

SPNHC Newsletter

Society for the Preservation
of Natural History Collections

August 1987
Volume 1, No. 1

CARNEGIE TO HOST 1988 SPNHC MEETING

The 1988 SPNHC annual meeting will be held at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, PA, May 31-June 3. In addition to individual papers and posters, the meeting will include a symposium on controlling the environment. A symposium on Hazards in Natural History Museums will be held June 3 and will be open to delegates attending the annual meeting of the American Association of Museums (June 5-9), also in Pittsburgh. For further information, contact Stephen L. Williams or Duane Schlitter, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, 5800 Baum Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15206 (phone 416-361-0564).

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

This first year of our Society has gone by quickly and as always there were things that I wanted to do but never found the time. Six Members-at-Large were installed in Montreal. Steve Williams (Carnegie Museum of Natural History) and Janet Waddington (Royal Ontario Museum) will hold their positions from 1987-1990, Wynn Watson (Wilfrid Laurier University) and Fred Collier (U.S. National Museum of Natural History) from 1987-1989, and Carolyn Rose (Smithsonian Institution) and Ingrid Birker (Redpath Museum) from 1987-1988. These six will be our mentors.

The next two issues of *Collection Forum* will be mainly devoted to the proceedings of the 1987 meeting. Presently there are a number of manuscripts going through the peer-review process with our Editorial Board. Never-the-less, there is still room for additional papers; so, if you are hesitant, go ahead, finish writing your paper and send it in to be considered for publication.

I would like to personally thank all the members who worked so hard to make the 1987 meeting at the Redpath Museum such a memorable event. The Organizing Committee worked miracles and the Chairpersons of our various committees presented reports which showed their interests. A number of important topics were presented at the Redpath meeting and I was favorably impressed by the quality of papers. I hope the 1988 meeting in Pittsburgh will continue along the same vein.

Daniel J. Faber, President

1987 ANNUAL MEETING

The second annual meeting of SPNHC was held at the Redpath Museum, McGill University, Montreal, May 31-June 3, 1987.

The 102 participants represented a wide range of curators, conservators, professors, collections managers and technicians involved with natural history collections in museums and universities worldwide. One delegate came from Spain, one from England, seven from western Canada (University of Victoria, Tyrrell Museum, B.C. Provincial Museum, Univ. of Manitoba, Manitoba Museum of Man & Nature), 25 from Ontario (mainly ROM and the National Museum of Natural Sciences), 35 from Quebec (the Redpath Museum, McGill University, Universite de Quebec a Montreal, Universite de Montreal, the Montreal Discovery Room), 5 from eastern Canada (Newfoundland Museum, New Brunswick Museum, Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Atlantic Geoscience Centre) and 31 from the United States (ranging from the American Museum of Natural History in the east to Bishop's Museum in the west, from the Field Museum in the north to the Anniston Museum of Natural History and Corpus Christi Museum in the south).

Twenty-five oral papers and 18 posters were presented. Keynote addresses focused on fundraising, training programmes and the state of natural history collections in Britain. Interspersed with the meetings were special demonstrations such as *Encapsulation of specimen labels* and *Pest identification and control*. The fourth day included a selection of five hands-on workshops. A post-meeting tour of the National Collections in Ottawa was offered on the fifth day.

We were pleased to host the 1987 meeting and look forward to the 1988 meeting in Pittsburgh.

J. Kaylor and I. Birker,
Redpath Museum, McGill Univ.

1987 ANNUAL MEETING PAPERS

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES:

- D. Baird - A lifetime of collecting.
- L.J. Barkley & K.L. Garrett - Training in the care of natural history collections: report on the Collections Care Pilot Training Program at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.
- C.J. Collins - The development of geological specimen conservation in the United Kingdom.
- D. Doell - Funding for the natural history museums - an historical perspective and presentation of alternative strategies.

