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The Biology Curator

Title: Development Of A Biological Records Centre At Bolton Museum

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Source: Berry, K. (1996). Development Of A Biological Records Centre At Bolton Museum. *The Biology Curator*, Issue 5, 13 - 14.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/806>

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confident when applying for grant aid knowing that matching money can be generated. In the past five years Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council RECAP (Reclassification and Access Projects) and ACCESS grants have been key to our collection management programme. Vast improvements, previously unthinkable, have been made to storage and visitor access to collections.

6. Fund Raising: Just ask people to give you money! Art curators do it all the time. In 1992, hot on the heels of the Rio Earth Summit, we formed the Sheffield Biodiversity Research Project with clear aims and objectives. We asked for public donations and raised £1,750 in no time. A 'Freeze-drier Appeal' also had an excellent response. Naturalists, birders and wildlife enthusiasts are most generous to a good cause.

7. Exhibitions and Events: Paul Richards has reviewed these income generating activities in a separate paper (Richards, this issue). My only additional comment is to watch out for opportunities. When Kokoro displayed their robotic dinosaurs at Ponds Forge International Sports Complex, we set up a display of large skeletons to amuse the long queues of punters. We negotiated £1,000 to provide and ostrich, camel, manatee, elephant skull and assorted horns and skulls. It was the easiest money we ever made; less than two days work and the customers were delighted. The skeletons looked fabulous set amongst the rocks and palm trees adjacent to the leisure pool (very consistent humidity levels!).

Conclusions

There is no doubt that income generation has saved the Natural History Section at Sheffield Museum so far *and* allowed greater investment in resources than ever before. But there is a price to pay in terms of loss of traditional functions.

Amongst the problems are that the core service suffers (you spend more time out on contracts). Core budget never returns (while ever you are successful). You spend more time on finance administration (mainly a problem for me as cost centre manager). *But:* our staff feel more secure, you have more budget control, pay for more resources, equipment and activity, and more records and specimens are generated.

I hope these examples provide ideas for some inspiration to others and salvation to a few. We do not advocate income generation as the way forward for all museums. If you have reasonable staff levels and a good core budget, stick with it. On the other hand if cutbacks or worse are looming and your service looks like getting the axe, think about it!

Appendix

Natural History Section core staff 1995:

Derek Whiteley	Principal Keeper, Natural History
Gaynor Boon	Assistant Keeper, Meteorology/Earth Sciences
Paul Richards	Assistant Keeper, Nat.Hist.Conservation
Tracey Owen	Clerical Officer (0.5 fte)

City Ecology Unit core staff 1995

Jean Glassock	Senior City Ecologist
Julie Westfold	Assistant Ecologist
Lucy Heath	SWAP Project Development Officer
Jane Haigh	SWAP Assistant Project Development Officer

[SWAP is the Sheffield Wildlife Action Partnership – a partnership with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust enabling and promoting wildlife in the community.

FREEZE DRYING – PRESENT KNOWLEDGE AND AREAS FOR RESEARCH

Speakers: Pete Morgan, Paul Richards, Geoff Yates.

[Brief notes by Charles Pettitt]

Some Advantages of Freeze Drying:

Freeze-drying easy to do; no cutting, dissection or nasty chemicals required.

One can preserve far more small vertebrate specimens than by conventional study skin preparation; also preserves *all* body parts (although reconstitution not yet tested, but freeze-dried specimens should be much better for DNA studies in future).

By preparing a bird with one wing out handling damage is reduced, and it is also good for nature artists who are major users of bird skin collections.

Small birds or bats, once freeze dried, can mounted on large pin similar to insect mount; again this makes handling easier and reduces risk of damage from abrasion while stored. Bats should be prepared with mouth open, again to make examination easier without the risk of damage.

Drawbacks: Freeze-drying is -

a) Expensive to set-up – the equipment has high capital cost.

b) Expensive to run – requires lots of electricity.

c) Expensive to maintain – maintenance costs on the machinery are high, and it *does* sometimes go wrong!

d) If machine does break-down during a run, especially if it is early in the cycle, it can cause great damage to the specimens being processed.

General points:

Lipids sometimes liquify after freeze drying, and can cause greasy stains.

Soft-bodied invertebrates (eg. caterpillars) work extremely well, but need careful mounting while drying, otherwise get crinkly-winged dragonflies, etc.

Discussion:

There is still a pest problem with freeze dried material, though. There was some discussion on the advantages of freeze-drying as a method of pest control; *ie.* if extract all the oxygen and water as well as freezing then this should kill pests more quickly. No resolution of this problem was arrived at, but it was agreed that the subject could form the basis of a future 'specialist' BCG meeting.

Feedback requested:

Is anyone doing research on the use of freeze-drying, particularly for pest control purposes? Would a specialist meeting be useful? If you have any views please contact Geoff Yates at Bolton Museum (Bolton BL1 1SE).

DEVELOPMENT OF A BIOLOGICAL RECORDS CENTRE AT BOLTON MUSEUM

Kathryn Berry, Bolton Museum

In the 1980s there was a change of emphasis away from collecting to recording.

