ART GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc.)

AGMANZ NEWSLETTER, No. 4. MARCH, 1955.

EDITORIAL:

The Newsletter is sent to certain Museum Associations abroad, including the International Council of Museums which devoted a column in the December issue of ICOM NEWS to extracts from Agmanz Newsletter No. 3. Reference was made to the report on salaries and status, with news from the museums occupying the greater part of the column. The Editor appreciates very greatly the publicity given and the encouraging interest of Icom which thus brings our Newsletter and the activities of our Association to the notice of many museums in other countries. As a natural result of Icom's helpful co-operation, two requests followed in quick succession. One from the Canadian Museums Association for regular copies of the Newsletter, the other from the Research Associate of the American Association of Museums, who is conducting a survey on salaries in United States museums, for a copy of the Newsletter containing our own report on the status and salaries of museum officials in New Zealand.

By complying with these requests Agmanz is assisting to consolidate the goodwill which exists between sister Associations, a task to which Icom itself has already made no mean contribution. Credit is due to the many members of our Association who have made possible the production of a Newsletter, which has already set a reasonable standard and so attracted the attention of interested organizations in New Zealand and abroad.

CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL MEETING:

The third biennial conference of the Association will be held this year in Wanganui from April 26th. to 29th. Council is meeting shortly to finalise a programme, and following the President's visit to Wanganui, to consider his report on local arrangements.

Earlier conferences have proved profitable and stimulating, so with an increasing membership the forthcoming conference should produce some interesting discussions. The City of Wanganui is giving much consideration to its part as host, while both the Wanganui Museum and the Sarjeant Art Gallery are planning to ensure that for all attending the occasion will be a worthwhile experience within a friendly atmosphere.

If sufficient members travel by train, it will be possible to obtain a concession of 10 per cent from the Railways Department, a privilege which is also available to wives and children of members.

Please remember that the Annual Meeting will be held during the conference, on April 27th. at 3 p.m. Nominations for the various offices close with the Hon. Secretary, Mr. R. R. Forster, C/- Canterbury Museum, on March 30th. This is your opportunity to forward nominations for the Council which will control the affairs of the Association for the next year.

Voting will be by postal ballot, so make sure that you exercise your privilege and record your vote which must reach the Hon. Secretary by post before the Annual General Meeting.

BOTANICAL EXHIBITS:

During 1951-3, I visited twenty-three museums, universities and similar institutions in U.S.A. and England, and the part of these notes on the botanical exhibits which I saw is taken from a report I made in September, 1953.

The botanical exhibits seen were of seven kinds:-

1. Models of habitats with appropriate plants and animals.
2. Dioramas.
3. Models of flowers and fruit.
4. Dried plants, including woods.
5. Illustrations.
6. Apparatus.
7. Fresh specimens.

1. Models of habitats. The finest examples of this technique which I saw were at Denver and Chicago. Each model represents several years of work by a team of taxidermists and artists, and the considerable outlay on materials and wages is beyond the resources of most museums. The displays are permanent features of the display halls and would be more effective if the labels and guide literature were improved. Generally the labels fail to explain the model and any guide literature is unattractive.

2. Models of flowers and fruit. At Chicago, a display illustrating the families of flowering plants is partly built. The large-sized coloured wax, glass and plastic models rival the famous glass flowers at Harvard. Already the display has cost a considerable sum of money, and it will occupy two or three technicians for many years. Photographs of the individual exhibits will have a ready sale and enable the Museum to recoup part of the cost, but I think that this technique is too expensive to use on a large scale at Auckland.

3. Dioramas. There were (and are) successful examples of this technique in a number of U.S. institutions, but in every case the centre piece was ethnological or zoological. Plants were used to break up the fore-ground or fill the curved background, and a diorama with a plant as the centre piece would be a novelty.

