

Conservation at the Horniman - new for Old. Applying standards to new and historic galleries**- Louise Bacon**

Horniman Museum, 100 London Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 3PQ, UK

In 1898 Frederick Horniman commissioned Charles Harrison Townsend to design a museum to house his collection of Natural History specimens and Anthropology collections. The two original galleries are now a Grade II* listed building as is a later additional gallery designed by Harrison Townsend in 1911. In recent years the Horniman Museum had a programme re-developing the two Ethnography galleries as well as creating a new gallery for musical instruments in a purpose built Heritage Lottery Funded Building. The Natural History gallery has undergone no large-scale renovation since 1957. It still contains the original 1911 mahogany showcases, which will be retained. Applying conservation and collections care standards to historic galleries and old showcases has its problems and its challenges.

Hatching a Plan: Developing modern standards in egg collections**- Douglas Russell**

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Recent research based on egg collections has highlighted the need for obtaining a continuing time series of avian eggs. Modern specimens are frequently under-represented in museum collections following tightened legislation over the last fifty years. It has become apparent there is a need for proactive discussion at international level with regard to obtaining modern comparative specimens of avian eggs within a controlled ethical and legal framework. The only current techniques for continuing a time series, which are presently open to institutions, include collecting under licence, police seizure and through avian breeders. This presentation will examine the merits of the various acquisition options available and discuss possibilities for national cooperation. Furthermore, fulfilling access demands has led directly to increased pressure to supply collections data online. The need for international cooperation, consensus and consultation in the release of sensitive data online is discussed, with particular reference to the challenges of balancing increased public access against the sensitivity of data used in researching species conservation.

Regional Collections at Risk: Why funding stuffed otters and dried nettles is seen as an easy cut to make.**- Clare Stringer****Leeds Museum Resource Centre***Introduction*

Most of the UK's 20 million natural science specimens held outside of the nationally funded institutions are in local government hands. It is crucial that these regional councils understand the value of the resources they control and take pride in owning and using them.

An average local authority councillor will have to listen to appeals for money from many sectors. Roads, housing, healthcare, social services and, of course, museums to name a few. Even within museums there are obviously divisions: art, history, ethnography, archaeology, natural science and more. So how does such an average councillor decide where to allocate the money? In which direction is he or she more likely to be pulled? Just how appealing are stuffed animals, pickled fish and dried weeds anyway?

Informing the 'informed' decision makers

There can be no doubting the decline in the number of regionally held natural science collections over the past few decades. Although material has not necessarily been lost (amalgamations are common), local authorities have managed to stop funding collections by disposing of them. Often the collection has not had a curator for many years and so, with no advocate, councils may find it difficult to come across arguments for keeping the collections and easy to come up with arguments for their disposal. As has been discussed many times, when properly presented for consideration the advantages of keeping and funding natural science collections make them worthy recipients of local taxpayers money. It is raising these arguments in the town halls across the country that is the harder part, mainly because natural science collections are still often thought of as morbid rows of clumsy taxidermy and their curators as dusty relics of a now obsolete time.