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A key part of implementing standards within NML is the Collections Management Training Programme that has been developed in-house and delivered almost entirely by NML staff. Launched in November 2004 the programme consists of three modules covering a range of topics, such as acquisition, location control, loans management and documentation. The overall objective of the training is to provide staff with knowledge of NML's policies and procedures, in addition to providing them with training in fundamental aspects of museum work, such as environmental control, emergency planning and pest management. Many of NML's procedures are still in draft, and discussions during the training programme have been fed back into their development. The response from the delegates to the programme has been very positive, resulting in an improved sense of corporate identity and recognition of the need for unified systems. Delegates have also gained a greater understanding of the differences and similarities between disciplines. This can only improve communication and improve cross-departmental co-operation.

The development and implementation of the collections management procedures is very much work in progress at National Museums Liverpool. However, by recognising that there are differences between disciplines, and by trying to be inclusive, we are creating standard procedures that work for everyone.

### **Applying the theory of minimising the risks from the ten agents of deterioration at the Herefordshire Museum Resource and Learning Centre**

**- Kate Andrew**

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#### *Abstract*

The West Midlands region of Britain is home to two new collection centres, housing around 200,000 items including substantial natural history collections. The Herefordshire Museum Resource and Learning Centre was officially opened on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005 and the Ludlow Library and Museum Resource and Learning Centre was officially opened by HM the Queen in May 2003. Both centres were created from briefs written by the author that set out the need to minimize the risks from the ten agents of deterioration, a model first developed by the Canadian Conservation Institute and expanded by Robert Waller of the Canadian Museum of Nature. Both centres received substantial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and capital investment from the relevant local authority.

The Hereford centre is a refurbishment of an existing building, the Ludlow project a new build. The differing approaches to achieving minimal risks from each agent and the effectiveness of these measures were compared and contrasted in the presentation given to the SPNHC meeting.

The gestation and progress with the Ludlow project has been described in the past to UK audiences, for example at the 1999 GCG meeting in Dublin and the 2002 NSCG meeting in Norwich, so this paper will cover only the planning of the Hereford project. The full article is due to appear in Collections Forum.

### **The Herefordshire Museum Resource & Learning Centre – a complex 3 phase project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Herefordshire Council**

#### *Hereford in context*

Hereford is the county city of Herefordshire and is located within the West Midlands region, sharing borders with Wales, Shropshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire.

The Hereford Museum was originally set up as a county service but local government re-organisation in 1974 saw the county merged with Worcestershire. From 1974 to 1998, the museum served only a city function with the county function covered by the County Museum in Worcestershire. Since 1998, Herefordshire Heritage Services has served a countywide function for the re-established county of Herefordshire.

Since 1998 many issues around duplication and delivering services across the new county emerged. The effective operation of the museum service was one of these issues. Collections and staff were spread across five main sites and several other locations within or close to the city of Hereford with at least fifteen different stores many of which were inadequate conversions of domestic or industrial facilities. The social history collection was particularly badly dispersed, making access for research or display very difficult.

After an abortive attempt to develop Churchill House Museum, an existing site in Hereford, a number of options were explored for the future of the service. A decision was reached to formulate a four phase programme of developments in 2000 with a search initiated for a suitable site to amalgamate stored collections to.

Phase 1 – purchase of site and basic refurbishment of one store

Phase 2 – refurbishment of entire site to create 3 further stores, staff offices, conservation lab and public research room and ancillary facilities

Phase 3 – new build extension to house all service collections and most staff on one site and create a public display area and a learning centre

Phase 4 – conversion and refurbishment of museum and library site to sole museum display use with removal of the library to a new build.

#### *A brief history of the collections*

Hereford Museum and Library was opened in 1874 but the history of collecting dates back to the formation of the Herefordshire Natural History, Literary and Philosophical in 18xx with the successor (and still extant) Woolhope Field Naturalist Club founded in 1851. The natural science collections are relatively modest, at around 10,000 items in total and collecting has been fairly static with the exception of a major entomology bequest in the late 1990s. However, the main thrust of collecting was by F.C. Morgan curator from 19xx to 194xx who concentrated his efforts on social history, agriculture art and costume. The whole collections total some 100,000 items.

#### *Phase 1*

After an extensive search and evaluation of several unsuitable buildings, Herefordshire Council used challenge funding to purchase the empty BT repeater station in Friar Street in central Hereford in the late summer 2000. The site and the building was a lucky find, other options explored were far from suitable. Planning consent was required for change of use and for the entire proposed scheme, so it was necessary to plan the whole refurbishment and new build quickly and prepare a submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund. This was during a period when the museum service had no dedicated manager and was led with a series of interim managers rather than a museum professional. The four phase development was planned as set out above.

During Phase 1 of the project, one large room, previously the frame room housing the telephone switching gear was re-furbished and fitted with mobile racking. This store was used to house mainly boxed material that had to be re-located quickly from the main off-site store that was on the site of a supermarket development. The second large room, previously the generator room, had wide span racking re-erected from this store and larger social history material was housed in a temporary manner. The refurbishment did not extend to office facilities and so staff based at the building had to “camp” and use a single networked computer for two years and then temporarily re-locate during the refurbishment.

An HLF offer of an £545,000 was made for the phase 2 works in September 2002 with the contract issued in December 2002. Purchase of the site and the phase 1 refurbishment was allowed as sunk funds. Shortly afterwards, the author was appointed as head of service and immediately noted some serious shortcomings in the proposals for both phase 2 and phase 3.

#### *A new brief*

The ten agents of deterioration model was applied together with lessons learned from the project at Ludlow and a brief written for the phase 2 and phase 3 developments. The original design had been based on a staff brainstorming session rather than a formal brief and based on a staff structure that had been superseded in the summer of 2002. The facilities in the phase 3 build were particularly lacking with no account taken for example of the use of compactor storage and consequently insufficient space for all the service collections.