The reasons were threefold:

- 1) Lack of space to store ever-increasing collections.
- 2) Greater awareness of environmental issues developing in council, local societies and public.

3) Existing information out-of-date and patchy.

Therefore we actively encouraged recording *via*

1) Local society involvement including Bolton Wildlife Project funded by Council and Lancs Wildlife Trust.

2) Beetle-down week, holiday activity and environment weeks are used to talk to the public and extract records from them .

3) Producing recording forms :

a) General ones for existing recorders.

b) Specific species forms e.g. Fox Watch work better than asking for general records for the majority of casual recorders.

4) *Recorder Newsletter* – species maps and information produced as feedback for recorders encourages further records.

Hardware in use: Four PC-compatible computers linked by BNC cable (three 486DXs and one 66MHz Pentium), with a total of 2Gb of hard disk space. One OKI 391 dot-matrix printer, and a 250Mb tape-streamer for backup. Daily backups are done by copying data to a second computer.

Software in use: English Nature's RECORDER package, running under a runtime version of Advanced Revelation 3.0, was installed on our computer in December 1991. The networking system is Novell Personal Netware. Mapping is done using an AREV package DMAP for printing the map, with link software provided to transfer the data from RECORDER. Initial hand drawn maps and card indexes made map production very difficult when we first started (eg. for the *Recorder Newsletter*) but RECORDER and DMAP allow great flexibility.

Data development: When the computerisation was started we mostly had site based information, so we built on what we had. How did we do it? First site was a garden used for moth trapping, but we needed to be less *ad hoc*. Therefore we asked other users of RECORDER what they did – some went by grid ref. and others just where record from. We went our own way, and developed a complete coverage of our area by sites starting with Bolton Metropolitan Borough boundary, including urban areas. This was done under a strict methodology:

a) Phase 1 survey sites

b) Local nature reserves, SBIs, SSSIs using Greater Manchester Countryside Unit (now Manchester Ecology Unit) outlines. This is a joint borough initiative to identify sites of interest and classify them

c) Bolton Museum's own identified sites

d) The 'rest' – still being added as and when needed for areas outside the borough) Recently liaised with Lancashire County Planning Department for sites that overlapped – in hindsight should have done this earlier as changing boundaries or using sub-sites is more difficult where records are already entered for an existing site.

N.B: for anyone contemplating drawing site boundaries DO NOT use the middle of roads, railways/rivers as boundaries. ALWAYS make sure they are completely in one or other site. The confusion arising from a dead hedgehog, and which site to put it in is very irritating!

Problems:

Paying for our own success!

a) For example Fox Watch 1992: between 1985 and 1990 we had 46 fox records. Between 1990 and 1995 we had 350+ fox records to contend with.

b) Manual site files (reports, surveys etc) mushroomed – space problems for filing cabinets again!

c) Many more regular contributors – RSPB, South Lancs Bat Group and local Field Naturalists' Societies as well as specialist individuals produce a constant deluge of records e.g. one recorder (who has repetitive strain injury and therefore cannot put any records on the computer himself) goes out every day to the same area covering about 40 sites and records everything he sees – about 2,000 records a month. Other enthusiasts have produced records for areas we otherwise would not cover as part of our own survey work.

d) All information given goes on, including e.g. blue-tits (how else can we assess population fluctuations if the commonest birds are omitted) and at the moment we can keep up but the backlog of old site information, journals and card-indexes is very neglected. The use of work-experience students and volunteers does help.

Benefits:

It is nice to get information out. Maps and species lists for sites were impossible to do before and again demand is increasing, proving that data we hold is of great value to local naturalists. In 1994/5 we dealt with around 600 enquiries relating to the Records Centre. Free access to the data is provided for everyone except commercial users. Commercial users pay for our time in providing data, performing surveys or laboratory data. Some examples of output are:-

a) Site maps and grid refs are given to those who monitor their own their own favourite area making processing the records much quicker.

b) Local college students on environmental management course use us extensively for their project work. We get records, they get a better result.

c) The Planning Department at first did not know we existed but now we do get enquiries for information when they want to destroy a particular site! Communication is getting a lot better and compromises are even possible.

Summary:

Over 170,000 records have been input in three and a half years,

Over 1,400 sites have been made.

Over 12,000 people have given us the information.

THE BOLTON 'WILDLIFE ON YOUR DOORSTEP' GALLERY & WILDLIFE STUDY CENTRE

Patricia Francis, Bolton Museum.

The gallery displays the wide variety of habitat to be found in the Bolton area. Represented habitats are urban, woodland, Pennine moorland and wetland habitats characteristic of the area, that is upland streams and reservoirs. These are portrayed by large dioramas and smaller subsidiary displays which explain linked topics in more detail, for example, waste-disposal and recycling in the urban section and invertebrates to be found in dead wood in the woodland section. Photographic panels also cover some aspects of each habitat. Several features especially help children to use and to enjoy the gallery. A carpeted step running entirely around the gallery allows even very small children to see into the displays. All labels were deliberately kept short, with a low-reading age and are of a large point size. Also, simple interactive areas are included within the