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same - the attention of the visitor must be drawn to the objects and displays, to alert them to receive the scheme and the story behind the exhibition whilst providing an acceptable environment for the objects on display.

The curator makes academic sense of a collection, but the designer has to translate this into visual sense. It is very much my ethos and that of the design section here that the design of the arrangement should be subordinate to the objects themselves. As Margaret Hall comments in her book *On Display*, Other designer may use banners in the wind outside or a magnificent entrance to attract attention and introduce the subject. The mechanics of design should never be obvious, the designer being no more noticeable than the good pianist accompanying the soloist

Further Reading

Hall, M. 1987 *On display: Design Grammar for Museum Exhibitions* Lund Humphries, London 256 pp.



Society for the Preservation of Natural Science Collections (SPNHC)

Annual Conference, Washington DC, 28th June – 3rd July 1999

Caroline Buttler & Vicky Purewal National Museums & Galleries of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF1 3NP

CB was supported in part by a travel grant from the Museums & Galleries Commission

The 14th Annual SPNHC meeting took place in Washington, DC, hosted by the Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education and the National Museum of Natural History. This was the largest ever SPNHC meeting with over 200 delegates registered.

The Smithsonian Institution encompasses 17 museums and 10 research centres, it cares for over 140 million artifacts and specimens. One major problem was finding time in the busy conference schedule to visit museums such as the Air and Space Museum and the Museum of American History. The Smithsonian Folk-life festival was also taking place on the Mall in front of the Smithsonian Institution; this enabled us to try Romanian and South African food during the lunch breaks.

The conference lasted six days, the first three were devoted to workshops, committee meetings and tours of the host institutions and the final three were technical sessions.

The National Museum of Natural History is an impressive building opposite the Smithsonian Castle. The entrance is dominated by a large stuffed elephant and by the smell of naphthalene!

The age of the exhibitions varies within the museum, the new Janet Anenburg Hooker Hall of Geology, Gems and Minerals was opened in 1997, but the older exhibitions are still interesting because of the high quality of the material on display. Tours were available of all the main departments and here we could appreciate the scale of the collections held in the Museum. It was, however, incredible that in the Department of Paleobiology, which contains over 40 million specimens, there is no dedicated conservator.

A tour of the Museum Support Centre was organised for Tuesday afternoon. This complex includes the Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and off-site storage for the National Museum of Natural History. Tours were arranged to look at different disciplines. The scale of the facility is impressive. It includes four storage areas, called pods, each the size of a football field. The height of the pods has allowed mezzanine floors to be added when required and in other areas, high racking was installed to take out-sized palletised items. The pallets were custom-made from aluminium with fabric dust covers. Forklift trucks are used to access the pallets.

Few people seemed to make their way to the Materials Research laborato-

ries, which was unfortunate because it was fascinating to see the depth and range of projects being undertaken. The day was completed with a barbecue. After a day of hot sunny weather, the heavens opened and the slightly wet delegates who braved it outdoors sheltered under an awning, which at times threatened to blow away.

The Conservation committee meeting took place on the Tuesday 29th June. Three topics of relevance to NSCG members were discussed.

A sub-committee is being formed to address the problem of pesticide residues on museum collections. The sub-committee aims to bring together specialists in this field to discuss research progress and to assess further research projects. Contact Vicky Purewal or Judy Birschoff, National Park Service, Division of Conservation, Route 2, Box 251-A, Kernersville, WV 25430 USA or Jessica Johnson on jessica.johnson@nps.gov or at her address National Park Service, Museum Management Program, 1849 C St NW (NC230) Washington, DC 20240 USA.

Paula Work of Cincinnati Museum Centre is responsible for collating any publications that would be relevant to SPNHC. If anybody knows of any recent publications or otherwise please let Paula have the details. You can e-mail her on work3@fuse.net or write to her at Cincinnati Museum Centre, Department of Invertebrate Palaeontology, 1720 Gilbert Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45202 USA. This would also be useful for the NSCG newsletter, so please send in any information, papers or journals that have any relevance to Natural Sciences.

Gene Hess of Delaware Museum of Natural History is in the process of putting together a vast project encompassing fluid assessments from collection managers around the globe. So far the survey concentrated on mainly US collections, however it would be beneficial if UK collection managers could contribute their data. This survey is being combined with the work conducted by Arnold Suzumoto on lids and fluids. The survey concentrates only on zoological material. If anybody is interested and would like more information contact Gene directly on hessgk@delmnh.org or write to Gene K Hess, Collections Manager, Delaware Museum of Natural History, Dept. of Ornithology, PO Box 3937 Wilmington, DE

19807, USA. Alternatively, contact Arnold Suzumoto on glassman@bishopmuseum.org or write to Bishop Museum, Department of Natural Sciences, 1525 Bernice St., Honolulu, HI 96817 USA.

The technical sessions were held over three days and were grouped in themed and general sessions. The themes were:

- Health & Safety Issues in Collections
- Collecting, Preserving & Accessioning Genetic Resources
- Repatriation

Talks of Interest

Health and Safety

Biological testing for toxic exposures.

Burroughs, G. Edward National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 4676 Columbia Pkwy, Cincinnati, OH 45226.

Report on the national institute for occupational safety and health study of health hazards and control technologies in museum and conservation work.

Makos, Kathryn A. Smithsonian Institution, Office of Environmental Management and Safety, 490 L'Enfant Plaza, Room 4202, Washington, DC 20560.