4. Dried plants, including woods. The Museums at Kew contain old-fashioned cases crowded with dried leaves, flowers, fruits, pieces of bark and wood, etc., and numerous labels. The material is most valuable, but the displays are so dull that all but the most curious soon lose interest. Frequently in ethnological displays the exhibits - e.g. a piece of pottery or a weapon - are beautiful, but usually in botanical displays the specimens are distorted in drying and drab in colour. Probably the main problem in botanical display is to overcome the loss of form and colour which occurs when specimens are collected and preserved. The Keepers of the Museums at Kew have attempted to solve this difficulty by pickling some specimens in alcohol, but again the results are unsatisfactory. Drs. Rollo and Alice Tryon of the Missouri Botanical Garden have preserved plants in plastic but have not overcome the problem of air bubbles. The technique is most promising, however, and merits further study.

5. Illustrations. Photographs, paintings and drawings, reasonably well executed, free from dirt and foxing with adequate space about them, and well labelled, are the cheapest and most satisfactory material for botanical exhibits. They can be arranged, with a minimum of dried specimens and models, in attractive and effective displays. The best exhibits of this kind that I saw are the fossil plant and animal cases at Chicago. Colour is used in the backgrounds and labels to attract attention, and the eye is held by the forms illustrated and led deliberately by the arrangement of objects, illustrations and labels.

6. Apparatus. Excellent working models were exhibited each year at the Science Fair held at Washington University, St. Louis, Mo. The Post-Despatch Newspaper and the University sponsor the Fair, which has the active support of local educational and scientific organisations. University scholarships given by local firms are awarded annually to the high-school students presenting the best displays in different fields of science, and the standard is very high. Large crowds of visitors are attracted to the Fair, and teams of students act as ushers and demonstrate the models. As few biological processes can be maintained on display without constant attention, however, working models are limited to short-period exhibits, but have an important and growing role in educational television.

7. Fresh specimens. A stand of fresh specimens at the Natural History Museum in Kensington, London, was one of the most attractive botanical exhibits which I saw overseas. At

Auckland I found that the work of collecting and identifying material each week was interrupted frequently by other activities until the chore was taken over by two keen amateur botanists, Mrs. P. Hynes and Mrs. K. Wood.

I noticed that most modern exhibits are lit by concealed tubular lighting. In the U.S.A. many shades are available and usually a study of the tube colours is made before an installation is accepted from the suppliers. At Chicago and Denver many halls are darkened to increase the effect of the illuminated exhibits. Air conditioning and constant patrols are necessary in the darkened halls, however, and I doubt whether the expenditure is warranted. It seems far better to illuminate exhibits which respond to extra light, and to aim for good lighting throughout the halls.

I found a hall designed for the exhibit it contained in only one of the twenty-three institutions which I visited (Hall of Man at Chicago), and I gained the impression that in almost every institution the halls had been built and equipped with standard cases before the staff responsible for the exhibits commenced work. While uniform layout and equipment have certain advantages, they are very expensive. Furthermore, they limit the scope for novel exhibits, and thereby hamper progress in display work.

From the exhibits seen I have drawn three obvious conclusions:-

1. The purpose of an exhibition hall should be decided and defined before exhibits are prepared. The purpose of a botanical display may be to illustrate the value of plants to man, to emphasize the increasing need for conservation of natural resources, to provide a reference centre in regard to the plants of the district served by the museum, to explain the main processes going on in the living plant, to serve as quiz material for question-answer classes at different primary and secondary school levels, etc. One or more of these aims may be chosen but some definite idea must be followed if the exhibits are to form a well-integrated display.

2. Models cost so much in time, thought and money, that their place in the display should be determined carefully before they are undertaken. Once they are completed and installed they are more or less permanent features of the museum.

3. A knowledge of the methods followed by artists responsible for the best display-advertising may be of more value to a museum employee than a knowledge of the technical skills required for wax and plaster work. All too often the exhibits contain excellent models which fail to arouse interest because they are poorly lit, inadequately labelled, or badly arranged.

ROBERT COOPER,
Auckland Museum.