PAPERS:

- C. Berlie - What is a discovery room?
 P.S. Cato - Review of organizations and resources that serve the needs of natural history collections.
 C.J. Collins - Mechanisms of shale delamination.
 W.P. Conroy - The habitat groups of William H. Werner: a significant historical collection.
 J.C. Danis - A new look at old collections (moving a major collection).
 J. Deisler - The development of a low-risk storage system for mollusk collections.
 D.V. Ellis - Biomass loss in wet-preserved reference collections.
 D.B. Fenner - Storage housing considerations with high density mobile systems.
 G.R. Fitzgerald - Ethical considerations of moulding and casting.
 M.L.E. Florian - Effectives on materials of natural history specimens by standard museum preparation methods. Part I. Freeze-drying and freezing used in preservation and eradication of insects, pests and fungi.
 K.L. Garrett - Preservation methodologies and suggestions for long-term storage and maintenance of avian flat skins.
 I.A. Hardy - Curation of samples and appropriate records at the Atlantic Geoscience Centre.
 G.W. Hughes - Impacts of a change from discipline to functional organization of collection management.
 M.A. Lawrence - Zoological collection incunabula: The Wied Brazilian Collection, 1815-1817.
 J.D. LeBlanc - Effects of long-term storage on biological materials.
 L. Marhue - Collections storage.
 M.R. Massaro - Systematic collection curators as historic preservationists: case studies from the MCZ Bird and Mammal Departments.
 J.A. Parmelee - Compactor installations for the collections of fungi and plants at the Biosystematics Research Centre.
 F. Rafi - Applications of an inventory of a museum collection.
 C.L. Rose - Selected sources, materials and techniques (conservation information session).
 K. Russell - Historical collections at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.
 J. Waddington & J. Fenn - Preventative destruction of amber: A search for preventative conservation.
 S.L. Williams & E.A. Walsh - The effects of DDVP fumigation on museum materials.
 W. Wood - Working in natural history museums - a health hazard?
- POSTERS:
- D. Alison & I. Birker - Bone cleaning by burial.
 L.J. Barkley & K.L. Garrett - Training in the care of natural history collections: report on the Collections Care Pilot Training Program at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.
 G. Brossard - The Insectarium of Montreal: a new museum devoted entirely to insects!
 M.R. Carman - Intrinsic materials which accompany natural history collections.
 D. Casselberry - The care of greasy specimen tags.
 M. Di Vergilio - Coordinate-classification: a new numbering system for biological and paleontological collections.
 M. Di Vergilio - The paleontological section of "The Montreal Mineralogical Club".
 D.J. Faber, V. Behan-Pelletier, L. Masner, J.A. Parmelee, T. Boulton, M.J. Copeland, & G.S. Nowlan - Natural history collections of the Canadian government (Ottawa area).
 J.G. Faber & M.A. Dancey - Use of natural history collection in teaching.
 G.R. Fitzgerald - Did you pack a 'bomb'?
 J. Gisbert & R. Garcia-Perea - Status of vertebrate collections in Spain.
 J. Gisbert, F. Palacios & R. Garcia-Perea - Use of TYVEK synthetic paper for labelling in vertebrate collections.
 J.F. Hanlan & C. Romero-Sierra - Treatment of degraded wood with silicon compounds.
 C. Romero-Sierra, J.C. Webb, & P. Blaney - Orchids and roses as samples of chemically preserved flowers.
 A.P. Russell, A.M. Bauer, & R.L. Walker - Microfil injections of small vertebrates: an adjunct to clearing and staining.

- M.E. Rutzmoser - Endangered species museum specimens: the problem of identification and protection.
 E. Sullivan & D. Dutton - Marsil Museum.

WORKSHOPS:

- T. Briza - Tricks with plexiglass.
 H. Reiswig - Separation of sponge spicules.
 L. Rockburn - Preparation of bird study skins.
 D. Green - Preparation and preservation of herpetological specimens.
 D.J. Faber - Clearing and staining of small vertebrates.
 G.R. Fitzgerald - An introduction to moulding and casting.
 D. Alison - Natural history tour of McGill Campus.
 J. Dawson - Pests: identification and control.
 R. Lamarche - Intensive photography seminar.
 D.J. Faber & others - Tour of natural history collections (Ottawa).

Symposium on Natural History Museums in Kansas City

"New Directions and Professional Standards" is the theme for a symposium addressing the current status and growth of natural history museums. Speakers will address topics such as whether conflicts exist between museum growth and professional standards of the museum and natural science disciplines; whether new growth improves the level of standards; whether small museums are responding to the future in the same manner as large ones; the conservation needs of natural history materials, etc.

