Natural Sciences
Conservation Group

Newsletter

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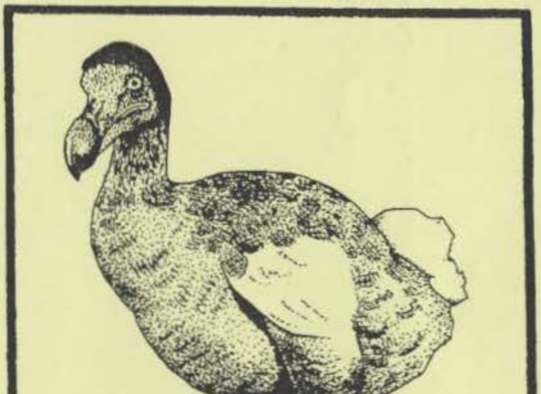
NATURAL SCIENCES CONSERVATION GROUP



Access to Collections
Best Value

The Society

The Natural Sciences Conservation Group promotes: research and exchange of ideas; advances in technical and ethical standards; the public profile of the conservation and preservation of natural science collections and objects; training; and publications.

Membership

The Group is keen to open its membership to all those involved in the care and conservation of natural science objects and encourages their active participation.

Annual Subscription

Students (UK only)	£8.00
UK personal	£10.00
Overseas personal	£12.00
Institution	£25.00

Newsletter

The Newsletter is a forum for articles, views and opinions on the care, conservation and curation of natural history and associated material. The Newsletter is produced three times per annum (January, May and September) and is free to all members.

Advertisements

1/4 page	£15.00
1/2 page	£25.00
Full page	£50.00

Instructions for Authors

Material should be type-written and double-spaced in A4 format and if possible accompanied by a text file or Word document on disk (Dos-formatted). The pages should be numbered and the position of any tables and/or figures should be indicated on the hard copy. The names of animal and plant species should be underlined and the authority name given in full for the first time used, thereafter they may be omitted. All references should be given in full. Articles and other items for inclusion should be submitted to the Editor at least three weeks before the publication date.

Opinions expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those shared by the NSCG Committee, the Editor or the membership at large.

Editorial

"It is indeed wonderful to consider, that there should be a sort of learned men who are wholly employed in gathering together the refuse of nature, if I may call it so, and hoarding up in their chests and cabinets such creatures as others industriously avoid the sight of."
Joseph Addison, 26th August, 1710

Welcome to Issue 15 of our Newsletter

In the words of the famous Psychic, Professor Trelawney: "Is there anybody out there?" I have not heard a dicky-bird, whisper, complaint or even, dare I say it, a compliment about the newsletter from you, the membership, and as much as a like a peaceful life, it would be nice to be given some external stimuli, or maybe even some articles.

In this issue we have the remainder of the articles from our joint *Access to Collections* conference with the BCG and GCG, plus an excellent article by Jo Sage from the *Best Value* meeting on everything you did/did not want to know about *Best Value* and from this I have at the very least learnt some new buzzwords; *outsourcing* being my particular favourite.

Another additional piece of jargon I recently learnt, which is my "buzzword of the year" is *institutional memory*. Now, when I was told I had this, I must admit I thought it an insult, but not wanting to appear ignorant of such jargon I took it like a man, so just nodded and smiled. I learnt later that it merely meant that I knowledge of my place of work, the collections and their history, i.e. I know where the toilets are and where my office is, or at least something like that.

Jargon brings me onto my next point, MGC = MLAC = *re*:source = ?? I have read, or at least tried to read the manifesto. There are some great things included, it even mentions conservation of collections, on the downside it also mentions Best Value, focused services, partnerships and quite a few other scary phrases. If anyone would like to comment on this manifesto, please send it to me, as I'm not sure I quite got the point.

Cheers for now,

D.

View from the chair

Dear members,

Your intrepid chairman has just recently returned from "oop north", Stoke-on-Trent to be exact. The NSCG, well me actually on your behalf, organised and ran a one-day seminar on *Best Value*. For those of you who are not employed by local government this will mean nothing to you, for those of you who are it will either bore or terrify you.

Best Value is the Labour Governments' alternative to Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). It aims to ensure that the public are receiving best value as regards the services they pay their local authority to provide. If these services can be provided more efficiently and more cost effectively by other providers, then you are in trouble.

The speakers were Joe Sage from Dundee Museums, Jane Arthur from Birmingham City Museums, Dr Darryl Mead from Glasgow Museums, and Wayne Longshore the Assistant Chief Executive from Stoke City Council.

Unfortunately, few people decided to attend the seminar, which was very disappointing considering the time, and effort that went into its' organisation, not to mention the quality of the speakers. Perhaps people think that it won't affect them, but unfortunately, it will.

As one who has gone through *Best Value*, it was interesting to see the different ways institutions approached the process. The question and answer sessions were especially helpful as they allowed the delegates to pose specific questions to the speakers about their own *Best Value* problems. The day gave everyone who attended food for thought. Only a handful of those who attended were NSCG members. It was gratifying to note that after the seminar, I, on behalf of the NSCG, was thanked for organising the day.

I have no doubt there will be similar *Best Value* seminars in the future run by other groups as the legislation begins to take effect, but there will be few with such good speakers. Joe Sage and Jane Arthur gave very good papers taking us through how their services dealt with the legislation, and how they organised themselves internally to amass the tremendous amount of information needed to write the report.

