

NatSCA AGM 2020

Report from the Chair



2019 was yet another uncertain year, with the implications of Brexit still being identified. NatSCA has been helping to support the natural science collections sector by liaising with Defra to help inform them of the needs of museums with scientific collections with regards to Brexit & CITES legislation.

To help address some of the other bigger picture issues surrounding the decline of subject specialist expertise in the museums sector we have been working with other Subject Specialist Networks (SSNs). A large part of this work involves us being on the steering group for the SSN Consortium. This is an important group, as it joins together the voices of around 40 SSNs similar to NatSCA, amplifying the message that museum collections need knowledge to unlock their potential. Through the Consortium we have an opportunity to engage more effectively with sector bodies, and we have already helped inform the Art Fund and Arts Council England about how the wider museums sector is supported by specialist groups and how they as funders can better support the work we do. This has resulted in a new funding strand from the Art Fund and we are in discussion with Arts Council England about how SSNs might be better supported to increase capacity for developing and delivering resources for our members.

We had good uptake of our conference bursaries this year, after increasing the award from a maximum of £100 to £250. Our 2019 Bill Pettit Memorial Award went to two projects. The Dorman Museum "Leo the Lion conservation project" (£1105) and the Victoria Gallery, Liverpool "Primate skeleton conservation project" (£1840). Both will have the results reported on our blog.

Training delivered this year included "Finding Funds for Fossils, Ferns and Flamingos: how to secure money for museum collections" run in partnership with the World Museum Liverpool; a "Care and Conservation of Insect Collections" workshop was run in partnership with The Oxford University Museum of Natural History, and "An introduction to mobilising your collection's biodiversity data" workshop in partnership with Bristol Culture and NMH London. This training ties in with our aim of facilitating the integration of the UK national dispersed collections with the European Distributed System of Scientific Collections (DiSSCo) programme. DiSSCo looks to become an increasingly important initiative for mobilising collections data and improving access to collections around the UK and Europe.

Our AGM and conference was on the theme of "Dead Interesting: Secrets of Collections Success" which was generously hosted by the National Museum of Ireland with additional tours kindly provided by the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland. At the AGM the membership voted for a proposed change in NatSCA's status to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which will be enacted at this AGM. This is a step that many SSNs are undertaking since the CIO status was introduced by the Charities Commission in 2013, since it confers 'legal personality' allowing entry into contracts on behalf of the organisation rather than individual trustees.

We had several committee members stepping down at the end of their term or due to limitations on their personal capacity issues last year. I would very much like to thank Roberto Portela-Miguez, Miranda Lowe, Rachel Jennings, and Emma Nicholls for all their valuable efforts in supporting NatSCA over the years. While we're sad to lose such wonderful members of our committee, we are delighted to welcome Jen Gallichan, Glenn Roadley, Amanda Callaghan and Kirsty Lloyd who were elected to the committee at the Dublin AGM and have already proven to be assets to the group.