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NatSCA News

Title: Darwin Centre and Beyond - Access to Collections and Access to Ideas at the Natural History Museum

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Source: Cracknell, L., Freeman, E., Harvey, M. (2006). Darwin Centre and Beyond - Access to Collections and Access to Ideas at the Natural History Museum. *NatSCA News, Issue 9*, 26 - 30.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/249>

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clude. The reactions were entirely positive to having the specimen on display, but we did learn from the group that they wanted information on the animal and its name. Hence Mandy the Shetland Pony who died peacefully at Knaresborough Zoo, in 1982, is now fully labelled.

One of the positive benefits of the renewal of our History of Life fossil displays has been a change of audience. Previously they were mainly used by undergraduate Earth Science students, now this group has been augmented by school students using the displays as a resource for art. Not to be outdone, we have also used the arts in our science teaching – a recent Evolution workshop for sixth-form students included a theatrical performance.

One evaluation technique we use is an open comment Visitors' Book. This has revealed a hugely positive response to our new displays, and especially to our Touchables.

The benefits of our new approaches to display have been several, including a doubling of visitors in the last five years, the winning of The Guardian's family friendly museum of the year award, a real enthusiasm for the new displays from a wide range of audience types, and an increase in donations by tens of thousands of pounds.

Louise Cracknell, Interpretation Manager – Darwin Centre Phase 2

Emma Freeman, Interpretation Manager – Special Exhibitions

Michael Harvey, Interpretation Manager – Gallery Development

Darwin Centre and beyond – access to collections and access to ideas at the Natural History Museum

The Natural History Museum is embarking on a range of substantial redevelopment projects over the next five years, and beyond. In 2002, the first phase of the Darwin Centre was opened, giving museum visitors an unprecedented level of access to both the museum's Zoology collections, and to its curators and researchers. 2008 will see the opening of the second phase of the Darwin Centre Project, one which is more ambitious in scope and builds on the lessons learned from Phase 1. In parallel to the work being carried out on this project, the Museum is also planning a longer-term redevelopment of its permanent galleries while maintaining a yearly series of major temporary exhibitions. In this session, staff from the Museum's Interpretation and Design department will explore the challenges inherent in developing a museum for the 21st Century, and the approaches the Natural History Museum is taking to dealing with them.

New public spaces at the NHM – changes and challenges

Last year, the UK government produced a consultation paper setting out its vision for museums and their role in 21st century life (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2005). Among its recommendations is a call for the opening up of collections to greater public access. In parallel to questions about collections access, the paper also asks how museums can strengthen their commitment to education as a core priority and how a strong research culture can be built within the sector.

These are questions that museums have been exploring for a long time. Over the course of three brief papers, we will briefly explore how some of these themes relate to the Natural History Museum, with particular reference to the ongoing Darwin Centre developments and to future plans for the use of collections in new permanent and temporary exhibitions. In doing so, we would also like to explore some broader questions about the relationships between researchers and collection managers and their colleagues in front-of-house, education and exhibition development, and about the museum's aspiration for an increasingly 'specimen rich' public experience.

In the coming years, there are many different aspects of the Museum's on-site visitor experience. In terms of gallery spaces, there are special exhibitions – the NHM offers a new one of these each year – so these need to work very much in the here and now. In the medium term, the Museum is developing a public offer for Darwin Centre Phase 2 – which is scheduled to open at the end of 2008. And in the long term, our per-

manent galleries – which represent the next big public project for the Museum after DC2 – are being planned to concept stage.

Louise Cracknell:

Darwin Centre Phase 2

- This is the biggest project the Museum has undertaken since it moved to South Kensington in 1881
- **Different to the rest of the Museum** in that the other galleries focus on ‘what we know’ about nature and the Darwin Centre focuses on ‘how we know’
- It is also unique in bringing together and placing equal importance on the three elements of collections, research and the public offer.
- The **strategic aims** of the Darwin Centre include:
 - Bringing people, specimens and scientists together in innovative ways
 - Providing an inspiring insight into scientific work and exposure to the collections
 - Creating dialogue and public participation in issues that concern them

- **The building**
 - Is on the site of the old Entomology building
 - Consists of a glass outer shell and an inner concrete cocoon that will house the Entomology and Botany collections
 - The new research laboratories are in the northern zone next to the cocoon
- **The public offer has 3 main elements** that tie in with a vision of a 21st century museum – they involve increasing access to the collections and to our science – how and why we do it.