The inspiration for the brief was the CCI wallchart and its additional development by Rob Waller of the Canadian Museum of Nature in a risk assessment framework. This framework had been used successfully to compose the brief for the Ludlow project which has been the subject to presentations to NSCG and GCG meetings in the past, it was also the inspiration for a series of “Agents of deterioration” special issues in NSCG newsletter between 1997 and 2000. Observations of how others had planned collection facilities made on numerous field trips, for example the SPNHC meetings in Chicago and Toronto and BCG trips to

Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam also informed the brief. The detail of the manner in which the ten agents were addressed will be covered in the parallel paper in Collections Forum.

The approach had to be adapted to take into account the planning consent for the building footprint, the already agreed fixed level of funding for phase 2 and an anticipated moderate amount of funding for phase 3. Some much-needed changes were made to the phase 2 plans, which in turn required approval from HLF – this was received in December 2003 with phase 2 of the project getting underway in March 2004. Taking the decision to revise the plans was seen as a fairly radical one, but now that phase 2 is operational, it is clear that the original planned method of operation of the centre would have been unworkable, objects would have been moved and handled un-necessarily and use of space is far more efficient.

*Phase 2 conversion*

The work on phase 2 started on site in March 2004 and the building was handed back in October 2004. The decision was taken to retain the collections in the completed store during the construction work, despite the need to fit a new heating system, new lights and gain access for re-wiring. This decision was a combination of the need to retain access to collections for exhibitions and enquiries, the need to retain the ability of collection staff to undertake useful work during the 40 week project, the unnecessary risk to collections from yet another move and the need to keep costs down.

Collections in the temporary store were inventoried onto the computer database and moved to commercial storage to join collections from Churchill House Museum, which had closed in the summer of 2002.

Collections remaining on-site were protected with acid free tissue dustsheets and the compactor racking unit was kept closed as much as possible. At completion of the phase 2 conversion, a deep clean was carried out on the site with the most serious obvious dust accumulation noted on the top of the compactor units and very little ingress within bays.

Access for contractors to the store was only possible via a member of museum staff. We retained keys to this area and a separate alarm zone and would only allow access if a member of staff was also present in the room. Although the main contractor was agreeable to this condition, certain sub contractors struggled to understand the need for this condition. Lessons learned from other construction and refurbishment projects suggested that we were wise to insist.

We used the staff time on-site to undertake a 1 in 10 inventory of collections located in this store, adding data to the database initially from hand completed sheets and later direct onto a laptop. This exercise was invaluable in planning for a complete 1 in 10 collection assessment (now complete) and future inventory work, in satisfying our auditors and in assessing the condition and scope of collections.

*Preparing for phase 3*

Since phase 3 of the project was anticipated to cost in excess of £1 million, in line with HLF guidance, a project-planning bid was also prepared (for phase 3 of the work) during 2003 and awarded in early 2004. Project planning funding allowed the team to commission consultants reports on the storage needs for the collection and the development of programmes and audiences for the learning centre elements. In addition, the design team was able to work up the architectural designs to a point where accurate estimates of cost could be made for the main phase 3 bid.

The audience development plan considered the requirements for the public and learning centre elements of the centre and set out the level of service that the centre could deliver in the first year of operation. The storage consultant was also appointed to look in detail at collection storage needs that would also allow public access to stores. Staff went on a series of site visits to Cardiff, Liverpool and Manchester to gain inspiration and ideas, from facilities that combine collection care and public access.

*The phase 3 bid*

The phase 3 bid to Heritage Lottery was submitted in August 2004 for a total scheme cost of £1.83 million and a stage 1 pass was awarded in March 2005, shortly after the completed phase 2 was officially opened. Match funding from Herefordshire Council has now been secured and the stage 2 submission is currently being prepared, we hope for a decision from HLF in December 2005, allowing building work to commence in April 2006 for 12 months. Public programmes should be possible from September 2007.

### *Moving in*

We undertook an exercise of checking quotations for the moves associated with phase 2 and selected GB Liners, a large commercial storage and removal company based in Hereford. In Ludlow, we were not able to get any companies to quote for the work in the way that we needed to operate to balance the amount of material with the timetable of a bulk de-infestation and so had to undertake the move in-house.

In Hereford, we were not able to undertake a bulk de-infestation at this stage but we plan to undertake it once phase 3 is complete.

GB Liners packed up the contents of the temporary store, speaking inventory numbers into a Dictaphone and providing a hard copy list of container contents.

We used this information together with container content lists from Churchill House to plan the order in which material would be returned to store over a three month period. Using our wheeled vehicle store as the unloading point for containers and taking delivery of xx containers twice a day, two days a week. GB Liners staff placed the larger objects in position on shelving for us and we used intervening days to unpack the smaller cartons, make adjustments and to keep up with other work.

As we neared the end of the official moves, a number of items that we had not been aware of re-surfaced, including a hearse and a collection of weights and measures. But by March 2005, we had reduced collection storage sites to only two.

### *Re-establishing a service*

Throughout the project we kept our councilors well informed of progress through site visits and briefings. We have also been featured frequently in the free council newspaper, including the front page, together with radio broadcasts and local newspaper coverage.

We choose to re-open the centre to volunteers, pre-booked guided tours and individual researchers at the start of December 2004, three months ahead of the official grand opening. We have been delighted with the response to the new facility and can report in the first six months of operation 200 researchers, xx tours with yy participants, 487 hours of volunteer input and zz meetings.

We are also testing out our approach to public open days with the first event (part of Museums & Galleries Month) attracting 132 participants; two further events are planned for this year. The long-term aim is to offer ten open days a year.

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