This symposium (October 4, 1988) immediately precedes the joint annual meeting of the Mountain-Plains Museums Association and the Midwestern Museums Conference in Kansas City (Oct.5-7). Professionals are encouraged to submit individual papers for presentation at the symposium on topics relating to the philosophy and functions of natural history museums. Deadline for submission is November 30, 1987. For more information, contact Paisley S. Cato, Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-2258 (phone 409-845-5777).

QUESTION OF COPYRIGHTS

As editor of *Collection Forum*, D.J. Faber would like some feedback concerning the issue of copyrighting the journal. Is there a need to copyright *Collection Forum*? Are there any objections to the lack of a copyright? Instead, would it be sufficient to include the following statement in the journal: "All material in *Collection Forum* may be photocopied for the noncommercial purposes of education or scientific advancement without the need to seek specific permission." Send your ideas and opinions to Daniel J. Faber, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0M8.

NOMINATIONS

The SPNHC Nominations Committee is now receiving nominations for the following positions on the 1988 slate of officers: President-Elect, Secretary, and 2 Members-at-Large. If you wish to nominate someone, please send the name and address to either Fred Collier, Department of Paleobiology, National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. 20560, or Wynn Watson, Dept. of Biology, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON N2L 3C5 no later than October 15.

INKLINGS

HELP! Do you ever have a question about curatorial methods, computer use, conservation procedures, locating a specimen for a display? Do you wonder how someone else has solved the same problem? Would you like to share a nifty solution to a problem? To pose a question or provide a solution for this regular column, contact Julie Golden, Dept. of Geology, Univ. of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242 (phone 319-335-1822 or -1818).

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

Conservation Training Index. Published by ICCROM and GCI. International index of training courses in conservation. Available by mail from: Getty Conservation Institute, 4503 Glencoe Ave., Marina del Rey, CA 90292-6537 (phone 213-822-2299). Price: US \$10.00.

Formaldehyde: how great is the danger to museum collections? P. Hatchfield and J. Carpenter. 1987. Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, MA. 44pp. Discusses emission of formaldehyde from numerous materials found in museum storage and exhibit environments and addresses the impact of the emissions on a variety of museum objects including metals, shell, glass, paper, and textiles. Outlines a simple method for testing materials prior to use.

Excellent bibliography. Available by mail from Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, Harvard University Art Museums, 32 Quincy St., Cambridge, MA 02138 (phone 617-495-2392).

Museum and Archival Supplies Handbook. 3rd ed., rev., 1985. Ontario Museum Association and Toronto Area Archivists Group, Toronto, Ontario. 174 pp. An excellent review of conservation materials, their uses and sources of supply. Pertinent bibliographic data are included. Available by mail from: Ontario Museum Association, 38 Charles St. E., Toronto, ON M4Y 1T1 (phone 416-923-3868).

Insecticide analysis by gas chromatography in the stores of the Danish National Museum's ethnographic collections. J. Glastrup. 1987. *Studies in Conservation* 32(2):59-64. Discusses the results of analyses of 118 samples which showed extensive occurrence of naphthalene, DDT and methoxychlor in the collections. *Studies in Conservation* is the quarterly journal of the International Institute for Conservation, 6 Buckingham St., London WC2N 6BA England.

-C.A. Hawks, Carnegie Mus. Nat. Hist.

Preservation of libraries and archives. C.J. Shahani and W.K. Wilson. 1987. *American Scientist* 75(3):240-251. Interesting overview of the problem of acid paper, with some great photographs of brittle paper, treatments, etc.

-J. Simmons, Mus.Nat.Hist.,Univ.Kansas.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Membership on SPNHC committees is open to all members. Contact the committee chair if you are interested in a particular area.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE - The 1988 annual meeting will be held at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, PA, May 31-June 3. A bid to host the 1989 annual meeting has been presented by the Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology and the Provincial Museum (Alberta, Canada).

BIBLIOGRAPHIC committee compiles list of references for meeting participants. Committee member, Liz Sifton, prepared the list of references pertinent to the management and preservation of natural history collections that was made available to annual meeting participants. This committee has also coordinated ten reviews of publications for *Collection Forum*. Please send titles of pertinent literature for inclusion in future reference lists or for review purposes to Mary R. Carman, Dept. of Geology, Field Museum of Natural History, Lake Shore Dr. & Roosevelt Rd., Chicago, IL 60605-2496.

