

SPNHC Newsletter

Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections

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TRANSFER OF SPNHC LEADERSHIP

The 1996 annual meeting was featured with the transfer of the President's position from Carolyn Rose to Grant Hughes. The SPNHC membership elected Sally Shelton to the position of President-elect and Elizabeth Taylor for another term as Secretary. Arnold Suzumoto (Bishop Museum) and Barbara Moore (Peabody Museum) were elected as incoming Members-at-Large to serve three-year terms. The SPNHC membership is grateful to the services provided by the changing officers and the outgoing Members-at-Large, Greg Brown and Sally Shelton.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

SPNHC members are challenged to manage and care for natural history collections. These collections are like libraries of rare books that tell us about our natural world and the species in it. It sometimes is hard to let people know the social value of collections. Each taxonomic group is written in a foreign language needing experts to translate which species are new, rare, or endangered, or perhaps others that contain secrets about past distributions and habitats, or that potentially have new chemical properties of immense importance to society. As managers of these collections we have a tremendous responsibility to ensure that specimens are maintained and are available for study or for other educational purposes.

As your new President, part of my job is to make sure that what SPNHC is doing meets the needs of its members. Through SPNHC we offer valuable opportunities to learn more about management and care of natural history collections. With the strength of the membership we are able to offer low membership dues. Our new books, the journal, and the newsletter are produced by members on a volunteer basis. We have great annual meetings, such as the one in June that was hosted by The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. This provided an opportunity to discuss some of the latest issues in collection preservation while forming closer associations with other members of our profession.

As SPNHC members we benefit from this learning and involvement. However, it may be difficult to apply all we learn if our home institutions are under financial pressure

and even downsizing staff. How do we meld our professional responsibilities with the reality of today's museum environment?

I believe that it is important for each of us to contribute as much as we can to our museums. This involves our daily attention to four cornerstones -- financial management, production of a well-managed collections, service to clients, and development of improved ways of doing things. SPNHC can help by providing information that assists your development. Because our museums can't improve unless we do, we need to think about ways that we can improve our skills in the management and care of collections, and then demonstrate these skills to others. As we continue to improve the preservation, conservation and management of natural history collections we will be looking to SPNHC members for ideas. We will continue to support research on collection management and care, and recognize it through the Faber Award. The SPNHC council and committees will continue to focus on conservation, resources for museums, publications for the Society, and professionalism in collections management while maintaining SPNHC as a vital organization with ongoing international activities and reasonable membership fees.

I look forward to working with each of you on these issues. Please feel free to contact me if you wish to be involved in one of our SPNHC committees. It's a great way to learn more about collections.

Grant Hughes President, SPNHC

FIVE YEAR PLAN -- TO THE YEAR 2000

The Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections approved the 'Five Year Plan—To The Year 2000' at its recent meeting in Philadelphia. This plan sets our mission and general direction to meet the aspirations of our members to improve the management and care of natural history collections.

We believe that the next five years will be a challenging time for natural history collections, and for museums in general. Demands for collections access and use will increase while, at the same time, we will continue to care for collections for future uses in research and education. Funding will be limited as governments try to

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improve the financial picture and eliminate deficits to keep options open for our future and that of our children.

With these trends there is a continued and growing need for SPNHC. Our goal is to provide for improved management and care of natural history collections through our members. This will enable you to do your job better by applying new techniques that you have learned about through our publications, workshops, internet sites, and informal discussions with colleagues. Your professional development will be supported by a network of people doing the same job as you, and this will assist us all in meeting our challenges to protect our collections. The following mission statement, vision, priorities, and goals are being set in motion by SPNHC.

Mission Statement -- The mission of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections is to improve preservation, conservation, and management of natural history collections to ensure their continuing value to society.

Five Year Vision -- The Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections will be widely recognized as a vital, leading, international, interdisciplinary organization that facilitates the improved preservation of natural history collections and serves the interest of the SPNHC membership.

