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## The Biology Curator

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Title: Environmental Monitoring at the Oxford University Museum

Author(s): Not Listed

Source: Not Listed (1995). Environmental Monitoring at the Oxford University Museum. *The Biology Curator*, Issue 2, 7.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/574>

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### ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AT THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

The Oxford University Museum has recently received grant-aid from the South East Museum Services to purchase a telemetric monitoring system. A survey of current environmental monitoring, control, and remedial conservation was carried out as a preliminary to forward planning for conservation. It revealed that while widespread monitoring and controls were already in place for light, insect and pollutant and mechanical damage, only limited monitoring and controls were set up for temperature and humidity.

The telemetric system comprises twelve detectors which send readings by radio to a central logger. The data is then downloaded to a computer where it can be plotted and analysed. With thirty six separate stores and a large display area, the Museum has given priority to those areas containing most vulnerable specimens such as certain historic collections and bone material. Off-site stores are monitored using traditional recording thermohygrographs and a number of small max/min electronic thermohygrometers supplement the whole system.

After the first year of monitoring the Museum should have the hard data necessary to establish control measures which will protect the most vulnerable collections..always assuming the system confirms the environmental 'hunches' of staff members!

Meanwhile the Museum would welcome visits from any curators, conservators etc. interested in seeing the telemetric monitoring system in action. Please contact Jane Pickering, Monica Price or Rennison Hall to arrange an

appointment, at the University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford. OX1 3PW. tel 01865 272950, fax 01865 272970.

[Perth Museum is currently operating both telemetric and wired in sensor systems, please contact the Editor if you would like to know more.]

### LETTERS

**Bear Appeal** - I have had a request through the Grimsby *Evening Telegraph* from a Norwegian called Arne Mjaland, who is trying to trace the whereabouts of a brown bear which was shot by Mr Karl Ljasland in 1910. The bear apparently killed many sheep and cows in the vicinity of Aserul in Norway and the body was purchased by an Englishman and shipped to Grimsby for conservation.

Does anyone know the possible whereabouts of this bear? It could now be in a museum or a stately home anywhere in the country, as Grimsby was probably just the port through which it entered Britain.

*Adrian Norris,  
Assistant Curator, Natural History  
Leeds City Museum  
Calverley Street, Leeds LS1 3AA*

**Live Animals in Museums - A Live Issue?** - Manchester Museum has for many years had an Aquarium/Vivarium showing large snakes, other reptiles, amphibia and fish.

We are now in the throes of an architectural and policy review, one aspect of which is the future for the live animal displays. One view is that we should build upon the undoubted popularity of the live displays and attempt to integrate them more with the planned new static displays. Another view is that 'Society' has

moved on and that live displays no longer have any place in museums.

Do any other members of the Group have views on this topic, or have you had experience of the same debate recently? If so, we would welcome a note from you to help inform our discussions; please send to Charles Pettitt, Manchester Museum, M13 9PL, email c.pettitt@man.ac.uk

**A Zoological Gardens Museum?** - I am a member of the Bartlett Society, a small group of enthusiasts who have an interest in the history of zoological gardens and exotic animal husbandry. Many members have collections of material on the subject which, although containing items which individually are of low value, are of some significance as collections and would be very difficult to re-collect. The material has value to future researchers, not only of zoological garden history and animal records, but of social significance too.

There is no zoological gardens museum, and the few zoos that keep archival material are only concerned with their own collection. The Bartlett Society has no resources to house or maintain such a collection but there are many individuals (and probably organisations) that would be willing to donate all or part of their collections when they die, or before, if they knew that the material would be preserved for use by others.

Perhaps BCG members may have suggestions for a suitable repository for our collections, or for parts of them? The ideal would be the creation of a national Zoological Gardens Museum.

I would be pleased to provide further details if this would be of assistance.

*Mr John Adams, 61 Belmont Road  
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