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have been reduced to the level of mere objects that provide knowledge to subsequent generations. In addition to the 14.2%, another 3% of respondents responded by feeling that the present displays lack dignity.

A possible, more appropriate re-display could mean a separate museum area. One which might be darkened with a more subdued atmosphere, where people were given the choice to view the remains or not. This of course might attract a certain ghoulish interest in trying to present a more appropriate display. This is the way the Royal Mummies are displayed in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, where no photography or talking is allowed. This public control might encourage more respectful viewing.

It is of course difficult to right past colonial wrongs of acquisition. There is now little chance of these remains being returned to Egypt and there have been no claims to this effect, though there have been requests to repatriate cultural objects. However it is not just that these remains have been isolated from their original funerary context (as indeed most have), but that none of these collections reflect on the reasons why they have them in the first place. The story of their acquisition and the colonial trade in antiquities has a place in their future re-display. Visitors can then make a more informed decision about whether it is right for museums to have these human remains as well as other ancient Egyptian objects.

As well as visitors and focus groups, curators, scientists, Egyptologists, educators and museum staff should all play a part in re-defining an appropriate final resting place. Significantly it was the warding staff at both the British Museum and the Manchester Museum who felt most uncomfortable with the idea of the remains being in a museum. This can partly be explained by these staff seeing them on a regular basis and so forming a more personal connection with them. As they more than any other group of people are most aware of the final resting place aspect of these displays.

Many visitors stated verbally to me that they “trusted” the museum to be professional in how it displayed its collections. However this trust is perhaps not justified when we do not present the complete picture and these human remains are all treated merely as objects surrounded by other objects. Over the past decade a number of groups from ICOM down have presented guidelines for museums holding human remains (<http://www.icom.museum/ethics.html#6>). Many of these have been developed to deal with the issues related to the possible repatriation of human remains, but some like the Museum Ethnographers Group guidelines deal directly with the care of human remains (<http://www.museumethnographersgroup.org.uk/HumanRemainsguidelines.html>). There are no explicit guidelines relating to collections that hold remains without cultural descendants and together with the parties mentioned before it is perhaps time to draw up a series of guidelines that deal directly with these collections. The Human Remains Working Party recommendations have started this process and this discussion needs to continue to give all museums guidance on how best to deal with their human remains collections

The results of this survey then are the basis of further research that needs to be undertaken with visitors, focus groups and other stakeholders in trying to establish a more ethical display of these remains. The statistics might point to a public support for a display, however there is a small minority that do not support this idea and significantly it is a ‘minority’ that is currently dominating repatriation claims for human remains with cultural descendants. Therefore it is important in trying to decide the future of these particular human remains to address all public views, not just the majority. In addition, though, the results of the survey highlight the fact that re-display is not a necessity and most visitor views towards these remains are ambivalent and somewhat contradictory, 14.2% of visitors wanted a more respectful display and museums do at least owe this truth to this particular set of human remains.

Target audiences and agendas

Liba Taub, Director Whipple Museum of the History of Science, University of Cambridge

I was very pleased to attend the NatSCA conference in Dublin, and to have the opportunity to talk about a subject which concerns everyone working in museums: how the desire to attract target audiences influences our institutional agendas. Rather than try to reproduce the talk I gave, here I would like simply to reiterate my 'take-home' message: to thine own selves be true. As specialists working with scientific collections, we must be true to subjects, our collections and, particularly, to those audiences who crave access to our collec-

tions and areas of expertise.

Jo Hatton invited me to speak to NatSCA having read an article by Deborah Mulhearn on university museums in the October 2003 *Museums Journal*, for which I was interviewed. (I am Director and Curator of the Whipple Museum of the History of Science, one of the Designated collections at the University of Cambridge, and active within the university collections community.) Many of our institutions rely on public money and, increasingly, we must report data on our performance indicators and our 'target audiences'. It was the question of 'target audiences' that Deborah Mulhearn raised when she contacted me.

As director of a university museum with an internationally known collection of scientific instruments, I must consider which are the appropriate and realistic target audiences for my institution. To some extent I believe that this will be determined by the subject matter of my collection. At the Whipple, we have over 6000 visitors a year. Forty per cent of these visitors are young men, which is a very unusual figure nationally. Normally, young men don't go to museums. At one point, a major funding body suggested that we needed to bring in more women as visitors. Then we thought: wait a minute—no one else brings in these numbers of young men; let's just be happy about it and carry on. I told Deborah: 'We have to be true to ourselves and get on with what we do best'.

I received my doctorate in History of Science and went into museum work because I was interested in the material culture of the history of science; as an historian of science trained in intellectual history and classics, I was particularly interested in incorporating the evidence embodied in scientific instruments as part of our historical understanding of the sciences. My training as an historian of science is key to my role as Whipple Curator; I am a subject matter specialist.