CATALOGUE OF NEW ZEALAND RESEARCH COLLECTIONS IN BIOLOGY: At the 1953 (Christchurch) Annual Meeting of AGMANZ, a sub-committee was set up with Dr. C. A. Fleming, (N.Z. Geological Survey), as convener, to deal with a number of projects of interest to research workers in museums. The convener reports that he and Mr. Dell, the two Wellington members of the sub-committee, have begun work on a Catalogue of New Zealand Research Collections, similar in style to Sherborn's well known booklet. It is proposed to circulate the Wellington compilation (when completed) to committee members in other centres with a view to extending the coverage. The project will require the co-operation of specialists in all plant and animal groups, and the convener has submitted the following notes to give others an idea of the type of information it is proposed to compile.

The proposed catalogue will consist of an alphabetic list of items of three main types:

(1) Animal and Plant Groups, down to the level of phyla or classes (but not necessarily consistent from group to group). Under such headings will be listed the museums (including university departments, D.S.I.R. units, etc.) in which New Zealand collections are held, with a brief statement of scope of holdings and whether they include types. If possible, specialists will be asked to compile the sections for their groups. An example (not necessarily correct):

CEPHALOPODA. Dominion Museum: spirit collection contains representative series of N.Z. living species, including types of several described by Kirk and Dell. A small series of overseas specimens and of fossil cephalopoda. N.Z.Geological Survey: Fossil Tertiary nautiloids (Aturia,etc.) and argonaut (including types). N.Z.Mesozoic ammonites and belemnites, (about 1000 registered items including types) and small collections of overseas species A few Paleozoic Nautiloidea (similar entries/or other museums, listed alphabetically).

There seems no reason to exclude references to overseas collections under such headings, e.g. British Museum: contains types of species described by Robson, E.A.Smith (etc.); Paris Nat. Hist. Museum: contains type of Quoy & Gaimard's Pinnoctopus cordiformis. The amount of detail compiled under such headings will undoubtedly vary with the importance of the group and the knowledge of the compilers.

(2) Names of collections. Under such headings will be listed briefly the contents of each collection, its history and its present repository. Every museum contains bought, presented or bequeathed collections known under the name

of the original owner, e.g. Buller Collection, Stead Collection, Hochstetter Collection, Earle Vaile Collection, Webster Collection, Suter Collection, etc., etc. Examples:

MANTELL COLLECTION: A collection made by Gideon Mantell and sent to his son, W.B.D.Mantell (N.Z.) in the mid-nineteenth century is now in the Geological Survey and consists of European rocks, minerals and fossils, including a few specimens mentioned in "Petrefactions and their Teachings."

MARSHALL AMMONITE COLLECTION: The New Zealand Upper Cretaceous Ammonites described by Marshall in 1926 are in Otago Museum, Auckland Museum, Auckland University College Geology Department, and Geological Survey.

(3) Names of leading New Zealand Systematists. Under such headings will be listed the present repository (-ies) of the collections on which the named systematist worked. It is not proposed to list overseas workers nor authors of only a few species. Example:

FINLAY, H. J. (1901-1951): Gmnoblastic hydroids in - - - - - - - (?); mollusca mostly in Auckland Museum; foraminifera mostly in Geological Survey.

The convener will welcome comments on the above proposals, which have not yet had the formal approval of the whole committee.

NEW ZEALAND GEOLOGICAL SURVEY:

The Paleontology and Petrology Sections of the Geological Survey constitute specialist research museums differing from other museums because their prime function is research and service for a particular group in the community (geologists) and because they have no contact with the general public through display collections. The Survey's collections are the responsibility of the paleontologists and petrologists listed below:

Paleontology Section

Senior Paleontologist:	C.A.Fleming (macrofossil animals)
Micropaleontologist:	N.de B. Hornibrook (foraminifera and ostracoda)
Assistant Paleontologist:	B. Waterhouse (macrofossil invertebrates)
Paleobotanist:	R. A. Couper (pollen grains and spores)
Assistant Paleobotanist:	D. R. McQueen (large plant fossils)
Technicians:	G. L. Adkin, Mrs. W. Tolley and vacancy.

Petrology Section

Petrologist:	J. J. Reed
Petrologist:	A. Steiner
Assistant Petrologist:	H. J. Harrington (on special leave)
Technicians:	E. A. Leopard and C. Shaw.