Wayne Longshore gave an overview of how *Best Value* was being tackled by a city authority, and just how much time and money the process was costing. Dr Mead took a different view and used the process to highlight the deficiencies in the museum service in Glasgow and what had to done before the service could provide best value to the charge payers. An interesting turn around on the view that one has to cast one's own museum service in the best possible light. You could say we had two strategies; one defensive and one offensive, both of which it seems have been successful. As I noted at the conference, there is no right way of carrying out this process, however, there are a lot of wrong ways. It is essential that conservators in local authorities are forewarned and forearmed and that they make their voices heard when their report is being written. One of the areas that can be easily outsourced is conservation.

In these days of cutbacks, conservators are seen increasingly as an expensive luxury. Conservators as a profession need to stand up and shout exactly what it is they do and make our employers understand how important a conservator is to the safety and preservation of their collections. Conservators, by their nature, are not used to doing this.

The *Best Value* process is so important to local authority museums that we have decided, if possible, to produce a special *Best Value* publication containing the speakers talks. However, since trying to get copy out of speakers is like trying to get a wage increase from a local authority this may be some time in coming. Consequently, Joe Sages paper is published in this edition of the newsletter and hopefully the others will appear in due course. I would like to thank Keith Bloor and Don Steward from the Potteries Museum Stoke-on-Trent for providing us with a venue, and the speakers who provided us with a stimulating day.

On a different note, our newsletter editor can only print what you the membership send in. Keep the NSCG newsletter vibrant by sending in your articles, conference reviews, book reviews and news items.

My regards to you all,

Bob Entwistle

Announcements

Biological Curators Group

Digital Learning - Biology Collections and the New Technologies

Tuesday 30th January 2001

Department of Museum Studies, Leicester University, Leicester

IT usage has moved way beyond simply using computers for documentation purposes. Digital technologies are re-shaping how we use, interact with and display biological collections. They offer new ways of communicating and affording access to the huge resource and potential contained within our collections. This meeting aims to explore some of the many ways digital technologies are being used and look at the potential for providing access, information and new ways of using and interpretation.

Contact: Nick Gordon, New Walk Museum, New Walk, Leicester, LE1 7EA
Phone: 0116 2473030
E-Mail: gordn001@leicester.gov.uk

Natural Sciences Conservation Group

Pyrite Decay
One Day Meeting

The Natural History Museum, London

February 2001

Details to be announced

Contact: Adrian Doyle, Conservation Laboratory, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 5BD
Tel: 0207 942 5538 Fax: 0207 942 5546
E-mail: amd@nhm.ac.uk

Insect Pests in Museums

A Two Day Course at the Natural History Museum, London.
14^{th}– 15^{th} March 2001

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

Of interest to all those with responsibility for natural history specimens, ethnographic collections, folk collections, textiles, etc.

Covering: pests and damage, pest identification, pest environments, pest monitoring and control, and pest management among other topics.

Details from: P.R. Ackery, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London, SW7 5BD
Tel: 0207 942 5612
E-Mail: pra@nhm.ac.uk

BCG & NSCG Joint Meeting and AGM

The Future of Collecting/Collections of the Future
Opportunities and Expectations

18th-19th April 2001
Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Oxford

Details to be announced

Contact: Nick Gordon, New Walk Museum, New Walk, Leicester, LE1 7EA

Tel: 0116 2473030
E-Mail: gordn001@leicester.gov.uk

ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS
NSCG / BCG / GCG CONFERENCE

Conference in Scarborough, Yorkshire, Monday April 3rd - Tuesday April 4th

The National Museums and Galleries of Wales Collections Centre at Nantgarw

Bob E. Child, Head of Conservation, National Museum and Galleries of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF1 3NP

The Problem of Space - or lack of it

As with every other museum there has ever been, NMGW is short of adequate storage space. This has always been so and will probably always continue to be so, for changing reasons. The pressures on storage space for us are for the following obvious reasons:

- all departments have historically acquired collections that they are unwilling or unable to dispose of,
- all departments continue to actively (and often passively) collect by acquisition, bequest, field work collecting, archaeological excavations etc.,
- modern exhibitions tend to use fewer objects from the collections and take up more space.

Not so obvious pressures are from:

- the number of non-curatorial staff needing accommodating and financing. In the NMGW non-curatorial staff have increased by approximately 150% in the last 20 years,
- improved conservation standards require better conservation storage, which always takes up more room, and should not use the worst storage areas such as basements, attics, or the field next-door,
- requirements for better access to the collections leads to fewer objects in the storage systems and stores.

The problem gets worse

NMGW has been aware of the increasing space crisis for some years, but has lacked the funding to do much about it. Our position was not relieved when substantial new building to the NMGW Cardiff occurred in the early 1990's, and the space was used for new offices and galleries, and little extra storage space. The position became critical in the mid 1990's for the following reasons :

- developments in Cardiff Bay forced us to sell the Industrial and Maritime Museum and re-house its collections,
- temporary storage in rented buildings and 'grace and favour' stores belonging to Cardiff Bay Corporation were expensive and/or on insecure short lease. This could have jeopardised our Registered Museum status,
- sub-basement areas in NMG Cardiff were deemed unsuitable for storage (which they had been up to then) as the space was needed for an air conditioning plant, some areas were prone to flooding, and safe access was a problem under H&S legislation.

A possible solution - if albeit a compromise

With the sale of the Industrial and Maritime Museum, the NMGW had funding to develop a new museum in Swansea in partnership with Swansea County Council. It also made available a sum of money sufficient to hire or purchase a storage building for the displaced collections. The problems facing us were :

- there was no suitable funding of a sufficient size available for rent or purchase within a 30 mile radius of Cardiff. (Avonmouth is strictly speaking within that radius, but transport problems across the Bristol Channel proved "challenging").
- we were keen not to have just a repository but a building where the collections could be better appreciated, conserved, documented and accessed. The name Collections Centre was deliberately chosen.