I understand that the Natural Sciences Collections Association was formed through the merger of two groups, the Biology Curators Group and the Natural Sciences Conservation Group. Like me, you are all specialists who were attracted to your area because of the subject matter itself. There is something in scientific collections that draws all of us, sufficiently so that we have dedicated our careers to collecting, looking after and interpreting scientific material. The theme of this year's annual conference is 'Natural History is Cultural History'; I was impressed that the organisers apparently did not feel the need to add the emphatic word 'too' at the end of the title, because I am certain that I am not alone in sometimes wondering to what extent science counts as 'culture'. Part of my sensitivity to the question as to whether or not science is regarded as part of broader culture may be due to my being an historian of science, but I believe that many scientists also must experience a sense of frustration sometimes that painting, music, and ballet count as culture but the creativity involved in scientific (and mathematical) work sometimes seems to be overlooked.

All of us responsible for scientific collections, whether they are natural history collections or scientific artefacts and instruments, have been told, repeatedly, that science is meant to be 'FUN', and that this is an important message we are meant to be conveying through our exhibitions, outreach activities and other programs. And, of course, scientific collections are meant to offer learning experiences as well, in a way which may be somewhat different to other sorts of collections. As one of my colleagues, Jim Bennett, the Keeper of the Museum of the History of Science at Oxford has said (and here I paraphrase): When visitors go to an art museum, no one expects them to come out painting, yet when people (particularly children) visit a museum devoted to a scientific subject, they are then expected to come out doing experiments.

Currently, as we are all aware, the 'educational' function of museums is emphasised. The value of museums for school-age children is often cited, and many attempts are made to coordinate students' museum experiences with the national curriculum. Some children's museum education programmes are remarkably effective; the National Gallery's well-coordinated efforts relating to Hans Holbein's portrait of *The Ambassadors* is a fine example; the exhibition highlighted, incidentally, the role of scientific instruments. But children are not the only target of those promoting the educational role of museums; 'life-long learning' and continuing (or adult) education are also emphasised. This latter focus may be due to growing recognition of the economic and political power of the 'ageing population', as life-expectancy increases. An interest in promoting tourism may also be at work. For it seems, increasingly, museums are not meant to be simply pedagogical experiences, they must also provide recreation, entertainment and income generation.

Increasingly, there is a sense that museums are an important force in today's world, serving society in a number of ways. The recently published *A Manifesto for Museums*, (endorsed by the Directors of National Museums, the Chairmen of MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) and the Association of Inde-

pendent Museums, the Convenors of the Group for Large Local Authority Museums, the President of the Museums Association, and the Chief Executives of the Regional Agencies) emphasises the importance of museums for learning, helping the economy, promoting tourism, contributing to urban regeneration, catalysing creativity, working as an agent for social change, promoting intercultural understanding, acting as civic and community spaces, and as centres of research and innovation. This is certainly an impressive list of contributions to society, but one of the defining features of a museum appears to be absent: the care, preservation, display and interpretation of collections. Many of us, as professionals who are responsible for collections, would see this as a key and unique contribution which museums make to society.

Sometimes there seems to be a tendency to presume that all museums are simply museums, without differentiating what the different roles and functions of individual museums may be within their own contexts and their own communities. But, the nature of collections held within museums do vary and often, quite rightly, define the character of the museum. Natural history collections contribute to the definition of the museum which houses them. There are, certainly, questions as to what motivates visitors to go to particular museums. Sometimes it seems as if the government and funding bodies make certain assumptions regarding the importance of 'good day out' or 'free admission'. However, it is not clear government and funding bodies have done enough visitor research to understand what does motivate visitors.

Two researchers at London Metropolitan University working on the motivations of museum visitors, Niall Caldwell and John Coshall, have been concerned with 'getting into' the minds of visitors. Their studies indicate that visitors are not that motivated by cafes, and, perhaps surprisingly for the government, they don't seem to be put off by admission charges. Their studies suggest that visitors are motivated by what is 'interesting'. But what Caldwell and Coshall have not been able to determine, yet, is what visitors do find interesting.

As the director of a museum with a rather specialist scientific collection, a history of science collection, I know that many of the visitors to the Whipple Museum of the History of Science are coming because they are interested in seeing objects related to the history of science. Similarly, I would be surprised if most visitors to natural history museums did not find the collections 'interesting'. When I looked at a number of UK museums websites, it seemed as if target audiences were being defined by socio-economic categories (e.g., adult, children, disabled people, families, unemployed), rather than by 'what they find interesting', that is, the subject matter or type of collections handled by the museum. For example, the Science Museum in London specifies the following under 'target audiences' for the 3D IMAX theatre: families and school groups; ABC1s as well as groups C2, D and E. (This information is available on their website: www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/corporate_commercial/sponsorship/ground.asp.) It is possible that potential visitors may not recognise instantly whether they are part of the intended target audience, and may not know whether or not the Science Museum will be 'interesting' to them. It might also be the case that the Science Museum reckons that anyone visiting their site has self-selected with an interest in science. Perhaps surprisingly, a major public museum in the U.S., the Philadelphia Museum of Art, on its website www.philamuseum.org/education/vast.shtml) defines its target audiences specifically by subject matter Interest: 'Recommended for [those] who would like to become more comfortable looking at and talking about art, and also for teachers who wish to explore the ways in which art and the Museum's collections can enrich their classroom studies'. Here, we find a specific mention of subject matter and of collections.