Strategic Priorities

- To protect collections by supporting research and development of collection care and management techniques.
- To serve our members by providing educational and support services that enable them to improve the management and care of natural history collections.
- 3. To serve society by improving the understanding of the value of natural history collections and the role of preservation, conservation, and collection management in maintaining these collections.

Five Year Goals -- The following five year goals are being implemented:

- increase awareness of the needs to improve the management, care and utilization of natural history collections throughout the world;
- increase professionalism in collections management and care, and promote its recognition in the natural history and museum communities;
- increase the body of knowledge on the care, and management of natural history collections, and improve its accessibility;
- increase collaboration with other organizations to implement SPNHC objectives;
- expand membership and increase participation in SPNHC activities.

Implementation -- The SPNHC Council and Committees will develop annual plans and targets that will enable us to reach these goals over the next five years. If any members wish to work on one or more of the goals please let Grant Hughes know and SPNHC will be able to benefit from your experience.

SPNHC 1996 IN PHILADELPHIA PROVIDES A NOSTALGIC PERSPECTIVE OF NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUMS

The four-day annual meeting of SPNHC (June 12-15), hosted by The Academy of Natural Sciences and coordinated by Local Committee Chair Elana Benamy, offered a unique perspective of natural history museums. Philadelphia, a focus of American history since colonial times, helped to reinforce the historical value of natural history collections. This concept was reiterated with informative and entertaining presentations as well as field trips, social events, and programming. Participants were able to visit some of the oldest natural history collections in the western hemisphere, such as those at The Academy, Mutter Museum, and Wagner Free Institute. Other tours included The Winterthur Museum and Garden, The Delaware Museum of Natural History, Philadelphia Zoo, and Independence National Historic Park. The workshop organized by the Education and Training Committee was Valuation and Insurance of Natural History Collections. The 1996 annual meetings were enjoyable and informative, and SPNHC is grateful for the efforts of the staffs of The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and other participating institutions for this memorable event.

SPNHC RECEIVES IMS FUNDING FOR MANAGEMENT TRAINING AT THE 1997 ANNUAL MEETING

The Institute for Museum Services has approved a proposal for a management training workshop at the 1997 annual meeting. The workshop, entitled *Quality Management—Quality Collections Care*, will be held in Madison, Wisconsin, on the 12th and 13th of July.

SPNHC has presented over three dozen workshops in the past decade, ranging from the specific (preservation of herpetological specimens) to the general (preventative conservation). When we ask the membership to evaluate these programs, we frequently hear a comment that goes something like this: "it's all very well for me to know what I ought to do, but I can't do it because...." This is then typically followed by a phrase such as "my boss won't listen to me"; "the people who run this place just don't understand"; or "I don't have the authority to do that". What we are hearing, in other words, is that it is of limited use to present people with the correct technical answers to their problems, if we cannot also help them find the tools to implement these solutions.

With these issues in mind, we have been investigating the possibility of offering a management training course focused on improving the ability of collections care staff to successfully implement projects at their institutions. A Professional Services Program Grant from the Institute of Museum Services has made this possible, and "Quality Management - Quality Collections Care" will be offered at

the 1997 SPNHC annual meeting in Madison, Wisconsin. Our thanks to IMS for supporting this project.

Because of the highly interactive nature of this workshop, enrollment for the two day session will be limited to 30 participants. We will cover the basics of project management, as well as exploring how to persuade key players to buy into a course of action, and how to effectively communicate goals and needs to other staff.

Participants will meet in a combination of group lectures and discussions and smaller break-out sessions. The format will include group exercises as well as a takehome assignment that will challenge participants to identify a project in their institutions that they can plan and implement using the methods they have learned in the workshop.

Workshop curriculum planning and presentation will be developed by Mary Case and Will Phillips of the management consulting firm Qm2 (Quality Management - Quality Museums) in consultation with the Education and Training Committee of SPNHC. Qm2 has extensive experience working with non-profits in general and museums in particular.

Ms. Case was formerly Director of the Office of the Registrar at the Smithsonian. Her recent projects have included "The Good, The Bad, the Director" for the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, and "When Managers Collide" for the Texas Association of Museums.