- The Atrium – is primarily a place to enjoy the architecture of the building and also to gain an introduction to the idea that the Museum’s collections are much more extensive than the specimens seen on gallery and that they are used in research
- Explore – is a self-guided journey inside the collections cocoon with views into working science spaces and collections storage areas. Interpretation of these views will help visitors explore why we have the collections and how they are used in relevant scientific research. Explore provides a compelling way to talk about the process of science. This is an increasingly important part of the National Curriculum and aims to create scientifically literate citizens who understand ‘how science happens’ and can make informed judgements on the way scientific issues are reported in the media. Explore also answers calls for increased transparency about publicly funded science.
- Sir David Attenborough Studio – is the next step on from the current Darwin Centre Live space. It will have a capacity of 150 (75 seated) and is the place where visitors can meet our scientists, hear them talk, ask them questions and engage with the issues that concern them.
- **Challenges** in selling our science in the Darwin Centre
 - The three elements (collections, research and public offer) often have conflicting needs and priorities. For example a space must function for scientific activities but also enable the interpretation to tell the story of the research facility. We have been working together with the laboratory managers and have scientists seconded to the Public Offer team to ensure we work together to solve such issues.

- The nature of the dry collections means that for pest management reasons we cannot allow the public to truly go behind the science and walk around the collections areas opening drawers. So if we are to increase access to the collections what other forms can this access take? We will be working on this with our designers over the next stage of our work.

Emma Freeman:

Special Exhibitions

Imagine it's the Easter holidays, you're taking your kids, nephews, younger brother for a day out. Where do you go - Alton Towers, Paint-balling, cinema Ice Age II, Shopping at Bluewater, Natural History Museum. These are some of the activities that the Museums SE exhibitions are competing with. At £8 or £9 per entrance fee, visiting an exhibition can be an expensive day out so it has to be worth it. Since National Museums went free 5 years ago it has become increasingly important for the Museum to generate means of income, beyond government funding. Special Exhibitions are a key element in raising funds for large-scale public projects, like Darwin Centre Phase II, which is the biggest public funded project at the Natural History Museum since it was built in 1881.

Special Exhibitions at the Natural History Museum are a series of temporary, changing blockbuster exhibitions, often for families with children aged 7-11. They often tour internationally. Their primary aim is to make money for Museum projects. They can therefore be seen as the showbiz end of the Museum - they need to be a crowd puller in order to generate income. They are also a key vehicle for pulling first time visitors into the Museum and encouraging repeat visits. Once they are in the door, they'll visit other exhibitions and the more likely they are to come back again.

Because they often tour, Special Exhibitions are also an opportunity to outreach our science to venues internationally and to increase visitation to the Museum.

- DinoJaws opens this June. It is the biggest temporary exhibition on dinosaurs we've ever created with 11 of the most technologically advanced dinosaurs ever made. Fifteen percent of visiting parties come to the Museum specifically to see dinosaurs so they are often our 'hook'. Dino Jaws will be a fun, highly interactive exhibition about dinosaur diets. Families will work together as scientists, examining fossils to work out what different dinosaurs ate.
- Antarctica opens May 2007. The Museum are developing it in partnership with the British Antarctic Survey to develop an blockbuster exhibition with high impact and an international focus.

Our main challenges are creating Special Exhibitions that:

- Are educational blockbusters about natural history that families will pay for
- Meet educational desires of the parents and the entertainment desires of the kids.
- Are a decision choice for a day out
- Can tour - specimens are very difficult to tour safely, particularly abroad.
- Are relevant to host venues as wide ranging as France, Poland, Korea.
- Are commercially viable

What we are doing:

- Understanding more about our potential audiences. Finding out what will appeal to them? What will they expect to see in an exhibition about Antarctica? How can we challenge and surprise our visitors? How can we market the exhibition so it appeals?
- We are creating flexible exhibitions that can be personalised by host venues who wish to add their own content
- Replacing specimens with models that can be kept outside of cases and engage the senses such as touch and smell
- Including additional opportunities for income generation such as simulators, photo opportunities – families would actually welcome paid for elements for in the shop.
- Taking advantage of international programmes eg International Polar Year and partnerships such as BAS

Michael Harvey:

Permanent Gallery Development

After DC2, the museum's next task will be to revisit the permanent galleries, and redevelop exhibitions that at between 20 and 30 years of age are beginning to appear somewhat tired. The museum has come to see a specimen-rich offer as being inextricably linked with the communication of the processes of natural history in general and of NHM scientific processes in particular. Richard Lane, our Director of Science has characterised the research collection as a scientific instrument, like a radio telescope or a cyclotron, which is used by scientists from all over the world. This is something that lies at the heart of what the museum is, and the museum wants to share that with its visitors. I say "the museum wants" quite deliberately – because this is an aspiration which has been clearly articulated across all sectors of the museum – directorate, public engagement departments and at all levels of the science departments. These aspirations come at a time when we are seeing calls for greater openness in science from both government and non-government organisations. Notably, the House of Lords' 2000 report into Science and Society looked not only at public understanding of science but also public trust in science (House of Lords, 2000). And as I have mentioned at the start of this paper, we also have a democratic imperative – the museum holds the national collection and, as such, must respond to calls for greater public access to the nation's collections – natural history and otherwise.

