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Author(s): Thompson, S.

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how issues such as Local Government reorganisation and the shift to a unitary authority will affect the operation of the museums in the Borders, but with some good fortune and a prevailing wind the task of curating, collecting, researching and interpreting the natural heritage of the Borders will continue for many years to come.

John Harrison
Natural Sciences Officer
Roxburgh District Museums Service

Summary of Museums Association Meeting held in Doncaster

The aim was to establish a forum where the MA, federations and specialist groups could come together, perhaps two or three times a year, at different venues around the country. Discussion indicated that twice a year would be a reasonable aim, and the next meeting may be in Bristol later this year.

The meeting was in general quite interesting, and it is useful to be able to confront the MA directly. However one little hiccup concerned the notification of the specialist groups. Although all of us had received invitations, generally via our institutions, MA claimed that they had also gone to the specialist groups as well. In fact neither the chairs or the secretaries of the BCG or GCG appear to have received any such invitation, thus potentially leaving out the whole of the Natural Sciences curatorial community. A small issue perhaps, but one I hope would not be repeated. In fact, committee members from both groups were present at the meeting.

Stephen Locke spoke on the current situation at the MA and its plans for the future. He sees the role of the MA as being to raise the standards of museums, but a principle means to do that would be by the underwriting of professional standards. He stressed that the core values of the Association would be retained, but hoped the Association would become open to a wider range of applicants than at present, shop managers being a cited example.

This led onto the review of the membership structure, and in particular the way in which the applications for associateship were to be assessed. The aim was to make the assessment more rigorous and more relevant, while again opening up the areas of museum work that could be eligible. The gaining of the diploma as a prerequisite for asso-

ciate membership was to be removed, and assessment by portfolio and interview were proposed. The award would be made on the basis of both training and experience, with the ability to demonstrate a commitment to their institution as a museum. Thus associate membership would be given on the basis not only of what they had been trained to do, but also on what they had actually done. It was accepted that criteria would be difficult to define for some areas of museum work, and also that problems might arise with respect to those people who had been awarded this status under the older regulations.

Barbara Woroncow then said a little about the (possible) forthcoming local government review. The general impression seems to be that not enough is known or decided at present, so it is difficult to know what to do (*Only in England - Ed*). Some points were made. Particular problem areas were likely to be break up of county museum services, smaller museums with a wide remit (eg. The Yorkshire Museum, and pastoral care posts not based on any institution, (eg, Gloucestershire, Cumbria and Ryedale).

The MA were to make a statement of general principles, and to set up a working party to look at any potential problems. Letters had been sent out to those museums that look as though they might be at risk, but the response has so far been poor.

Brian Hayton gave some rule of thumb points for pragmatists:

- Know what you are doing.
- Ignore what voices on high are saying. They won't know any more than you.
- Don't assume it will be alright on the night. However don't assume all change is bad.
- Keep your masters happy.
- Know who your friends are and keep them.
- Make more friends.
- Find out who writes policy and talk to them.
- Blow your own trumpet. Run information campaigns.
- Stay in charge of your own situation.

Discussion indicated that many people were still very much in the dark. The MA will put more information in the Museums Journal.

Along with a certain amount of specialist discussion, there was one topic of more general relevance. Cathy Niblett gave a talk on the provision for

disabled people in museums. This will be covered in the next round of registration, and may be a requirement rather than an option. MAGDA have a range of documents designed to help people deal with problems of disabled access, and Cathy gave some guidelines on how to meet the minimum standards.

- Conduct a disability/access audit.
- Always work in consultation with disabled people.
- Look at all types of disability. Some may be less apparent than others.
- Establish a working party which includes disabled people.
- Draw up policy and a timetabled action plan. Have this endorsed by your governing body.
- Review your progress as part of your normal review procedures.
- Be grateful for criticism, and act on it.

Promote public support.

It remains to be seen how successful these meetings will be, but they have the potential to be a useful forum, doing interactively what is otherwise covered less effectively in the Journal.
Steve Thompson, Scunthorpe Museum

REVIEWS

Duckworth, W.D., Genoways, H.H. & Rose, C.L.

Preserving Natural Science Collections: Chronicle of our Environmental Heritage

National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property, Inc. 1993. 140pp. 25 photographs. 1 figure.

This publication is the result of a joint project between NIC, the Association of Systematics Collections and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections. The publication consists of an executive summary (4pp); Chapter 1 - Significance and value of natural science collections (11pp); Chapter 2 - the scope and nature of the conservation challenge (13pp); Chapter 3 - Meeting the challenge - recommendations and strategies (14pp); Bibliography (38pp); Glossary of selected terms (16pp); Appendix A - natural science conservation training program (7pp); Appendix B - recommended topics for research and technology transfer (7pp); Appendix C - Project chronology (2pp); Appendix D - project participants and contributors (13pp); and Appendix E - Resolutions from the International Symposium and First World Congress on the Preservation