Health hazards in collections: testing for arsenic contamination.

Howe, Shelley, Johnson, Cynthia and Southward, Jude. Denver Museum of Natural History, 2001 Colorado Blvd., Denver, CO 80205-5798, USA.

General

Impacts of NAGPRA: dealing with culturally sensitive material at the Denver Museum of Natural History.

Johnson, Cynthia. Denver Museum of Natural History, 2001 Colorado Blvd., Denver, CO 80205-5798, USA.

Conserving the data in natural history collections: approaches for automatic scanning and digitising. Andersen, Arthur & Chapman, Ralph, E. Virtual Surfaces Inc., 832 E. Rand Rd., Suite 16 Mt. Prospect, IL 60056 USA; ADP, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560-0136 USA.

Conserving the data in natural history collections: using technology to minimise wear and damage on specimens during research.

Chapman, Ralph, E. & Andersen, Arthur ADP, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560-0136 USA. Virtual Surfaces Inc., 832 E. Rand Rd., Suite 16 Mt. Prospect, IL 60056 USA

Storing oversized objects in the department of anthropology: aluminium pallets with open framing.

Evans, Sunae Park and Hansen, Greta. National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560-0136 USA.

The concentration shift indicator: a simple instrument to monitor the preservation quality of ethanol preserved specimens.

Van Dam A.J. Leiden Museum of Anatomy, Leiden University Medical Centre, Box 9602, 2300 RC Leiden, Netherlands.

Zoology Issues concerning loan policies for destructive analysis of museum based frozen tissue and DNA samples.

Baker, Robert, Hager, Britney and Monk, Richard. Museum of Texas Tech University and Department of Biological Sciences, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409-3191 USA.

A survey of the adhesives and consolidants used by Byrozoan researchers and the implications for Natural Science Collections.

Buttler, Caroline and Spencer Jones, Mary. Dept. of Geology, National Museum and Galleries of Wales, Cardiff, CF1 3NP. Dept. of Zoology, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 5BD.

Preserving a giant squid in New York City.

Cordeiro, James R and Hussaini, Bushra. Department of invertebrates, American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York, NY 10024, USA

Collection, storage and preservation of vertebrate genetic resources: a perspective from the Burke museum.

Edwards, Scott V. and Birks, Sharon. Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, University of Washington, Box 353010, Seattle, WA 98195.

Botany

DNA banking: legal implications and conservation activities.

Fay, Michael. Royal Botanic Gardens, Department of Conservation Genetics, Jodrell Laboratory, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 3DS.

Digitising, conserving and re-housing a 17th Century plant collection.

Huxley, Robert. Dept. of Botany, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 5BD.

The analysis and detection of hazardous pesticide residues present on herbarium material.

Purewal, Victoria. Dept. of Biosyb, National Museum and Galleries of Wales, Cardiff, CF1 3NP.

Geology

Recovering microfossil specimens from deteriorating mounting media

Golden, Julia. University of Iowa, Dept. of Geology, Iowa City, IA 52242, USA.

Planning for the reorganisation, move and integration of two major fossil invertebrate collections.

Wetmore, Karen. Museum of Palaeontology, 1101 Valley Life Sciences Building #4780, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-4780, USA.

The general technical sessions had a wide variety of subjects, including a new method to monitor ethanol preserved specimens, recovering speci-

mens from a flood, adhesives, and methods of storing over-sized objects. In one session, there was a series of talks on scanning, digitising & reverse engineering museum specimens. If there is anyone interested in seeing these papers, please contact the author directly, otherwise Caroline or myself should be able to provide the abstracts.

The conference was very well organised and, despite the heat and humidity, Washington DC was an ideal location for a conference involving museum professionals.



Announcements

Register of Natural Science Collections On-Line

Funding from the Museums and Galleries Commission has enabled the FENSCORE (Federation for Natural Sciences Collection Research) Committee to compile a searchable on-line database of natural science collections at <http://www.man.ac.uk/fenscore/>.

There are now more than 15,000 entries, covering most of the UK. This initiative has also been supported by the Manchester Museum.

Insect Pests in Museums

A Two Day Course at the Natural History Museum, London.
14th– 15th March 2000

Course Tutor: David Pinniger
Cost: £100.00 plus V.A.T.

Details from: P.R. Ackery, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London, SW7 5BD.

Publication Announcement

Managing the Modern Herbarium An Interdisciplinary Approach

D. A. Metsger and S.C. Byers, Editors Published by SPNHC
Cost: £36.00 approx.

"Managing the Modern Herbarium highlights the significance and value of one of the world's oldest and most basic elements of botanical systematics, the herbarium. The book combines practical guidelines for the proper care of documented collections of preserved plants and fungi with recommendations for their responsible use in modern systematic research. Though focusing on collections of plants and fungi, the book also provides a useful model for other disciplines." SPNHC.

Publication Announcement

Insurance for Conservators

Proceedings from the 1st Conservation Forum Seminar September 1997

Edited by Caroline Bendix, Valentine Walsh and Val Munday

The Conservation Forum is pleased to announce the post prints from the Insurance Seminar are available as of the beginning of September. The cost of the publication will be approximately £10.00 + P. & P.

The post-prints will provide a reference for all insurance issues covered at the conference, including points raised during the question and answer session at the seminar. Written in an easy style, with advice and information from acknowledged experts, this guide will prove an invaluable reference for conservators within both the public and private sectors and for those employing conservators.