What are the practical steps that the NHM is taking to ensure access to both the collections the museum holds and the scientific ideas it generates in both this new phase of the DC, and in the conceptual work for the renovated permanent galleries? What does it mean for other functions of the museum? Two key challenges are those of bridging the divide between the scientific and public elements of the Museum.

One of the key issues is the divide between the museum's science and public functions. Last year the NHM held two staff workshops to explore this issue. The workshops concluded that there is indeed a division between the two areas, and that it is based on long held prejudices (many of which are inaccurate) and historical differences on both sides.

Along with many other museums, the NHM has changed dramatically in the last 30-40 years – both internally and externally. Different aspects of museum work have become more professional – where a museum scientist might once have entirely driven the development of an exhibition, specialist interpreters, content researchers and designers now produce those exhibitions. Where museum directors were once selected primarily for their scientific record they must now be professional in a greater range of fields and are often no longer from a purely scientific background.

The workshops concluded that these changes have led to the development of silos of expertise and activity (spoken of in 'tribal' terms), which can be difficult to breach. The workshops also concluded that the situation is improving, and that elements of the DC project has helped to break down barriers and increase mutual respect – through closer interactions such as DC Live (wherein scientists work directly with a the DC Live team in the NHM Department for Learning to develop and present their public sessions). A key recommendation of these workshops was that it is in day-to-day cooperation that these divisions are

broken down. Moving forward to the development of DC2 and the permanent galleries, the museum has set up half-time secondments whereby staff members from science work in the offices of the programme and exhibition development teams. This has the advantage that, throughout the development of the DC2 public programme and the future permanent galleries, the interpretation, learning and design teams will have direct daily access to representatives from science. Even at this early stage in this work, these secondees are shaping our thinking about the practicalities of the museum's aspirations. They are able to give us a picture of where greater specimen access may cause problems, and we are able to explore solutions at an on-the-ground level rather than going up and down the various hierarchies (which is a genuine relief in a organisation of over 900 people).

Through our daily contact with these curators, we are exploring questions such as:

- If we want to place more of the collections in the galleries and provide access for the public, how can we continue to ensure access for research?
- How can we enrich the information recorded with the specimens to capture data that may be useful in the public domain as well as in the scientific?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current collection when it comes to suitability for display? We have a commitment to make more of the collections accessible, but the vast majority of the 70 million specimens were never intended for display. In the DC, this is not a problem as we are explicitly providing access to research collections, and the mode of storage is explained from the outset. In our permanent galleries, the display-quality of the specimens becomes more significant.

Conclusion

We are not for a moment suggesting that the Natural History Museum is the only organisation exploring these possibilities, nor that we have it entirely right. Our intention in preparing this paper has been to give a flavour of what is a very exciting time for the museum. The DC project is the largest the NHM has embarked on since the opening of the Waterhouse building in 1881, and the Life Galleries have been largely untouched since 1989. I hope we have given a sense of the fact that these physical changes in the museum parallel some key philosophical directions that we, the government, our funders and many of our fellow museums are also exploring.

Will Watts, Dinosaur Coast Project Officer, Scarborough Museums & Gallery **Redisplaying the Rotunda Museum**

'The Rotunda Museum is unique. It is perhaps the only museum whose design, original displays and even the stone of which it is built combined to express the logic of William Smith's ideas and the, then, brand new science of geology' (Professor Simon Knell, University of Leicester). The Rotunda Museum in Scarborough first opened in 1829 and over 175 years later it is the subject of a £4million redevelopment scheme due for completion in 2007. This paper will explain the rationale for the redisplay of the Rotunda Museum. How we plan to present Smith's ideas, in the context of the aspirations and diverse interests of the Scarborough Philosophical Society and its Museum, return the Museum to the cutting edge of science through the 'Shell Geology Now' gallery and provide the gateway to the wider geological heritage of the Yorkshire Coast through the Dinosaur Coast Visitor Centre.

In 1827 a meeting was held in Scarborough to discuss the possible formation of a philosophical society and the building of a museum. Attendees at this meeting included Thomas Hinderwell a local natural historian and holder of large, varied and important collections from the area. Also present was William Smith, the 'father of English Geology' recently employed by Lord Derwent at the nearby Hackness estate as land steward.

Two years later in August 1829 the dream of a Scarborough based philosophical society with its own museum was realised with the opening of the Rotunda Museum, built to designs suggested by William Smith who also acted as foreman of works. The museum housed the collections of Hinderwell and other local collectors and covered a huge range of subjects from geology and natural history, through ethnography to social history, a truly cross subject display. Although the museum originally featured geology in pride of place this soon changed as other subjects became more prominent, including natural history and archaeology. These changes in interest coupled with the expansion of the museum through the addition of the two