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NSCG Newsletter

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Accreditation scheme

Review of the Museum Training Institute Professional Accreditation for Conservators day seminar held at the London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre, Holloway Road, London on Tuesday, 22 April 1997.

At a meeting organised and commissioned by the MTI, the subject of formalising qualifications for conservators across the board of disciplines, was discussed. Although nothing presently exists for Natural Sciences Conservators, UKIC have assembled a structured plan along the lines of student, associate and fellowship for whatever discipline.

Alan Leigh of Parameter Research outlined the aims and objectives of the MTI project "to enable conservators to identify and move toward agreement on the need for and a means of accreditation, by using the assessment opportunities presented by S/NVQs". Much work has already been done studying accreditation schemes in other professions, consulting with conservation bodies via the Conservation Forum and other professional bodies and by collation of questionnaire responses. Benefits of accreditation were listed as identifying the profession, the body of knowledge, the common values and ethics, commitment of individuals and recognition of the profession by others. Further reasons listed were to ensure competence of members, application of the code of ethics, to provide structured guidance, discipline and protect

interests of members, to inform actual and prospective clients of the members' worth and to maintain Continued Professional Development.

Chris Newbury, Director of MTI, talked of the need to identify and commission NVQ assessment centres and to identify university courses (quality of lecturers and facilities) for approval as a part of the route to accreditation. He drew attention to an MTI document on guide-lines for education and training course approval.

Val King of the Museums & Galleries Commission stepped in at the last minute for Carole Milner to discuss trends in professionalism. She told us of the rapidly expanding number of accreditation schemes being set up and how the UK is ahead of Europe in this respect. How do we recognise a competent professional and how do we judge competence anyway? Accreditation should be dynamic and accessible.

Hilary McGowan of the Museums Association described the new pathways to the AMA, formerly via the Museums Association Diploma, now via routes A, B and C which are varying combinations of relevant degrees, NVQs and years of experience working within museums. Continued Professional Development and Mentoring for candidates was also discussed. A conservator can be an AMA but an AMA *per se* cannot be an accredited conservator.

Mike Corfield of English Heritage

gave the view of accreditation from a commissioning body and stressed the need for a standardised measure of competence and for a register of the accredited.

After lunch, the delegates were split into four groups for informal discussion and a final plenary session identified the consensus of opinions. Conclusions drawn included that a national unitary accreditation scheme would be a good thing with the need to recognise the peculiar requirements of different sub-groups. This to be policed by the Conservation Forum Federal body. We and not the employers should be the ones to set the standards. The NSCG should be involved and be able to dictate what and how much we want to satisfy our accreditation. There could also be a lower level accreditation (= NVQ level 3) for technicians.

*Paul Brown
Natural History Museum*

Our next newsletter will feature 'Pests' as an Agent of Deterioration in our pull out guide to the risks facing museum collections. Meanwhile two events are being held in the near future, at Liverpool Museum and The Natural History Museum.

PEST CONTROL IN COLLECTIONS:

The Way Forward?

2nd December 1997

The Natural History Museum

A one day meeting covering: pest problems at the NHM; their dry spider collection; *Stegobium* at Kew; pesticide residues in herbarium specimens; low temperature treatments; nitrogen and carbon dioxide; and the Thermolignum process. Registration fee: £5

For more information contact: Phil Ackery on 0171 938 9346, Fax: 0171 938 8937, e.mail: pra@nhm.ac.uk

INSECT PEST CONTROL IN COLLECTIONS

4-5th December 1997

Liverpool Museum

This course will show how to identify, evaluate and deal with insect pest problems in collections. The emphasis will be on the need to develop well planned and defined control programmes stressing prevention, the use of non-chemical methods of control and the safe, effective and legal use of pesticides.

Tutors: David Pinniger, Consultant Entomologist; Tracey Seddon, Senior Organics Conservator, NMGM; Steve Judd, Curator of Entomology, NMGM.

The course fee will be £95. Places will be limited so please apply asap. For more details and/or enrolment form contact: Tracey Seddon (address on last page) or Jim Black Tel: (0171) 387 9651, Fax: (0171) 387 9651, email: j.black@ucl.ac.uk