In Nantgarw, the Welsh Development Agency were building speculative light industrial units for sale to suitable applicants. These buildings had office space and facilities and a large open area of 3000m^2 with excellent access at the rear. This proved large enough for the transferral of the Industrial and Maritime collections with space for staff to service it.

NMGW purchased the building and transferred the collections into it in 1998. After a period of reorganisation it was made available for public visits. However, having a building which was owned by the museum allowed us to develop long term ideas and plans.

Future developments

The Collections Centre is currently closed as we are now building an Archive Resource Centre within the present building. This is to house the NMGW accessed archives, collections documentation and the administrative archive of personnel, finance etc., files. The building is due for completion in September 2000 and will have digitisation facilities, conservation laboratories and visitor research access.

The site owned by NMGW at Nantgarw covers approximately 10,000m^2, and it is our intention to extend the present Collections Centre to provide a further 5000m^2 of high quality storage. Our criteria for its use are :

- it is not a dumping ground for unwanted collections,
- any collections transferred there must be in an acceptable standard and must have departmental staff responsible for its upkeep,
- material that could be of interest to the public should be made so, perhaps on an 'open storage' basis.

The lessons learnt

Our experience over the last few years with the Collections Centre and its current and future developments has been very positive. There have been a number of useful and salutary spin-offs. Some of them are:

- it has made us re-think collecting policies,
- it has made us re-evaluate our existing collections especially with regard to conservation and disposal issues,
- neglected collections have been recognised as having value.
- resource issues in improving collection standards have been properly addressed.

Before Nantgarw we thought a light at the end of the tunnel meant somebody with a torch bringing you more work. Now we hope that we have a focussed and realistic opportunity to preserve and present our collections in a manner that they deserve.

Access to Large Collections Stores at The Science Museum

Hazel Newey, Head of Conservation, Science Museum, Exhibition Road, London, SW7 2DD.

The Science Museum has approximately 350k objects in its collections relating to the history of science, industry, technology and medicine. At present, there are about 3,000 on display in the museum galleries at South Kensington and the remainder are located either at the storage facility in Hammersmith, West London or at the Large Object Store at Wroughton Airfield, outside Swindon. This article will cover basic access to large numbers of objects as well as large-scale objects.

The West London Store is the old Post Office Savings Bank in Olympia, a large Edwardian building shared with the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum. When the building was acquired, The Science Museum decided to make its smaller objects as accessible as possible by putting them out on open shelves or racks, unless security or safety dictated otherwise. In order to ensure that the environment remained stable and dust-free, the windows were sealed on the inside with heat-reflecting board to exclude daylight and the heating pipes insulated so the temperature was stabilised. A pest management programme was instituted so insect infestation could be dealt with immediately.

Currently, apart from museum staff, the collections at West London are used mainly by individual visiting researchers. There are a number of group visits over the year from special interest societies and groups, usually led by one or more curators and often as part of a meeting or seminar. There are also a number of corporate evenings for our sponsors, during which they are given a tour of the store accompanied by one or more curators, conservators or stores staff. There are also plans to open the store to the public on certain days. The arrangements for this have not been decided and due to our current exhibition programme this has been put on hold.

The larger objects that are not on display (c16k), for example from the transport, civil and mechanical engineering collections as well as medical and analytical items are stored at Wroughton. The site is a World War II maintenance airfield and the objects are housed in six hangars and a new purpose-built, environmentally controlled store. During the summer months, the museum organises a series of events or open days, usually at weekends. Several of the hangars are laid out in display configuration, for example road transport, agriculture and aviation. The staff or members of the local support group act as guides or the visitors are free to wander around the designated walkways. The main objects have labels with some textual information. The aviation hangar is also used for corporate hire space. The aircraft are arranged around an open space in the middle, which can be used for trade stands, or corporate dining. Although it seems removed from the main purpose of the collections it stimulates interest and promotes visits from people who may never have considered going to the site before. There are other hangars, which are more densely packed with objects, and these are occasionally opened for behind-the-scenes tours or specialist visitors.

The museum is in the process of acquiring additional land and building at one end of the site. The whole site will become the National Collections Centre and the intention is to increase public access and increase the interpretation and education aspects. Space will be leased to other museums, whose collections relate to the Science Museum's, both for access and some storage.

With collections relating to science and industry, Health and Safety issues always have to be considered. Many of the objects are large and seemingly robust but are not safe to handle or climb on. These are separated from the public by barriers but the staff have to be constantly aware as some visitors disregard these in order to get a closer look (or even get inside the planes). Likewise, some of the objects have intrinsic hazards in the materials from which they are made, for example asbestos, mercury, and other chemicals. It is essential when allowing the public to access the collections that the full extent of possible hazards are known and understood. This indicates the need for the correct information to be entered onto the collections inventory or database, the object marked with a visible hazard label and, if necessary, moved to a separate area. The Science Museum tries to identify hazards before an object is accepted for acquisition or loan, asking the owner or lender to remove the problematic component. In addition to looking for hazardous materials, we use a Geiger counter to identify objects that may have radioactive components, and check for insect pests on arrival.

Providing access to collections that are not normally on public display has considerable resource implications. It is not just opening the doors to the stores and letting everyone in. There is still a need for interpretation; security and the human factor to ensure the visitors get the most out of the experience. Access should be seen as an opportunity to show the public other aspects of the work of museums in the preservation of the heritage.

