-copied down tables.

Cost/benefit appraisals can offer a structured route for discussing and quantifying options for collection care projects and making an informed decision rather than attempting to draw together opinions from a group discussion or relying on personal "gut feelings".

May has set out her methodology in this new publication and presented two actual worked examples that used the appraisals, one project was assessing options for re-housing an entire museum service, the other conserving a newly acquired object. Scorings and calculations are required and at first sight may be a little off-putting, but a careful reading of the text with reference to the worked examples should clear this hurdle. Master scoring sheets are included at the end of the book to be photocopied and used for the exercise. The other book reviewed here offers copies of the publication in alternative formats, perhaps the tables could be provided on computer disc from this book too. The concept could also usefully be developed into a one-day training course with this book as the course manual.

Although the author warns that this team approach to problem solving would not be appropriate in all management environments, it would be very useful to institutions operating project teams, particularly for bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The approach is perhaps analogous to the equal opportunities interview and selection procedure. This book allows the interested team to try the approach themselves and present the results as a coherent argument to funding bodies.