Mr. Phillips has over 25 years of practical experience in organizational problem solving and development. He provided AAM with management support for the New Visions Process, he has worked with the Smithsonian, Canadian Museum of Civilization, and the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, to name but a few of his museum clients.

Registration fee is \$175 for the two day session (lunch not included). Because enrollment is limited to 30 participants, applications are being accepted now on a first come basis. Send cover letter and check for \$175 made out to SPNHC to: Julia Golden, SPNHC Treasurer, University of Iowa, Department of Geology, Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1379. The Education and Training Committee is soliciting corporate sponsorship to provide a limited number of scholarships. A small number of spots will be reserved for scholarship applicants. Look for further information in the first circular for the 1997 meeting, or contact Beth Merritt (phone 513-345-8508; e-mail 74437.462@compuserve.com).

SPNHC 97: NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS ON CAMPUS

The 12th annual meeting of SPNHC will be hosted by The Natural History Museums Council at the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 8-14 July 1997. The meetings will be held in the Wisconsin Memorial Union Theater and Main Lounge. Everyone is encouraged to submit papers and posters. The Local Committee has proposed that Natural History Collections on Campus serve as a central theme for the meeting because of the need to address important differences between university collections and museum collections. The tentative schedule is as follows: Tuesday, 8 July -- registration, committee meetings, field trips; Wednesday, 9 July -- registration, collections open house, first council meeting (Memorial Union Theater), icebreaker (Tripp Hall); Thursday, 10 July -- registration, program, opening and presentations; Friday, 11 July -presentations and annual general meeting, final council meeting, banquet (Great Hall, Memorial Union); Saturday-Sunday, 12-13 July -- training workshop on Museum Management. For further information contact the Chair of the Local Committee, Steven J. Krauth (346 Russell Laboratories; 1630 Linden Drive; University of Wisconsin; Madison, WI 53706; USA; phone 608-262-0056; fax 608-262-3322; e-mail krauth@entomology.wisc.edu).

SECOND WORLD CONGRESS AND SPNHC

Overview -- In 1992, SPNHC made a special effort through the meeting in Madrid to work with other natural history organizations to raise the concerns for collections at international levels. The Madrid meeting was exceptional and it served as a starting point with specific resolutions and the formation of the World Council on Collection Resources. The membership of SPNHC subsequently endorsed the resolutions developed in Madrid.

Since 1992, SPNHC and the Association of Systematics Collections have worked together to promote the initiatives that originated in Madrid. Through the leadership of Chris Collins, the Second World Congress on the Preservation and Conservation of Natural History Collections, held at the University of Cambridge on 20-24 August 1996, was a critical continuation of this international initiative of SPNHC and other natural history organizations. The membership of SPNHC is grateful for the efforts and leadership provided by Chris Collins.

The Cambridge Meeting -- The Second World Congress in Cambridge had intrinsic significance by perpetuating an international agenda. However, the meeting and associated activities in themselves were simply outstanding. Over 320 individuals, representing about 175 institutions and 50 countries, attended the meetings. The 30+ programmed presentations featured new perspectives for addressing future needs of natural history collections at international levels, and included topics such as political perspectives, media perspectives, industrial perspectives, marketing, and corporate funding. Also, there were over 100 poster presentations covering all major aspects of natural history collections. The training programs included five workshops on information technology supported with workstations, five workshops on collection care, and a major workshop on funding and fund-raising strategies.

Social events included a reception at the Fitzwilliam Museum, an Elizabethan dance performance, and a memorable Congress banquet at St. John's College. The activities and exceptional services provided by the staffs of the Cambridge institutions were particularly special in a setting featured with 17th and 18th century architecture.

World Council on Collection Resources -- The World Council on Collection Resources, commonly referred to as the WCCR, serves as the mechanism for pursuing the goals established in the Madrid resolutions. As an international initiative it has been challenging, both politically and logistically. The attendees of the Second World Congress addressed these challenges by creating a WCCR development committee to be co-chaired by Des Griffin (Australian Museum) and Muhammed Isahakia (National Museums of Kenya). An invitation to host the Third World Congress in the year 2000 was received from the National Museum of Kenya.

