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**NatSCA Papers Given at the
2005 NatSCA / SPNHC / GCG / ICOM Conference**

**the Natural History Museum, London
June 13th - 18th 2005**

***“Realising Standards”
Wednesday 15th June, 1.30pm onwards***

Subject Specialist Networks – developing a subject specialist network for the natural sciences in the UK

- Nick Gordon, Chairman NatSCA

One of the key drivers behind the formation of NatSCA was the recognition that natural sciences in Britain needed a stronger voice and would be better served by a larger organisation rather than a number of disparate groups. While NatSCA has a national scope, producing publications, organising meetings, seminars and training, it was recognised that there was a clear need for a national network of natural science curators and institutions to take projects forward on a local, regional and national level.

A framework partnership was developed to support a grant bid, including The Natural History Museum, National Museums and Galleries, Merseyside, and museums from the Regional Hubs. The aim of the bid was to develop a framework for a national network based on the major regions of the UK. At the time of writing the abstract the first meetings were being organised. This paper will consider the progress to date, issues that have been raised and the priority areas identified for the Network to address.

‘Standardising’ within a multi-disciplinary museum: How do the natural sciences collections fit in?

- Donna Young, Collections Manager (Botany), World Museum Liverpool, National Museums Liverpool

- Anne Fahy, Senior Registrar, National Museums Liverpool

National Museums Liverpool (NML), the only national museum in the UK based solely within the regions, became a national museum in 1986, though its existence goes back to the founding of the original Liverpool museum in 1851. Today, NML consists of eight museums and galleries. As with many museums that were founded in the 19th century, the collections are encyclopaedic, encompassing the natural and physical sciences, maritime and urban history, fine and decorative arts, ethnology, antiquities and field archaeology. Owing to the diverse nature of the organisation, differing standards and practices had developed in each of the separate venues, and in some cases within individual departments. Over time, it became apparent that in order to operate effectively it was necessary for corporate standards to be developed. Although an institution-wide Acquisitions and Disposal Policy had existed for some time, a Collections Management Policy covering other collections-related activities had not been developed.

A Working Group comprising conservators, curators, registrars and auditors was established with the brief to develop a Collections Management Policy for the organisation. In creating the policy a number of issues had to be taken into account. Primarily these were the institution’s legal and ethical responsibilities, the institution’s aims and objectives and NML’s existing corporate standards.

The Collections Management Policy was rolled out to staff in 2004 and articulated how NML manages its collections and the standards to which staff are expected to work. To support the policy, collections man-