The WWW

Re:source

The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries is a new UK strategic organisation replacing MGC.

http://www.resource.gov.uk/

Journal Abbreviations and Full Titles (BIOSIS Format)
For those of us involved with cataloguing collections, this WWW is very helpful, with a searchable database of abbreviations of journal titles.

http://csssrvr.entnem.ufl.edu/~pmc/journals/j_titles.htm

The "Deutsches Entomologisches Institut" Bibiography of World Entomologists
A useful list of obituaries of entomologists

http://www.dei-eberswalde.de/

Best Value

A One Day Seminar
The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent
28th September 2000

Best Value for Collections Care

Jo Sage, Technical and Specialist Services Officer, McManus Galleries, Albert Square, Dundee, DD1 4DY

Introduction

In 1996, Dundee's Art Galleries and Museums joined with a range of arts-based services to form the Arts and Heritage Department. This process brought together an assortment of 10 technical staff to form Technical and Specialist Services, a distinct group providing support services across the Department.

During 1998/99, the Technical and Specialist Services team (TASS) underwent a Best Value Review, which sought to determine the most cost-effective *way* of delivering technical services for the ensuing five years.

This paper attempts to explain, simply, what Best Value is and how to prepare for it. The information presented draws heavily on personal experience as well as published information.

As with any new concept or management tool, *Best Value* comes complete with its own set of jargon and "newspeak". Whilst some of this may appear self-explanatory, much of it requires some definition.

What is Best Value?

Best Value is the Labour Government's strategy to ensure Council services:

- reflect the needs of local communities
- are accountable to those communities
- are the best available in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and economy

There is no set formula or pattern for Best Value; *"what is best is what works"*.

Best Value is not simply a replacement for the rigid Compulsory Competitive Tendering regime imposed on Council Direct Service Organisations by the Conservative Government in the 1980's. Instead, it is an all-embracing concept affecting every local authority service.

Since April 2000 there has been a legal requirement for all Councils in England and Wales to review all services over a 5 year cycle, with the aim of reviewing about 20% a year.

In Scotland, Wales and some Pilot Authorities in England, Best Value has been on the go since 1998 and approaches to the process vary. For example, some Councils are reviewing part of each service each year, as in Dundee, whilst others are reviewing whole Departments at once. Currently Dundee is undertaking its' third round of reviews.

Since Performance Monitoring is a key feature, Best Value has been described (somewhat cynically) as Continuously Review All Performance.

Principal Best Value Methodologies

Based on our experiences in Scotland so far, there are three main models for Best Value Reviews: -

1. **Market Testing** - which involves a process of other people tendering for *your* work and, of course, *you* tendering for *your* own work.
2. **Benchmarking** - which involves comparing how well *you* do things against a recognised set of criteria (these *may* be national Performance Indicators or agreed between a "Benchmarking Club" of similar organisations, e.g. Museums.
3. **Pilot Study** - this covers a wide range of novel approaches to improving a service's relationship with its' customers (= "Stakeholders") and its delivery methods.

Other models *may* be developed in the future as the process evolves.

Best Value; basic principles

There are a number of "guiding principles" relating to Best Value. These aim to ensure a degree of cohesion within the whole review framework without prescribing the details of the review process itself. Again, "what is best is what works".

Whilst the notion of "quicker, better, cheaper" *may* have some relevance in the manufacturing sector, it is of limited application to the provision of public sector (i.e. non-profit) services. Instead, a lexicon of snappy phrases has appeared (borrowed, no doubt, from a succession of tried and failed management fads)

The 4 C's - **Challenge, Compare, Consult, Compete** - form a basis for *any* Best Value review insofar as *they* require *you* to assume:

- that the *status quo may* not necessarily be the best *way* of doing things: Challenge.
- that other organisations *may* operate more effectively: Compare
- that *your* service is not considered worthwhile *by your* users: Consult.
- that whatever services are delivered *may* be more cost *effectively* provided *by* someone who *may* not be *you* - Compete.

The 5 E's - **Efficiency, Effectiveness, Economy, Equity, Environment -**

Preparing for Best Value

As the saying goes, "knowledge is power". With Best Value, when *your* professional existence is under *scrutiny*, insider intelligence is crucial.

To "be prepared" *you* should:

- assess the political climate of *your* Authority: what stance do elected members take on Best Value, direct versus indirect service provision, and security of employment for staff? What is your Authority's track record on CCT (Compulsory Competitive Tendering)?

- Determine the views of your Senior Management: do your Senior Managers have any preconceived ideas of what they want the outcome of Best Value to be? Are they, for instance, loudly proclaiming the virtues of Trust status or quietly hoping to get the whole thing over with as soon as possible?
- Find out how Best Value Reviews are being organised in your Department: "whole service / part service; market testing / benchmarking etc.
- check the remit for the Review that affects you: do you have the opportunity to influence the terms of reference.

If your museum is MGC Registered, you should check your Business Plan for:

- what commitment your organisation gives to Conservation,
- what Performance Indicators relate to Collections Care.

Performance Indicators (PI's), both national and local, are playing an increasingly important part in our working lives. There is a danger that the fundamental tenet of Best Value - meeting local needs - will be overwhelmed by the need, real or perceived, to attain targets set by central government.

National Performance Indicators fall into two "classes. Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's) and Audit Commission Performance Indicators (ACPI's). Altogether there are over 170 national Performance Indicators.
Of the BVPI's the following are the most relevant:
BVPI113 - the number of pupils visiting museums and galleries in organised school groups,
BVPI114 - does the local authority have a local cultural strategy?
BVPI 119 - percentage of residents by targeted group satisfied with the authority's cultural and recreational activities.