BYLAWS are continuing to undergo revisions. C.A. Romero-Sierra submitted a proposal to change terminology concerning council positions in order to clarify the positions. All SPNHC members should have either voted on the issue at the annual meeting or by mail. All questions concerning the bylaws should be directed to C.A. Romero-Sierra, Dept. of Anatomy, Queen's University, Old Medical Bldg., RM 101, Kingston, ON K7L 3N6.

COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY COLLECTIONS - This committee represents the needs of academic collections not affiliated with museums. If you have a particular area of concern which you would

like to see addressed, contact either P.S. Cato, Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, or D.F. McAlpine, New Brunswick Museum, 277 Douglas Ave., Saint John, NB E2K 1E5.

COMPUTER-USE chairman compiles database on system used by SPNHC members. Based on responses to a 1986 questionnaire, a summary of EDP systems has been compiled and is available from the committee chair, I.A. Hardy, Atlantic Geoscience Centre, Bedford Institute, PO Box 1006, Dartmouth, NS B2Y 4A2. The summary is being updated, using a more simplified form. If you have not previously listed your system, or would like more information, contact Hardy.

CONSERVATION committee provides demonstrations and a list of resources for meeting participants - This committee is concerned with the long-term preservation of materials which compose natural history specimens, as well as related materials such as tags, labels, and field records. Casts, drawings, and other media also are included when they serve as specimens. Members of this committee are actively committed to compiling and disseminating conservation information as well as encouraging research on related topics. Cathy Hawks and Carolyn Rose compiled *A Preliminary List of Conservation Resources for the Care of Natural History Collections* for distribution at the annual meeting. Committee members also presented demonstrations of techniques at the meeting. For further information, contact C.L. Rose, U.S. National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560.

LIAISON - Chairman J. Golden has established a number of contacts with organizations such as Assoc. of Systematics Collections, Museum Computer Network, Society of American Archivists, Assoc. of College and Univ. Museums & Galleries, the Natural History Museums Committee of ICOM and the Committee on Curatorial Supplies & Practices of Am. Society of Ichthyologists & Herpetologists. Committee members will work to maintain contacts with these and other organizations to exchange information and arrange joint projects, when possible. If you are willing to act as a liaison between SPNHC and another professional society, contact Julie Golden, Dept. of Geology, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242.

MEMBERSHIP drive planned - Membership data are maintained on RBase 5000 by Albright. The first SPNHC Membership Directory was compiled and distributed; a revised edition of the directory will be available in the fall, 1987. The

committee will conduct a membership drive in 1987-88. To assist in this endeavor, or for further information, contact Shirley S. Albright, New Jersey State Museum, 205 W. State St., CN-530, Trenton, NJ 08625.

PUBLICATIONS committee published two issues of Volume 2 of *Collection Forum* in 1986. The 40 pages published included five feature articles, 4 research articles, and News, Reviews, and Society Business sections. The two issues of Volume 3 (1987) will appear as a joint publication.

SPNHC Newsletter will begin as a separate publication in August 1987, permitting the journal to be restricted to feature and research articles as well as reviews of publications. P.S. Cato has been appointed Editor for the newsletter; J. Golden will serve as Associate Editor.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT committee chairman Marhue has begun compiling a list of suppliers as well as bibliographic sources for supplies and suppliers. For further information, contact Len Marhue, Zoology Division, National Museum of Natural Sciences, 2378 Holly Lane, Ottawa, ON K1A 0M8.

TEACHING COLLECTIONS committee plans to survey members of SPNHC to register teaching collections, to determine if and how the collections are being used, and by what type of student. The goal of this group is to encourage interaction in order to share information on methodologies and possibly resources. Mary Anne Dancy, Room 29 VMMB, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, ON K1B 0M8.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Following the SPNHC Council meeting in Montreal, the membership categories, benefits and fees have been established as follows:

Individual:	\$15 Canadian	\$12 US
Sustaining:	\$50 Canadian	\$39 US
(includes institutional and corporate memberships)		
Suscribers:	\$20 Canadian	\$16 US

Individual and Sustaining memberships receive all mailings, including *Collection Forum*, *SPNHC Newsletter* and mailings for the annual meeting. These categories also receive one copy of the most recent edition of *The Membership Directory*, and have one vote for voting purposes. Suscribers receive only *Collection Forum*, but do not have any other benefits of membership. Inquiries about memberships should be addressed to: SPNHC Secretary, S.S. Albright, New Jersey State Museum, 205 W. State St., CN-530, Trenton, NJ 08625.