The findings of Caldwell and Coshall indicate that museum visitors are motivated to visit museums which they find interesting. Undoubtedly, many of our visitors come to our museums because they find scientific material interesting. If people are interested in natural history, they will visit museums which display and interpret natural history collections and we, as museum professionals, dedicated to our own subject specialisms, are carrying out roles which no one else in our society can or will do. We have a responsibility to our target audiences, particularly those that 'target' our collections and our subject areas. In seeking to serve our target audiences, we should recognise that many of our visitors and users rely on us for access to and information about our collections, and we must respond strive to respond to their needs.

I began with a simple message: to thine own selves be true. In fact, I have a slightly more complicated message: as professionals committed to working with scientific collections, we must be true to our collections and to those visitors and users who desire and require access to our collections and our subjects. For those who are drawn to the natural world, seeing natural history collections will always be an interesting and exciting experience—and we must facilitate and celebrate the social and cultural importance of that experience.

Further information

- *The Ambassadors* was held at the National Gallery from 5 November 1997-1 February 1998; see Foister, S., R. Ashok and M. Wyld (1997), *Making & Meaning: Holbein's Ambassadors*, National Gallery Publications. Special educational materials were developed and made available to coincide with the exhibition.
- Bennett, Jim. 'Beyond Understanding: Curatorship and Access in Science Museums' in Svante Lindqvist, ed., *Museums of Modern Science*, Nobel Symposium 112 (Canton, MA, 2000), 55-60, see p. 57.
- Caldwell, Niall and John Coshall. 'Measuring brand associations for museums and galleries using repertory grid analysis'. *Management Decision* 40, no. 4 (2002): 383-392.
- Caldwell, Niall. '(Rethinking) the measurement of service quality in museums and galleries. *International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 7, no. 2 (2002): 161-171.
- Mulhearn, Deborah. 'University Challenge', *Museums Journal* October 2003: 32-35.
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Evolution & public display: an historical perspective

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Ernst Mayr celebrated his 100th birthday in July, still going strong. His long career began as a collections specialist (Cain 2002). His big break came in 1929 when he arrived in New York to start a contract with the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), sorting newly acquired materials from the South Seas. Mayr quickly proved himself. By the end of WW2 he was blossoming into one of the most influential biologists in the twentieth century. Most people forget Mayr's roots in the curatorial community (Bock 1994). Likewise, almost no one remembers his role in exhibit design at the AMNH. The most important example was his work completing the 1948 exhibit "The Biology of Birds" (Lanyon 1963; Mayr 1948). The full story is one for another place. Suffice it to say Mayr cared passionately about the science of ornithology. He used this opportunity to outline an intellectual programme, steering his colleagues towards a future in which the study of general biological processes became a noble goal.

Mayr's work on "The Biology of Birds" is fascinating for another reason, and this other dimension is the focus of the present essay. The content of Mayr's exhibit contrasts sharply with most of the previous exhibits at the AMNH. It also was part of a general trend among natural history exhibits over the twentieth century. That trend continues today, influencing the criteria we use for judging an exhibit's success. It's easy to appreciate why this trend took place. But I think we've gone too far. This trend pushes us away from moral obligations we have both as experts and as citizens.

Mayr and exhibits at the American Museum

Historians love to discuss exhibits at the AMNH, especially those fabulous habitat groups from the start of the twentieth century. It's easy to tie the AMNH's early exhibits programme to a series of cultural and political agendas driven by the museum's trustees (Rainger 1991). These men were philanthropists and social reformers also behind the creation of public parks, compulsory education, planned recreation, public libraries, and so on. Their educational programmes trained working class kids for specific roles in Edwardian culture and for life in the modern, science-based industrial city. Exhibits at the AMNH were part of this training. Some delivered messages directly, such as hygiene and nutrition. Others were more subtle, reinforcing messages about manifest destiny, family structure, race, social hierarchy, citizenship, and so on. It's easy to take this kind of analysis too far, but the point of considerable historical work is clear: the public galleries did more than innocently present natural history.

On one hand, "The Biology of Birds" fits nicely into this long tradition. One feature was a synoptic display, presenting bird diversity at the family or sub-family level and introducing basic anatomical themes. This fit into an educational programme and nicely complemented displays elsewhere in the building. Symbolic objects also had a place. There was a hornbill pair and their nest (complete with the original tree in which it was embedded) tied to a strong message about parental responsibility. Likewise, a set of panels considered relations between "birds and man," celebrating the value of birds as food and illustrating birds as cultural symbols. However, these parts of the exhibit are easily separated from those created by Mayr. Where he controlled the design, science took a front seat. He developed diagrammatic panels to illustrate basic biological concepts: migration, geographic variation, evolution, ecology, plumage, courtship displays, the physics of flight, etc. These are striking for their complete absence of practical and moral messages. Mayr's