Staff Changes.

The Paleontology Section lost Mr. O. P. Olson in the Tangiwai railway disaster. Mr. Olson had completed a revision of the Molluscan genus Baryspira and had compiled paleontological sections for a forthcoming bulletin on Oamaru. Mr. P. Vella, micropaleontologist, has resigned to go farming, after completing a study of the genus Notorotalia (foraminifera) and a survey of the foraminifera of Cook Strait, based on collections obtained by H.M.S. Lachlan and M.V. Alert. Mr. J. B. Waterhouse has joined the staff to work on the older fossil invertebrates. Mr. V. W. Baker, who has prepared foram samples for the Survey since micropaleontological studies were begun in 1938, retired in 1954 and his position is not yet filled.

Collections.

The following summary will give other museum workers an idea of the scope (and limitations) of collections held by the Geological Survey:

PROTOZOA: Many thousands of living and fossil Foraminifera, constituting the only representative New Zealand collection of this group, many mounted on slides as complete "faunas", others segregated systematically. Many are type specimens. These collections are normally cared for by two professional officers (with Mr. N. de B. Hornibrook in charge) and a technician.

COELENTERATA: About a thousand Tertiary corals, at present in Cornell, U.S.A., for revision, together with collections from other N.Z. Museums. Mr. Squires, who is revising the corals under the supervision of Professor J. W. Wells, recently reported that the collections represent a 200% increase in knowledge of N.Z. corals. The collection also includes N.Z. Permian, Devonian and Ordovician corals some of which have been revised during the past year by Dr. D. Hill (Queensland) and Miss H. Leed (now Mrs. Sheldon). Include type specimens.

POLYZOA: A rapidly growing collection of Tertiary species and a few Paleozoic forms.

BRACHIOPODA: Extensive collections of Devonian, Permian, Triassic, Jurassic and Tertiary and living species, including some types.

ECHINODERMATA: The Survey's collections are being revised by Dr. H. B. Fell (Victoria College) who has completed a bulletin on cidarids, and is continuing with other echinoid groups. Many determinable microscopic parts of echinoids and starfish are now recovered from fossil sediment samples. The collection includes type specimens of published species and of many unpublished species.

ANNULATA: A few fossil tube-worms, largely unstudied.

CRUSTACEA: Mesozoic and Tertiary fossil crabs and other groups include spectacular giant Harpactocarcinus crabs and crayfish. No types. A large collection of Tertiary Barnacles includes types described by T. H. Withers. Many types are included in the large collection of living and fossil ostracoda assembled by Mr. Hornibrook.

TRILOBITA: This fossil group is represented by small collections from the Cambrian (unstudied), Ordovician (including types) and Devonian (including types).

MOLLUSCA: These constitute the bulk of the Survey's collection and are the subject of a short article in Bulletin No. 9 Conchology Section, Auckland Museum (1953). They include several hundred types.

VERTEBRATA: Fossil fish bones, scales, teeth and otoliths including types. A few fossil moa, penguin, whale and Cretaceous reptile bones.

PLANTS: Collections of Tertiary leaf fossils are now being assembled and studied by Mr. McQueen who has also established a collection of fossil seeds and fruits. There are some types of Tertiary species described by Oliver and of Mesozoic species described by Arber and Stopes. A rapidly growing collection of fossil and Recent pollen grains and spores, assembled by Mr. Couper, includes types.

ROCKS AND MINERALS: The systematic collection of N. Z. rocks and minerals in the Petrology Museum contains 13,500 registered specimens, and many thousands of microscopic slides prepared from them.