EDUCATION/TRAINING

Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature has a one year **Museum Technician Training Programme** for paid or volunteer Canadian museum personnel to acquire or improve skills related to specific career goals. For program description and application forms, write to: Museum Technician Training Programme, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, 190 Rupert Avenue, Winnipeg, MN R3B 0N2.

The second **Collections Care Pilot Training Program** sponsored by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County will be held 22 Feb-11 March 1988 with follow-up session 9-13 May 1988. For application and curriculum packet, contact: Lynn Barkley or Kimball Garrett, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007 (phone: 213-744-3368 or -3369).

MEETINGS, etc.

International Conference on Collections Management for Museums, 26-29 Sept. 1987, Cambridge, England. Speakers and system demonstrations from Europe, North America and Australia will be presented during this first annual conference of the Museum Documentation Association. Contact: The Museum Documentation Association, 347 Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge, U.K. CB1 4DH (phone: Nat'l. 0223-242848 or Int'l. 44-223-242848).

Computer Applications in Museums is the topic of the Museum Computer Network annual meeting in Boston, 13-14 October, 1987. For program and registration information, write: MCN Conference, PO Box 111, East Winthrop, ME 04343.

8th Triennial Meeting of the ICOM International Committee on Conservation, 6-11 Sept., 1987 in Sydney, Australia. Will include a major session on the conservation of natural history collections, sponsored by the Natural History Working Group. For information, contact: ICOM 87, Dulcie Stretton Associates, 70 Glenmore Road, Paddington NSW 2021 Australia.

7th International Biodeterioration Symposium, 6-11 Sept., 1987 at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, England. Sponsored by The Biodeterioration Society and the Pan American Biodeterioration Society, the program will cover all aspects of the biodeterioration of materials, including museum and archival materials. For information, contact: Mrs. Christine Gaylarde, Secretary of Local Organizing Committee, Dept. of Biological Sciences, City of London Polytechnic, Old Castle Street, London E1 7NT United Kingdom.

Royal Photographic Society Symposium on the storage of recorded images, 21-25 Sept., 1987 at New College, Oxford, England. For information, contact: Miss H.M. Graves, Conference Convenor, Research Division, Kodak Ltd., Middlesex, HA1 4TY United Kingdom.

Speciation, an international symposium celebrating the 175th Anniversary of The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, will be held 5-8 Nov. 1987. For program and registration information contact: Dr. George Davis, Symposium Committee, Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA 19103 (phone: 215-299-1132).

The Natural History Affinity Group will be sponsoring one session and a business meeting at the 1987 annual meeting of the Mountain-Plains Museums Association in El Paso, Texas (21-24 October). The session is entitled, "Use of live animals in programming." For information, contact Paisley S. Cato (see address below).

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the first formal issue of the *SPNHC Newsletter*. The existence of this newsletter will allow members of SPNHC to exchange information concerning meetings, publications, special activities, research projects, educational opportunities, etc., in a timely, informal manner. It will also permit the society to continue to develop *Collection Forum* as a refereed journal for articles dealing with natural history collections.

All SPNHC members are encouraged to submit material to both the newsletter and the journal. *SPNHC Newsletter* is published biannually, winter and summer, and deadlines for the next two issues are 15 December 1987 and 15 June 1988. Information may be sent to either the Editor or Associate Editor (addresses below).

The journal is published fall and spring; guidelines for the submission of manuscripts to *Collection Forum* may be obtained from the journal editor, D.J. Faber, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, ON K1A 0M8.

Special thanks are extended to the Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences, Texas A&M University, for donating the costs of paper, printing and postage for this newsletter. The newsletter was prepared at Texas A&M University.

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SPNHC Newsletter

- Editor - Paisley S. Cato
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SPNHC MEMBERSHIP FORM

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SPNHC NEWSLETTER

c/o P.S. Cato, Editor
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