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similar approach to the Natural History Centre at Liverpool and Bolton, with many interactives, hands on material and some live specimens. The problems with the displays had been identified by the Director during his talk but with little political will to fund redisplay work, the museum is facing real problems. While the Director was keen to take the museum forward as a more public oriented institution, directing more resources towards exhibitions, education and schools, this was not shared by some of the curators. This conflict between scientific and social purpose is a significant difficulty facing the museum.

Thanks must go again to Kathie Way for organising another succesful and illuminating BCG trip. Long may they continue.

Nick Gordon

Buckinghamshire County Museum



Archives - Museum of Natural History Vienna

The complete written and pictorial documentation of the Museum's history from its beginnings to the present day are catalogued here. It is not only items on paper which are held here, historical artefacts such as early typewriters used and old instruments used in microscopic preparation by Emperor Francis I, the founder of the museum are housed. A new compactorised storage system (1995) holds the collection. The system is made of wood and it was noted that this was purchased due to its slow burning time in the event of a fire; the contents would not be heated as quickly as would with a metal system. Inside the cabinets all the paper items are stored in acid-free boxes which are capable of absorbing water in the event of flood damage. A paper conservator is employed who monitors all materials used within Archives, but has little involvement with archive standards adopted by curatorial departments.

The department also holds a collection of videos depicting and recording temporary exhibitions and events held in the museum. As the stability of the tape material

can not yet be measured, they will have to be periodically checked and copied again if necessary.

One of the interesting botanical holds was a bound volume of 'Flora from the Yellowstone' (Park), a gift to the museum from the Arch Deacon Ferdennand. I was intrigued to find that unlike most herbaria the historical material had been removed from the Botany department and placed within Archives. It was explained that the material was not scientific material, of no taxonomic value and therefore was not to be curated. No historical research is carried out by the curators. The material was by no means stored and forgotten about. The herbarium sheets were stored in a fridge in the basement of the museum along with other sensitive material such as the photographic collection. Some of the sheets where in print-type cut mounts from when they had been used for exhibition. The sheets (mainly cultivated plants from the Emperors' garden) had not been remounted but left on their original sheets to illustrate the historical aspect of early herbaria.

Once a month an open day, "Jour Fixe" der Abteilung Archiv, is held. Here an individual collector and their collections are

concentrated on. Associated material from the archive department such as note books and collecting artefacts from expeditions are displayed, along with specimens collected. The next event to take place after we arrived was an open day on Ida Pfeiffer (1797-1858), a zoologist, botanist and ethnographer. The day was also intended to mark the 200 years since her birth.

Donna Hughes
Liverpool Museum