The important ACPI's are:
15a - the number of museums operated or supported by the authority
15b - the number of those museums that are Registered under the MGC (now Re: Source) Registration Scheme
16a - the number of visits/usages to museums per 1000 population

16b - the number of those visits that were in person per 1000 population
17 - the net cost per visit/usage

Audit Commission PI's are published annually; it's worth checking your Authority's current performance for baseline information across a range of services. ("Know thine enemy".) Remember that national PI's generally relate to the museum service as a whole. PI's specific to conservation and collections care will be found in the Business Plan (also called a Service or Forward Plan). If you are not aware of these, someone hasn't been doing his/her job!

Internal PI's may address such issues as the percentage of the collections meeting MGC standards of collections care or the proportion of conservation staff time spent on remedial conservation or the proportion of staff time taken up by training.

Performance Indicators, not surprisingly, give an indication of how an organisation is performing during a specified time period (usually one financial year) and rely on the results of performance monitoring. The aim, of course, is to measurably improve Performance (achieve more, be more efficient and cost less to run). An organisation's Best Value Performance Plan - BVPP - sets out how it intends to improve performance and over what timescale; this is usually undertaken at the Corporate level with departmental Business Plans being aligned as necessary to fit the council's agenda.

The more informed you are beforehand about your organisation, your Authority and Best Value the better.

A Case Study – Best Valuing Technical and Specialist Services

As we know, there's more than one way to skin a cat so what follows represents only one of many possible routes to successful Best Value.

The Review Group consisted of:

- Review Team Leader (Personnel Department)
- Lead Officer (myself)
- Four team members

The roles played by the group members were:

Review Team Leader

- to act as link to the Chief Executive and the Council Best Value Group
- to approve the review plan and the elements within it
- to monitor and record the process and progress
- to audit any information gathered
- to advise on reporting formats

A good Team Leader makes life much easier in that he/she will be able to translate the views of the elected members and the Chief executive in terms of how much or little work the review group actually needs to do to satisfy the corporate objectives, given that undertaking a Best value Review is in addition to the normal workload.

Also, by getting the Team Leader to analyse and verify any data or statistics you are creating an audit trail should anyone outside the organisation want to check up (e.g. the Audit Commission - Accounts Commission in Scotland - whose job it is to monitor Best Value on behalf of central government)

Lead Officer

- to plan the review
- to allocate tasks to the team members
- to prepare reports etc
- to commission information retrieval and analysis

Team Members

- to gather information
- to prepare and undertake surveys
- to debate findings

The Main Stages

1. Define the service under review
2. Consult the stakeholders

3. Determine the Critical Success Factors
4. Compare the costs of service delivery
5. Undertake an Options Appraisal
6. Develop a Continuous Improvement Strategy
7. Seek Committee approval

1. Define the service under review

- Assess Job Descriptions
- Identify the tasks we perform
- Note the difference between theory and practice
- Rank tasks according to estimates of time spent on them

As a group, we had a good idea of what we were theoretically supposed to do, and we all knew what we actually did. We could also guesstimate how much time was spent on various projects and activities, but we needed statistics that were more definite.

A previous staffing review had given us a format for time recording that was simple but effective so this was re-introduced.

This was analysed by our Personnel Department (as was any other information we collected), which gave us a complete profile for each member of the team.

We were thus able to group our activities into discrete services, such as conservation, taxidermy, exhibition services etc. Since every member of the team is involved in several of these groupings, we developed the equivalent of a "food web".
(As with any food web, if you remove one element it can significantly upset the stability or viability of the whole system).

2. Consult the stakeholders

- Internal, i.e. within the Arts and Heritage Department.
- External, i.e. other Council departments and outside organisations

and individuals. Determine the information required from stakeholders and survey methods to be implemented.

- Undertake surveys and interpret results
  - o Defines the "ideal" service
  - o Identifies gaps between actual provision and expectations

A **Stakeholder** is any person or group whom has a vested interest in a service, such as visitors, elected members, ratepayers, "friends groups", schoolteachers, grant-giving bodies etc.

We held face-to-face interviews with our internal stakeholders, i.e. the curatorial, design, admin and other staff that we work with. These enabled us to quantify:

- How much of our time was spent on exhibitions, conservation, photography and concerts
- How much of our work was one-off projects or routine
- What quality standards applied (either national, e.g. qualifications required to demonstrate competence or internal quality standards)
- How much of the overall service we supplied was undertaken by us or was already contracted out

We also discovered just how satisfied people were with our overall performance and invited suggestions for improvements.

For external users we conducted a postal survey, from this we found out how they rated the service they had used, and whether they were aware of the other activities we were undertaking.

3. Determine the Critical Success Factors

Critical Success Factors are those without which any service would cease to function and which encourage a potential user to opt for your service, given a choice and all else being equal.
"CSF's" themselves must meet certain criteria, for example, they must:

- Include cost/efficiency.
- Include "quality".
- Refer to the "output".

- Relate to the "end" and not the "means".
- Be sustainable.
- Provide the key-deciding factor that sets your service above all others.
- be met in order to satisfy your service's basic purpose.

From analysing our user surveys, we determined that the following were the most important issues:

- Cost
- Response time
- Attainment of deadlines
- Quality and professional standards
- Diversity of skills

4. Compare the cost of service delivery

This involved three stages, namely

1. Establish our costs; these were:
   - Fixed costs, i.e. overheads such as the portion of building costs and central administration costs set against our service
   - Variable costs, i.e. salaries and revenue expenditure

Any income from our service was set against expenditure.

