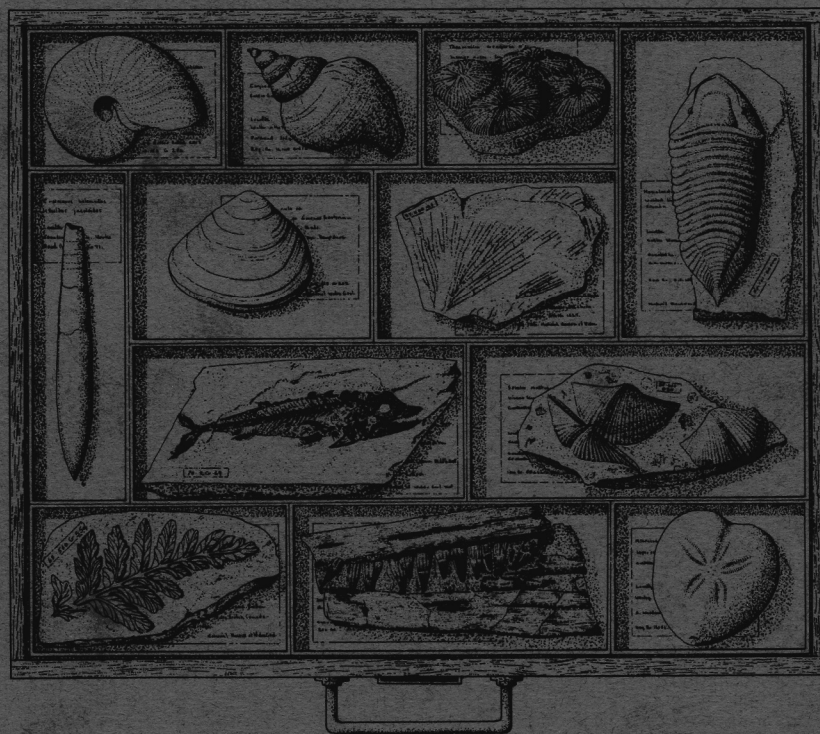


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Curation of Palaeontological Collections

*A joint colloquium of The Palaeontological Association
and Geological Curators' Group*



THE PALAEOONTOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

SPECIAL PAPERS IN PALAEOLOGY NO. 22

CURATION OF PALAEOLOGICAL
COLLECTIONS

*A joint colloquium of The Palaeontological Association
and Geological Curators' Group*

EDITED BY
M. G. BASSETT

THE PALAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
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PREFACE

THE establishment of the Geological Curators' Group in Britain in 1974 reflected both a growing concern among a wide spectrum of geologists for the well-being and proper deployment of geological resources in general, and the need for a unified body to co-ordinate work in this field. The Group's *Newsletter* has rapidly become a vehicle for discussing the practices and problems of geological curating, and is already reaching and involving an international audience embracing not only curators but also academic and applied geologists. Locally based meetings soon emphasized the interest in various aspects of curating, and with many of the initial contributions to the *Newsletter* being directed towards fossil collections it was not surprising that by early 1976 there was a general feeling that the time was ripe for a broadly based forum to discuss curatorial procedures related specifically to palaeontology. At the same time The Palaeontological Association was seeking to broaden its scope of activities by holding specialist workshops, and when it was proposed that a meeting on curating would fit within this programme, it was readily agreed that the two organizations would act as co-sponsors. Initial plans were made to hold the meeting in the spring of 1977, but in the event it was necessary to postpone it until 1978, when it was convened at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, from 29 March to 1 April. Ninety-one participants registered in full, but with a number of visitors attending 'informally' for part of the time there was a total involvement of some 110 people.

Naturally, attendance was dominated by curators from the British Isles (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Eire), but international interest in curatorial procedures was reflected by the presence of delegates from the United States, Canada, Norway, France, and West Germany. In fact, in many ways some countries outside Britain have given a lead in concentrating on similar subjects, and prior to planning the sessions at Cardiff I had been influenced by, and convinced of the usefulness of such discussions by the many points raised in two previous meetings. The first of these, held in October 1968 in Washington D.C., U.S.A., considered 'Natural History Collections: Past, Present, Future' (see Cohen, D. M. and Cressey, R. F. (eds.). 1969. *Proc. biol. Soc. Washington*, **82**, 559-762) and covered many topics related to curating in general. The second, which I was able to attend in Oslo, Norway, in June 1975, was directed specifically to 'Storage and care of palaeontological collections—especially type collections' (for summary see GCG *Newsletter* No. 6, 1976, 294-296). The aim at Cardiff was simply to develop some of these topics within a broader framework.

From the outset the meeting was planned as a workshop/colloquium, with emphasis being placed on active discussion from as many participants as possible. Two and a half days of proceedings were arranged in thematic sessions, and the over-all success is best judged by the fact that there was considerable lively comment both from the floor and from authors of papers. In addition to the day-time proceedings there was also a special evening lecture by Mr. T. E. Chase on 'Methods for reconstructing palaeontological models and dioramas' (see p. 225). Most curators are involved in

exhibition work so that both this lecture and the colloquium session devoted to palaeontological displays were seen as a welcome and integral part of the programme.

Many people helped to make the colloquium a success. Through the Director (Dr. D. A. Bassett), the National Museum of Wales gave generous financial support and facilities, and the staff of the Department of Geology helped to ensure that the sessions ran smoothly; in particular, Mrs. S. J. Bidgood deserves special thanks for co-ordinating the administrative work involved. Mr. T. M. Owen (Curator) and his staff were most co-operative in making arrangements for the colloquium dinner, which was held at the Welsh Folk Museum of the National Museum. The County of South Glamorgan and the City of Cardiff provided conference literature, and The Palaeontological Association and Geological Curators' Group gave valuable publicity and sponsorship.

M. G. BASSETT
Convener

EDITORIAL

THE papers making up this volume were all read at the colloquium, though all have been modified to varying degrees in the light of either the ensuing discussion that they provoked or of comments by referees. Eight further formal contributions to the meeting are not published here; a few were not submitted as written versions, while some have been omitted because they largely duplicated points covered by other authors. This in no way reflects the quality of the contributions that are not published, but highlights the fact that the meeting brought out a number of repetitive themes central to the various aspects of curating. There was considerable discussion around these themes, both after individual papers and in a number of separate general sessions, and in order to form a comprehensive record of the meeting as much of this discussion as possible was recorded on tape and in written form by speakers. Following transcription and collation of the discussion, speakers were subsequently given an opportunity to 'formalize' their questions and answers in writing, and where appropriate these versions have been incorporated in the volume following the respective papers. However, the amount of discussion was such that it has not been possible to include it all here, so this additional material has been abstracted and edited by the Editorial Board to form a summary of the meeting as a whole (p. 269).

Responsibility for the over-all planning of this volume has been shared by an Editorial Board, with the editing co-ordinated in the Department of Geology at the National Museum of Wales. Mrs. S. J. Parsons has undertaken the task of checking and collating the references in the various papers, and has dealt with all the secretarial work attached to a production of this kind; in transcribing the discussion she was helped by Mrs. D. G. Evans, Dr. R. M. Owens, and Mr. S. R. Howe.

We are most grateful to The Palaeontological Association for agreeing to the publication of the colloquium proceedings as a *Special Paper*, and to the Carnegie Trust for a grant towards the cost of the papers by Drs. Rolfe, Strachan, and Waterston.

M. G. BASSETT H. W. BALL R. B. RICKARDS
W. D. I. ROLFE H. S. TORRENS C. D. WATERSTON
Editorial Board

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