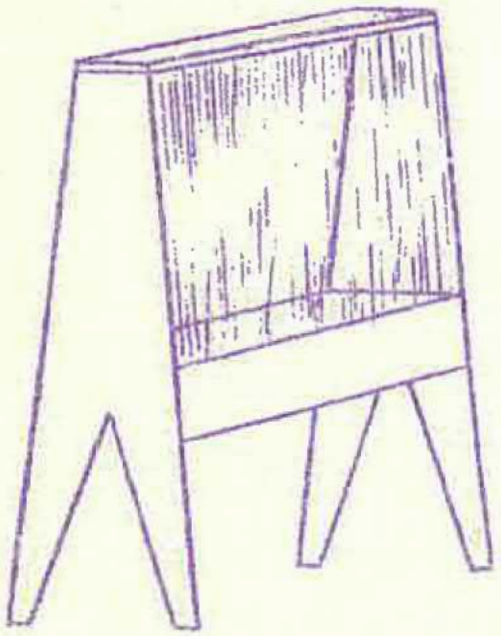
ACCOMMODATION

All the Paleontology Section expects shortly to join the Paleobotany Section at a building in Boulcott St., Wellington. A reinforced concrete garage is being sealed and lined for use as a safe for housing type collections, which previously have been subject to fire risk in the wooden building at 156 The Terrace. Working collections will still be housed in a wooden building until better and permanent accommodation is found.

A New Type of Showcase

Designed and used in the Hawkes Bay Museum

Based upon those very useful pyramidal cases issued about 1937 with Cargegie funds, this seems to us to be the answer for impecunious provincial museums. The Carnegie type in bronze cost £55. Today even in wood they would be considerably more.



Our design aims to cut costs by simplification both in labour and materials. The ends are standard but length can be varied by replacing or altering five boards only, thus it can be adapted to the objects to be shown or (as in our case) to the odd sheets of 32oz glass which accumulate from the dismantling of large picture frames. As the sides open, not the ends, it is ideal to set up displays in.

Two screws release the glass and the removal of thirty screws in all allow the whole to be packed away flat. This last feature will, we feel, appeal to large museums and galleries which may wish to have a reserve of easily stored cases for special exhibitions.

The dimensions which we have used are: Base board 16" wide. 33" from floor. Total height 70", display space tapers to 8" at top. We grind off the sharp edges of the glass with a fine carborundum stone and it is held at top and bottom only. 32oz glass is quite suitable up to 36" squares perhaps even up to 36" x 48" and is of course much cheaper than plate.

We are at present employing a "Handyman" and being anxious to keep him we would be prepared to accept orders for these cases without glass (but assuming a 36" square) in Pinus radiata in the white, packed broken down, FOB Napier at £7.0.0. each. Provided we do not have to hurry too much. Kauri would cost slightly more both in timber and labour.

REISSUE OF NEWSLETTER, No. 1:

Following many requests for the first number of the Newsletter, it has been decided to re-issue No. 1 on quarto paper, instead of the original foolscap, thus making the series uniform in order to facilitate filing. A copy will be mailed to every member with the current number.

MUSEUM NEWS:

SARJEANT ART GALLERY:

During December and January the Sarjeant Art Gallery held a very successful exhibition of pictures of early Wanganui and New Zealand. Altogether about sixty drawings, lithographs and paintings were displayed, many of which referred to the forties and fifties of last century, an important period in the early history of Wanganui. The display was the result of co-operation between the Wanganui Museum, the Sarjeant Art Gallery and the Alexander Library, but a few pieces were also loaned from the National Art Gallery and from private persons.

HAWKE'S BAY ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM:

Reporting to the Education Board on the newly established Junior Museum, Miss Campbell - Nature Study Specialist - mentioned the following points:-

The Junior Museum was opened on June 9th, 1954, and consists of a large room attached to the main Museum, but containing art, craft and natural history displays suitable for children. Many of the displays are the work of the children. It is controlled by a committee of ten children (five from the Art Club and five from the Junior Naturalists' Club) who receive direction and guidance from two Education Officers.

The Junior Naturalists' Club, consisting of fifteen selected nature study enthusiasts from local schools, meets at the Museum every second Saturday to discuss Museum business or to arrange for and participate in field trips.

School visits to the main Museum are difficult owing to the fact that there is no adequate staff available. Recently however an experiment was made when a Napier school sent a party of six children under a parent to study a specific subject. The party stayed the whole morning and it was possible to allow the pupils to handle and examine specimens and documents. Later the selected group reported the result of their visit to over one hundred classmates.