It is essential that your organisation's Finance Department do these calculations on your behalf because a) it is complicated and b) it creates an audit trail should anyone want to check the figures.

This exercise allowed us to prepare our in-house bid ready for us to
2. Market Test

This is a formal process based on the legal "closed bid" process the Council follows with any major contract. For this stage we had to:

- Prepare the specification for a "Notice of Indicative Prices".
- Identify potential alternative suppliers of our services.

- Invite Tenders following the Council's Tendering process.
- Submit our in-house bid as part of tendering process.

Having "packaged" our services, we invited tenders for each of them from one or more potential contractors. We also invited tenders for the service as a whole. A total of 15 "Tender Documents" were issued.

3. Compare costs

This was the decisive moment; the Chief Executive saw the bids before we did. Only then could we see how we actually compared with the "competition".
Of the 15 documents issued, only six were returned.

The bids were scrutinised to check that they were valid (i.e. met the specification) and the results tabulated for ease of comparison.

(The specification included clauses relating to professional standards and qualifications, sub-contracting, availability for out-of-hours or emergency working, public liability, insurance etc.)

5. Undertake an Option: Appraisal

To do this, you must

- Consider *all* Critical Success Factors
- Consider the consequences of different options
- Verify cost implications

In looking at the options, remember that cost is only one consideration; cheaper does not necessarily mean better value.
We argued that collections care requires the highest professional standards and that the needs of mixed collections typical of provincial museums are not best served by the occasional visit from a private conservator, particularly when the emphasis is on preventive conservation.

When the costs were analysed, we found that we were cheaper in real terms than our private sector counterparts in virtually every aspect of our work.

Due to the "food web", effect referred to above (where all the services we provide are dependent on more than one member of the team) we discovered that the partial contracting-out of our services would have been the most expensive option.

In fact, we do buy in skills and services when it is appropriate, as do most museum organisations, and one of our main recommendations was to retain this "mixed economy" approach. This was based in part on the fact that is cost effective but also on the grounds of the Council's responsibilities towards the wider economic well being of the community it serves by using the services of local, self-employed, conservation-related professionals.

Our recommended option was to "retain in-house service provision whilst optimising the opportunities for outsourcing, income generation and the establishment of new services to meet stakeholder requirements".

6. Develop a "Continuous Improvement" strategy

Best Value is not about establishing how efficient/cheap you are, and then leaving it at that. The underlying core of the process is to establish your baseline and improve your performance in relation to it.

Whilst responding to quantitative results from stakeholder surveys (e.g. improving response times to requests for work by x% per annum) is a fundamental part of continuous improvement, setting strategic goals is equally important. In our case, the team was already putting together a Development Strategy, which set out our objectives for improving collections care and raising additional finance in the face of budget and staffing cut backs as well as a greater emphasis on contemporary and performing arts activities as opposed to heritage activities. This was an important element of our Continuous Improvement strategy.

Whilst our Chief Officer had been kept up to date with developments, her input at this stage was vital in preparing our final report, particularly with regard to the prevailing political climate and how she expected the Arts and Heritage service to develop.

In Dundee Best Value reports follow the standard committee report format and are presented to Council through the Best Value sub-committee once approved by the head of department.

After several adjustments at the suggestion of both our Chief Officer and the Review Team Leader our final report, recommending retention of the in-house team, was approved by the council.

We then informed all those who had tendered for the service of the outcome of the review.

As a result of the process, we as a team feel more secure, for the time being, having proved our case. We can concentrate on continuing to provide and improve our services to the Department and ultimately to the public.

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

FOR SALE - INSECT CABINETS

We have for sale a number of large insect cabinets - approximate external dimensions 5ft 3in (height) x 4ft 3in (width) x 3ft (depth: front to back). They are double sided and have 80 drawers (will take continental pins) on each side, a total of 160 drawers per unit. Price for each unit: £1,100 (buyer collects). These cabinets are much better value than store boxes.

If you are interested, please telephone or E-mail,

Howard Mendel (Collections Manager), Department of Entomology,
The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.
Tel.: 02079425079
E-mail: h.mendel@nhm.ac.uk

The Constitution of The Natural Sciences Conservation Group

1. Name

The name of the charity shall be the Natural Sciences Conservation Group, (or other such name as the Trustees may from time to time decide with approval from the Charity Commissioners).

The Group (hereinafter called "the charity") is an unincorporated association with Charity Trustees elected by its members.

2. Objects

The objects of the charity shall be:

2.1. To advance the education of the public in natural science collections conservation.

2.2. To promote for the benefit of the public, the highest standards in the conservation, development, preparation, care and display of natural science collections and specimens.

3. Powers

In addition to any other powers which the Trustees may exercise the following powers in furtherance of their objects.

3.1. Power to encourage and develop education, training and research in natural science conservation through publications, regular meetings and seminars.

3.2. Power to raise funds and to invite and receive contributions, provided that in raising funds the trustees shall not undertake any substantial permanent trading activities.

3.3. Power to invest the funds of the charity in any of the investments for the time being authorised for the investment of trust funds.

3.4. The Trustees shall have the power to provide indemnity insurance for themselves out of the income of the charity provided that any such insurance shall not extend to any claim arising from any act or omission which the Trustees knew to be a breach of trust or breach of duty or which was committed by the Trustees in reckless disregard of whether it was a breach of trust or breach of duty or not.

3.5. Power to do all such lawful things as are necessary for the achievement of the objects.

4. Charity Trustees

4.1. Up to eleven Trustees are elected by the membership at the Annual General Meeting. There shall at all times be a minimum of four Trustees.