CALL FOR MEMBER-AT-LARGE NOMINATIONS

The Elections Committee of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections encourages nominations for two positions of Member-at-Large. Closing date for nominations will be 30 October 1996.

The two Members-at-Large elected this year will be voting members of Council, representing the membership and assisting our Society to reach its goals. Help us to continue the good work done to date. To submit a nomination, or for information on the election process, please contact the Committee Chair Judith Price (Canadian Museum of Nature; P. O. Box 3443, Station D; Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6P4; Canada; phone 613-954-7679; fax 613-954-7675; e-mail jprice@mus-nature.ca).

CALL FOR 1997 AWARD NOMINATIONS

The Awards and Recognition Committee is accepting nominations for The President's Award and The SPNHC Award. These awards are given only when an appropriate candidate is identified. Final decisions are based on documentation and approval from the SPNHC Council.

The President's Award is given in recognition of a SPNHC member's distinguished service to the development and continued success of SPNHC. Nominees must have performed significant service to the Society, outside of Presidential positions. Normally this would involve exceptional service to offices, committees, and/or ongoing activities of SPNHC. Nominees must be current or previous members of SPNHC.

For both awards, multiple nominations for the same individual are encouraged. Nominations must include the name of the nominee, name of the award proposed, a description of important contributions of the nominee, and other information supporting consideration of the nominee

for the award in question.

Nominations and related questions should be directed to G. R. Fitzgerald, Awards and Recognition Committee Chair, by 30 November 1996 (Canadian Museum of Nature; P. O. Box 3443, Station D; Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6P4; Canada).

THE FABER AWARD

1996 Recipient -- SPNHC presented the first Faber Award to Julia Golden from the University of Iowa. This competitive cash award of \$500 was given to support a proposal for her research project, entitled A Preliminary Survey of the Effects of Deteriorating Mounting Media on Fusulinid Collections.

At the present time, only one Faber Award can be given each year. It is hoped that future funding mechanisms for research on collection management and care can be expanded. The implementation of the proposal solicitation and evaluation process is a critical step toward this goal. The concepts behind the Faber Award make SPNHC unique among professional organizations and clearly establish the Society's interest in perpetuating research on collection preservation.

Call for 1997 Proposals -- The Awards and Recognition Committee is requesting proposals for a \$500 cash award to be given for the best project addressing issues on the management, care, conservation, or use of natural history collections. Applicants for the Faber Award must be SPNHC members in good standing for at least 12 months prior to the award date. The successful applicant will be expected to present a final or interim report at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the Society. Also, the successful applicant will be expected to publish the results, with the understanding that the manuscript will be sent first to the SPNHC Editorial Committee for first right of refusal.

Each applicant may submit only one proposal per funding period. The cover sheet should include a project title, name(s) of project personnel (including title, address, and phone/fax number), and a single-line spaced, 100-word abstract describing the proposed project. The proposal text should include a statement of purpose, project plan (e.g., participants, methods, materials, schedule of completion, etc.), and proposed use of funds. The application, including cover page, will not exceed 10 pages. The text will have one-inch margins, 10-12 characters per inch and double-line spacing. Curriculum vita of the principal investigator and letters of commitment may be single-line spaced and attached as an appendix.

Questions regarding proposals should be directed to the Awards and Recognition Committee. Proposals must be postmarked before 31 January 1997. Send proposals to G. R. Fitzgerald, Awards and Recognition Committee Chair (Canadian Museum of Nature; P. O. Box 3443, Station D; Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6P4 Canada).

A NOTE FROM THE TREASURER

The close of fiscal year 1995 found the Society monetarily sound thanks to the continued support of members and subscribers. Membership stood at 663 members in all categories (514 individuals, 20 associates, 122 subscriptions, and 7 complimentary/exchanges). The Society received several generous unrestricted donations this year.

