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The Biology Curator

Title: Biological Recording Cell Report

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Source: Garland, S. (1998). Biological Recording Cell Report. *The Biology Curator*, Issue 12, 4 - 5.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/440>

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Anyone who has seen SPECTRUM will know that it is thorough, comprehensive, and not an easy bedtime read. Don't let that discourage you. To meet the Registration requirements, there are only eight procedures to worry about. When you have more time, or need them for a specific purpose, you can think about the other twelve. The Registration Guidelines list the different types of record museums should keep and relate these to the eight "primary" procedures in SPECTRUM. So you know where to start.

There are two more sources of help available once you do start. Standards in action: A guide to using SPECTRUM, recently published by the MDA, is a guide to implementing SPECTRUM. It makes clear the link between SPECTRUM's

standards and Registration, as well as answering some real-life museum questions, and includes self-diagnostic tools for assessing your museum's documentation. To back that up the MDA has unveiled its team of SPECTRUM Advisers, museum professionals with extensive experience in collections documentation, who are available at the end of a phone to answer queries about SPECTRUM. Your correspondent is one of the SPECTRUM Advisers. Although the intention is to have regionally-based Advisers, it is worth noting that I am the only Adviser with a background in natural sciences. To contact the SPECTRUM Advisers, call 01223 366097.

In subsequent editions of *The Biology Curator* I will explain the "primary" procedures, how they can be implemented, how they can help your museum meet its aims and objectives, and some of the particular requirements and peculiarities of biological collections.

Next time Do It While You Can: Object Entry

Now Hear This!

EC regulation No. 338/97 prohibits the acquisition or use of a range of protected species, listed in that regulation, for activities associated with commercial gain. However, article 30 of regulation 939/97 allows museums to apply for a one off exemption certificate, which will be granted automatically to any MGC registered institution.

It would appear from the response at the recent Edinburgh meeting that many curators feel that this does not apply to them, as they do not operate for commercial gain. BEWARE! If you have entrance charges, special exhibition charges, sell publications or run any sort of shop or cafe, receive grants or sponsorship, this may well be considered as commercial gain. This means you!

Application is very straightforward, but make sure you have your registration number to hand. It also costs nothing, so every museum with biological material should apply as a matter of course, just to be on the safe side. To date there have been no more than a handful of applications.

For application packs (sounds complicated but it is about five questions on a single side of A4) contact Roy Queralt, Global Wildlife Division, Room 8/22, Tollgate House, Houlton Street, Bristol, BS2 9DJ. Tel. 0117 987 8010 / 8202 / 8749 / 6165. Fax. 0117 987 8206.

E.mail global.wildlife@gtnet.gov.uk

Website <http://www.open.gov.uk/gwd/gwdhome.htm>

Study Trip 2000

In 2000, we are intending to go to St. Petersburg. This will require a considerable amount of work and it is not yet clear who will be involved, but there is the possibility of running it as a joint trip between ourselves and at least GCG. Costs will probably be similar to those for trips that we have already run. I would be grateful for feedback from people as to whether they would like to attend, so that I can get an idea of what to cater for. Don't be shy. Thanks. Steve T.

Biological Recording Cell Report

*Steve Garland, Bolton Museum
National Biodiversity Network*

The NBN project is still awaiting a decision by the Heritage Lottery Fund. How the project develops in future will depend on this. Discussions are ongoing with the Natural History Museum concerning the future managing of national taxonomic checklists. The development of Recorder's replacement (now referred to as Collect & Collate Software) is on track. They are about to decide on a software developer, so work will start soon. I believe that they hope to be trialing a stand-alone version of the package by early next summer. There is little decided about the package yet, except that it will run on Windows95 (or 98 by then!). Various databases are being considered, including MSAccess.

The only other thing to report is that the number of Museum-based LRCs is steadily dropping. Sheffield Museum has been surgically separated from the LRC as a result of the creation of the Sheffield Museums and Galleries Trust. The LRC remains within the City Council. It would be interesting to know how many are left; other non-museum LRCs that were once in museums include Rotherham and Bristol and LRCs under threat include Derby, West Yorkshire and some in Scotland.

These changes bring into question whether museums will be a major player in this field in future. However, the BCG's involvement with the NBN is still important because of issues relating to archive management, voucher specimens, environmental sampling and identification/ verification of records. We must ensure that biological recording does not become divorced from collections and that manuscript records are not lost. Many non-museum LRCs do not see either of these issues as important, merely as an extra cost and an inconvenience. This attitude is a worrying extension

of the decline in interest in taxonomy and the shortage of ecologists with identification skills. The environmental press has been discussing at length the thousands of environmental biology and conservation graduates coming onto the job market with minimal identification skills. The quality of management plans and environmental impact assessments appearing as a result of this is worrying.

This is my last report as BCG Biological Recording Cell Representative. My replacement is Howard Mendel (see the Committee list in this issue). I am still involved though, and will continue as an active Cell member; so you can still use me as a contact.

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Editor's Note

The Newsletter comes out at the end of March, July and November so to make sure your events and meetings appear in the Diary Dates, please make sure that you send the details to us in plenty of time to reach the right edition. See the back page for copy date deadlines.