4.2. The Trustees shall comprise four officers, viz.: Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Editor and up to seven other ordinary members.

4.3. The Trustees may co-opt such additional members to the committee as it deems necessary from time to time, these co-optees will not be Trustees.

5. Meetings and Proceedings of the Charity Trustees

5.1. The Trustees shall be charged with the organisation and promotion of the group.

5.2. The Trustees shall carry out the wishes of the membership as determined at the Annual General Meeting of members.

5.3. The Trustees shall meet as a committee at least three times a year in addi-tional to holding an annual general meeting.

5.4. The quorum required for any meeting of the Trustees shall be three Trustees or one third of the total number of Trustees whichever number is the greater.

5.5. An emergency or special meeting of Trustees can be called to discuss a particular matter with 7 days notice.

5.6. The Trustee holding the officer post of chair shall chair all meetings, in their absence this duty can be undertaken by one of the other officer posts.

5.7. The chair has a right to a second or casting vote when the number of Trustees voting for or against a resolution are equal.

5.8. Minutes of meetings shall be taken.

6. Terms of Office

6.1. The Trustees holding officer posts, viz. Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Editor shall be elected for a period of three years. Ordinary Trustees are elected for a period of two years.

6.2. Competent Trustees can in exceptional circumstances be re-appointed after their term of office has ceased but may only be re-appointed if the membership deems them capable of fulfilling their duties.

6.3. The Trustees may co-opt members to fill vacancies occurring during a term of office. The co-opted member may serve until the following Annual General Meeting.

7. Members

7.1. Membership is open to all interested in the aims of the Group on payment of the annual subscription.

7.2. There are four categories of membership:-

- Personal
- Institutional
- Overseas
- Student

7.3. Other than institutional members, all members have full voting rights.

8. Subscriptions

8.1. The rates of subscriptions shall be determined at the Annual General Meeting.

8.2. Subscriptions are due on the first day of February in each year.

8.3. Members who fail to pay their subscription within 6 months of the annual subscription date will be deemed to have ceased membership of the group.

8.4. The membership of any individual or organisation can also be terminated at any other time for a good and sufficient reason by the committee. The individual or organisation has the right to be heard before a final decision is made.

9. Elections

9.1. Trustees shall be elected by the membership at the Annual General Meeting.

9.2. Two personal members of the group shall be elected as auditors at the Annual General Meeting.

9.3. Only members whose subscriptions are fully paid at the commencement of the Annual General Meeting and with full voting rights are eligible for election or to vote at elections.

9.4. Notice calling for nominations for election shall be issued at least 30 days before the Annual General Meeting.

9.5. Nominations for election must be received by the Secretary no later than 10 days prior to the Annual General Meeting. In the event of no nominations being received, nominations can be made from the floor by two members eligible to vote.

10. Annual General and Special Meetings of Members

10.1. A general meeting shall be held each year.

10.2. The annual general meting shall be incorporated within a conference which promotes the aims of the group.

10.3. At least 30 days notice wall be given of the date of the Annual General Meeting, stating the time, place and general business of the meeting.

10.4. The specific business of the Annual General Meeting shall be that agreed by the members present at the beginning of the meeting.

10.5. The quorum for an annual general meeting shall be ten individual members or one-tenth of the total number of individual members whichever number is the greater.

10.6. Minutes of the meeting shall be taken.

10.7. Only members whose subscriptions are fully paid at the commencement of the Annual General Meeting and with full voting rights are eligible to vote on the business of the meeting.

10.8. A special meeting for the membership can be called with 14 days notice, stating the time, place and general business of the meeting.

10.9. The Trustees may organise other meetings as deemed necessary.

11. Communications.

11.1. Members shall receive a newsletter on a regular basis.

12. Accounts

The Trustees will comply with their obligations under the Charities Act 1993 with regard to:

12.1. The keeping of accounting records of the charity.

12.2. The preparation of annual statements of accounts for the charity.

12.3. The auditing of the statement of accounts of the charity in time for the Annual General Meeting by the elected auditors.

12.4. The preparation of an annual report and sending of it together with statements of account to the Charity Commissioners.

13. Bank Accounts

13.1. The group shall maintain one or more bank or building society accounts.

13.2. Trustees who hold officer posts shall be designated signatories of the accounts.

13.3. Two signatures are required on cheques drawn on the account(s).

14 Trustees Personal Interest

Subject to the provisions of clause 3.3 and except with the prior written approval of the Charity Commissioners, no trustee may:

14. 1. receive any benefit in money or kind from the charity; or

14.2. have a financial interest in the supply or goods or services to the charity.

15. Powers of Amendment

15.1. Subject to the following provisions of this clause, the Constitution may be amended by a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting at a general meeting. The notice of the general meeting must include notice of the resolution setting out the terms of the amendment proposed.

15.2. No amendment may be made to clause 2, clause 3.4, clause 12, clause 14, clause 16 or this clause without the prior written approval of the Charity Commissioners.

15.3. No amendment may be made which would have the effect of making the charity cease to be a charity at law.

15.4. The Trustees must:

a. promptly send to the Commissioners a copy of any amendments made; and
b. keep a copy of any such amendment with this Constitution.

16. Power Of Dissolution

If the Charity Trustees decide that it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the charity, they shall call a meeting of all members of the charity of which not less than 21 day's notice (stating the terms of the resolution) shall be given. If the proposal is confirmed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, the Charity Trustees shall have the power to realise any assets held by on or behalf of the charity. Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be given or transferred to such other charitable institution or institutions having objects similar to the object of this charity as the members of the charity may determine, or failing that, shall be applied for some other charitable purpose.