Mistakes have been found in billing and shipping. If you have not received Collection Forum 12(1) or a book that you have paid for, please contact Julia Golden so that corrections can be made (121 Trowbridge Hall; University of Iowa; Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1379) (319-335-1822 / fax 319-335-1821)(jgolden@green.weeg.uiowa.edu).

SESSIONAL COMMITTEE ON PROFESSIONALISM ESTABLISHED

As incoming President of SPNHC, Grant Hughes created a new Sessional Committee to address issues involving professionalism as it relates to positions in natural history collections. These issues have been topics of concern for several years as evidenced by Collection Forum articles, such as Summary of a Study to Evaluate Collection Manager-type Positions, Interaction of Research, Management, and Conservation for Serving the Long-term Interests of Natural History Collections, Documentation Guidelines for the Preparation and Conservation of Paleontological and Geological Specimens, Documentation Guidelines for the Preparation of Biological Specimens, and ultimately the Society's Guidelines for the Care of Natural History Collections. More recently, the Canadian Museum of Nature and the Virginia Museum of Natural History completed a project that resulted in a book, entitled Developing Staff Resources for Managing Collections.

Because professionalism is recognized as an important issue by the Long-range Planning Committee of SPNHC, a sessional committee was created to further investigate what role SPNHC might play in promoting professional development of collection-related positions. Specific objectives of the committee are to answer the following questions: 1) What are the options for increasing professionalism in collections management and care? What are the advantages and/or disadvantages and recommendations? 2) How would SPNHC implement the preferred option? How would SPNHC assist members in receiving the support needed to increase their professionalism and to ensure an ongoing supply of professional collection managers? 3) How would SPNHC promote the recognition of the professionalism 'standards' throughout the museum community?

Kieran Shepard (Canadian Museum of Nature; e-mail ksheperd@mus-nature.ca) and Stephen Williams (Strecker Museum Complex, Baylor University; e-mail steve_williams@baylor.edu) are appointed to co-chairs of

the seven-member committee. Any questions or opinions regarding the issue of professionalism should be directed to either individual.

FLAMINGO POSTER

Each 1995-96 SPNHC member recently received an attractive 'flamingo poster' as part of an initiative of the Conservation Committee to provide educational material addressing specific conservation issues. The SPNHC membership is grateful to the Denver Museum of Natural History for designing the poster and to University Products for printing and distributing the poster. Posters are now being distributed to new members by Ann Pinzl, Chair of the Membership Committee, at the following address: Nevada State Museum, Capitol Complex, Carson City, Nevada 89710-0001.

SPNHC LEAFLETS

SPNHC Leaflets are short publications on practical, problem-solving techniques related to natural history collections. These publications tend to be more of a compilation of published works instead of original study. However, each Leaflet is designed to be a stand-alone issue. They currently are issued sporadically on a trial basis with the SPNHC Newsletter to determine their value as a possible new publication series of SPNHC.

If you have ideas concerning the series or are interested in submitting a paper, please contact Sally Shelton, Leaflets Editor (San Diego Natural History Museum; P. O. Box 1390; San Diego, California 92112; USA; phone 619-232-3821; fax 619-232-0248; e-mail libsdnhm@class.org).

WORKSHOP ON FEDERAL AND INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC PERMITS POSTPONED UNTIL JANUARY 1997

A workshop dealing with federal and international scientific permits will be held in San Diego on 29-31 January 1997. This workshop is co-sponsored by the San Diego Natural History Museum and the Association of Systematics Collections.

Confusion and controversy often surround the process of applying for and maintaining valid collecting permits. In many cases, the process is not well understood, new laws and regulations are not well publicized, or there is confusion about different agencies and responsibilities.