NATIONAL ART GALLERY AND DOMINION MUSEUM:

The Colonial Exhibition arranged by the National Art Gallery, the Dominion Museum, the Alexander Turnbull Library with assistance from other bodies, was opened in the Academy of Fine Arts Gallery by

Mr. D. M. Rae, M.P., on December 7th. The display will be open through the month of March and has already attracted many visitors. Organized and planned by Mr. S. Northcote Bade, an excellent catalogue was also prepared. To show the scope of the exhibition we quote from the introduction to the cyclostyled catalogue. "This is an exhibition of documents, paintings, sketches, furniture, clothing and household goods which together show something of early colonial life in New Zealand. The main galleries contain documents relating to early colonization, paintings and sketches from the Nan Kivell and Alexander Turnbull Library collections, photographs, and special displays of builders' hardware, firearms and other material. There are as well displays of furniture, silver, china and household goods which could not be shown in the period rooms.

In the subsidiary galleries there are four period rooms, three of them from the first decade of settlement, the other from the consolidation period of about 1875."

AUCKLAND MUSEUM:

Over three hundred guests were present at the twenty-fifth Anniversary Conversazione held at the Auckland War Memorial Museum on 29th November, 1954. Speakers were Sir James Gunson, Mr. Buttle, Deputy Mayor, and Professor L. H. Briggs.

Public interest having been aroused by the possibility of a New Zealand Antarctic Expedition, a small exhibition was arranged to illustrate some features of the Antarctic regions. Main headings in the exhibition were the route of the proposed crossing of the Antarctic continent, the topography, the fauna of the bordering seas, the geological structure of the continent, and rock-types from South Victoria Land.

With the assistance of the Librarian, a wide range of illustrations from volumes of southern voyages and scientific reports was displayed. These served not only to illustrate the region, but also to indicate the scope of the literature on the Antarctic available in Auckland.

Auckland Public Library kindly loaned some excellent enlargements of polar photographs by H. G. Ponting for the display.

PERSONALS:

Studying in New Zealand for a period, Mr. Benedict Sandin of the Sarawak Museum holds a Unesco Fellowship. While attached to the Auckland Museum he is paying special attention to display methods, but is interested in all phases of museum work. He has already undertaken a tour of the metropolitan museums in New Zealand.

The Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum has appointed Miss Helena Hull to the position of Senior Assistant. Miss Hull, who has had considerable secretarial experience, has been an enthusiastic voluntary worker in the Museum for some years.

Dr. Gilbert Archey who has been abroad for ten months inspecting museum displays and installations returned in January. While in the British Isles he attended the Conference of The Museums Association at Edinburgh.

Mr.A.W.B.Powell has been re-appointed to the committee on Marine Ecology and Paleoecology, National Research Council, Washington, and to the committee for Biological Oceanography, Pacific Science Association.

Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Turbott returned in October from an eight-months visit overseas, including attendance at The Museums Association's Annual Conference in Edinburgh as delegates of AGMANZ. Mr. Turbott was also a delegate representing the Ornithological Society of New Zealand at the International Ornithological Congress in Basle (Switzerland) in May, and, representing the Royal Society of New Zealand and the Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand, at the conference of the International Union for Protection of Nature in August at Copenhagen. These visits also enabled Mr. and Mrs. Turbott to visit museums in Switzerland, France and Denmark and, in addition, their programme included visits to observe a number of British museums. Mrs. Turbott studied lighting and display methods in ethnographical museums and the new arrangements at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington. Mr. Turbott's programme included study and research at the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, Oxford, and the British Museum (Natural History). Their visit was carried out with the assistance of the British Council, which made a grant-in-aid for travel to Mr. Turbott.

After a varied museum experience and lengthy service in the educational field, Mrs. C. Hall has returned to the Dominion Museum as Education Officer.

Miss Janet North, staff artist at the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum, resigned recently in order to be married.

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V. F. FISHER,
Hon. Editor.