Notes

Elections of Trustees are staggered to ensure continuity. Currently, the posts of chair and editor are up for election in 1998, the Treasurer in 1999 and the Secretary in 2,000.

Modified by K.J. Andrew (Chair NSCG) and Mark Thompson (of the Charity Commission) and accepted at the NSCG Annual General Meeting 14th May 1998.

Conservation Focus
News and Events from the Conservation World

re:source Launches Manifesto

Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries has launched its manifesto. The document outlines the organisation's vision for the future, its objectives and core values, and contains an action plan for the year ahead.

Matthew Evans, Chairman of Resource, stated: "Museums, archives and libraries have a central role to play in sustaining and developing cultural, social, educational and economic well-being. They are rich in flair, creativity and imagination. The task for Resource is to harness and develop these qualities in order to enrich everyone's lives, and to enhance the ways in which the sector is funded, managed, used and enjoyed."

Neville Mackay, Chief Executive of Resource, commented: "This will be a challenging year for us, but we have made a good start. The review of the museum Registration Scheme will be completed by the end of the month, and we will shortly launch a new £600,000 fund to encourage the development of sector-wide work in the regions."

Highlights of Resource's work programme for the next year include:

- Policy reviews on sector-wide issues such as standards, training, stewardship and skills development.
- Developing a new sector-wide education standard as part of a programme to promote education and access.
- Extending the People's Network into museums and archives and working with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to develop cultural content for the World Wide Web.
- Establishing a new fund worth £600,000 over two years to encourage development of sector-wide work in the English regions.
- Developing a research strategy to inform policy needs across all three sectors.

The manifesto will be available on the Resource website at www.resource.gov.uk from 19 July. To obtain a hard copy please telephone Sarah Woodward, Communications Assistant, on 020 7233 4200.

News from *re:*source

UKIC Takes On Conservation Register

United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) has taken responsibility for the former MGC Conservation Register and will operate it in collaboration with the National Council for Conservation-Restoration. Established in 1988 by the Museums & Galleries Commission (MGC), the Register is a national database containing details of over 600 conservation practices throughout the UK. The MGC was replaced by Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries in April 2000.

Conservation Regjster belongs with the conservation profession rather than a government agency. We are delighted therefore that the UKIC, an established professional body, has agreed to take over the Register and we know that it will continue to be a valuable source of information.

The new telephone number for the Register is 0207721 8246. For the foreseeable future the Register will continue to operate as before. It will continue to provide a free service to public sector jnstitutions such as museums, libraries and archives, The public and commercial organisations can obtain details of five conservators specialising in the required field for a fee of £5.00.

The Ten Agents of Deterioration: Physical Forces.

Part nine of the Ten Agents will be published as soon as we have enough articles to make it worth while. So if your collection has a suffered from a prang, a move or vibration, share it with the rest of us.

Please send any items for inclusion to the Editor at:

Darren J. Mann, Hope Entomological Collections, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Oxford, OX1 3PW
E-Mail: darren.mann@oum.ox.ac.uk

N.S.C.G. Committee Members

Chair

Bob Entwistle
Ipswich Museum
High Street
IPSWICH
Suffolk
IP1 3QH
Tel: 01473 433549 Fax: 01473 433558
E-mail: bobbyent@supanet.com

Secretary

Paul Brown
Department of Entomology
Natural History Museum
Cromwell Road
LONDON
SW7 5BD
Tel. 0207 942 5196 Fax. 0207 942 5229
E-mail pab@nhm.ac.uk

Treasurer

Kate Andrew
Ludlow Museum
Old Street
LUDLOW
Shropshire
SY8 1NW
Tel: 01584 873857 Fax: 01584 872019

Membership Secretary

Maggie Reilly
Assistant Curator of Zoology
Hunterian Museum
Glasgow University
GLASGOW
G12 8QQ
Tel. 0141 330 4772 Fax. 0141 330 5971
E-mail: mreilly@museum.gla.ac.uk

Editor

Darren J. Mann
Oxford University Museum of Natural History
Parks Road
OXFORD
OX1 3PW
Tel: 01865 272 957 Fax: 01865 272 970
E-mail: darren.mann@oum.ox.ac.uk

Committee Members

Adrian Doyle
Conservation Laboratory
The Natural History Museum
Cromwell Road
LONDON
SW7 5BD
Tel: 0207 942 5538 Fax: 0207 942 5546
E-mail: amd@nhm.ac.uk

Simon Moore
Hampshire County Museums
Chilcomb House
Chilcomb Lane
WINCHESTER
SO23 8RD
Tel: 01962 846337 Fax: 01962 869836
E-mail: musmsm@hants.gov.uk

Victoria J. Purewal
National Museum & Galleries of Wales
Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NP
Tel. 02920 573309 Fax. 02920 239829
E-mail: vicky.purewal@nmgw.ac.uk

Susan Cooke
Charnwood Museum
Granby Street
LOUGHBOROUGH
Leicestershire
LE11 3DU
Tel: 01509 233737 Fax: 01509 268140

Sue Lewis
Department of Entomology
Natural History Museum
Cromwell Road
LONDON
SW7 5BD
Tel. 0207 942 5779 Fax. 0207 942 5229
E-mail sel@nhm.ac.uk

Amanda Sutherland
Royal Albert Memorial Museum
Queen Street
EXETER
EX4 3RX
Tel: 01392 665951 Fax: 01392 421252

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NATURAL SCIENCES CONSERVATION GROUP