This workshop will address these problems by bringing together scientists, agency representatives, and collectors from several countries to examine the problems and provide clarification. Permit agency representatives will be available at a "permits bazaar" to answer individual questions and to facilitate on-site permit applications. Topics to be addressed include:

- The roles, responsibilities and requirements of permitting agencies: Canada, the U.S.A., Mexico, Central and South America;
- International regulations and treaties affecting global scientific collecting;
- Issues related to the Biodiversity Convention, collecting, and national sovereignty laws;
- Issues specific to vertebrate, invertebrate, botanical, microbiological and paleobiological collecting;
- The roles of scientific and avocational collectors.

The official languages of the workshop will be English and Spanish. Simultaneous translation facilities will be provided for speakers of these languages. Participants with other translation needs should contact the workshop coordinator. All proceedings will be printed in the language in which they are submitted, with abstracts in the other language. Individual translators will be available as needed.

Wednesday will feature presentations by a variety of speakers, representing the issues confronting governmental agencies, universities, museums, and private or avocational collectors. A reception at the San Diego Natural History Museum will be held Wednesday evening.

Thursday morning will conclude the formal presentations. Representatives of permitting agencies will be available all afternoon on Thursday to answer questions and to facilitate applications for permits. A reception and keynote address will be held Thursday night.

On Friday morning, a moderated plenary session will allow questions to be discussed by all parties. Proceedings of the workshop will be published.

The registration fee of \$250 US includes the cost of the translation facility, receptions, coffee breaks, and all handouts and proceedings. The costs of other meals, transportation, lodging and on-site permit applications are not covered in the fee. A list of hotels and motels in the area will be sent to registrants.

An all-day whale watching tour for a limited number of workshop participants has been scheduled for Saturday, February 1. Registration for this trip is separate from the conference registration.

For further information and registration forms, please contact the Workshop Coordinator, Sally Shelton (San Diego Natural History Museum; P. O. Box 1390; San Diego, California 92112; USA; phone 619-232-3821 ext. 226; fax 619232-0248; e-mail libsdnhm@class.org).

SPNHC SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS

SPNHC has printed its second Special Publication, entitled Storage of Natural History Collections: A Preventive Conservation Approach. This 448-page book complements the 1993 Storage of Natural History Collections: Ideas and

Practical Solutions which is now in its second printing and is scheduled to be translated into French and Spanish. Both books can be acquired by contacting Julia Golden, SPNHC Treasurer (121 Trowbridge Hall; University of Iowa; Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1379). Two other Special Publications are being prepared — Managing the Modern Herbarium and Terms for Collection Management and Preservation.

MEETINGS OF INTEREST

September 16 - 20 -- "Introduction to Caring for Museum Collections," at Smithsonian Institution in Washington, District of Columbia. For information call 202-357-3101 or fax 202-357-3346.

September 18 - 22 -- Textile Society of American's fifth biennial symposium in Chicago, Illinois. For information call 312-443-0849.

September 23 - 25 -- "Big Collections—Big Challenge," A conference on the storage and conservation of large collections in North Swindon, Wilts. For information call 01793-414600 or fax 01793-414606.

September 30 - October 4 -- Museums Association 102nd annual Conference in North Yorkshire, United Kingdom. For information call 0171-250-1836 or fax 0171-250-1929.

October 2 - 5 -- A Joint Meeting of the Mountain-Plains Museums Association and the Oklahoma Museums Association in Guthrie, Oklahoma. For information call 405-424-7757.

October 10 - 12 -- Restoration 96, the biennial RAI trade show in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. For information call +31 020-549-1212.

October 16 - 19 -- Western Museums Association Annual Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. For information call 213-939-6453.

October 27 - November 1 -- International Conference and Meeting of International Council of Museums and The International Committee for Training of Personnel (ICTOP) in Lubbock, Texas. For information call 806-742-2442 or fax 806-742-1136.

November 6 - 8 -- Second International Conference on Wood Protection with Diffusible Preservatives in Mobile, Alabama. For information contact Forest Products Society, 2801 Marshall Court, Madison, WI 53705-2295 or call 608-231-1361, ext. 201.

April 26 - 30, 1997 -- American Association of Museums annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. For more information call 202-289-1818.

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

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SPNHC 1996-1997

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Julia Golden, Treasurer
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