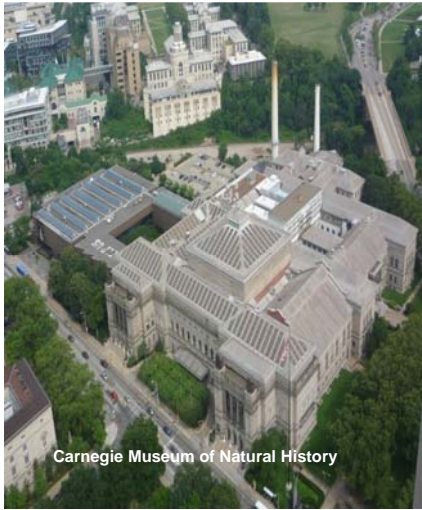


# What's ahead: using a general survey as a planning tool

Gretchen Anderson



Carnegie Museum of Natural History

## The Need.

- The Carnegie Museum of Natural History last conducted a general survey in 1989 funded by IMLS Conservation Projects. It was one of the first major natural history museums to do so, using the survey report as the foundation for the museum's first comprehensive long-range conservation plan. Jump forward 20 years.
- Old building, large collection, multiple buildings- new conservator

## Goals

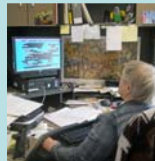
- 1) Assess current conditions of the collections, museum environments, and policy and procedures
- 2) Develop short-, mid-, and long-term priorities for collections care and reasonable strategies for attaining priorities. The result will be a cohesive long-range plan
- 3) Provide CMNH Conservator with a comprehensive and complete history of collections care at CMNH and better understanding of how to navigate the complicated organization

## The Project

- Choose the right consultant team for the institution. Two conservators [Catharine Hawks, Dr. Robert Waller] were part of the 1989 general survey and brought both extraordinary expertise and historical perspective to the project. LEED engineers Ernest Conrad and Paul Krietler, Landmark Facilities Group, were approached to assess the buildings. CMNH Conservator Gretchen Anderson lead the team and acted as liaison between consultants and staff.
- The Institute for Museum and Library Services, Conservation Project Support provided funding.
- CMNH administration fully supported the project.

### Phase 1: Planning

- Objective: Gather background information and documents required by Consultant
- Gather documents from staff
  - Conduct in-house review of environmental conditions and monitoring methodology
  - Realize that many procedures needed updating



Anthropology collections manager Deborah Harding at work station

### Tour Facilities



Ernest Conrad, Environmental engineer, LFG  
Team toured facilities with operations manager.

### Storage



### Phase 2 - Site Visit

- Objective: Provide consultants the opportunity to assess the buildings, collections and interview stakeholders.
- ✓ 6 days of intense and stimulating activity
  - ✓ Tour 3 of the 5 buildings (2 sites were too far away)
    - See the hidden sections of the buildings
  - ✓ Meet with staff across institution
    - collections-based sections to view collections and discuss procedures
    - Administration, Facilities and operations
    - Events, public programs, exhibits, retail
  - Meetings held in departmental spaces



Consultant team meets with curators and other staff in scientific sections. Shown here are Invertebrate Zoology (above) and Mollusks (right).

### Meetings



Dinosaurs in Their Time, one of ten exhibition halls at CMNH

### Exhibits



Dinosaurs in Their Time, one of ten exhibition halls at CMNH

### Museum Functions



The team visited staff and spaces involved in all museum functions, including the Educational loan collection (left) and the Discovery Room.

### Phase 3: Collaborative Analysis and Strategy Development

- Objective: Develop workable strategies to reduce the risk to collections
- Much time spent in writing and editing survey results – one voice
  - Discussion between consultants on specific issues, such as reasonable environmental conditions
  - On going dialogue between CMNH stakeholders and Consultants



Conservator Anderson editing drafts after long email conversations with consultants

### Phase 4: Final Report

- Objective: The final report will be a document to aid in ongoing conservation and preservation planning
- Identify and quantify risks to collections, including landmark building
  - Prioritize collections care needs and develop strategies
  - Identify funding for collections care
  - Provide tool for administration to use for planning and fundraising
  - Foundation for a detailed conservation long-range plan

List of topics covered in the final report

Executive Summary	RYBC	Handwriting	Entomology
INTRODUCTION	Other Storage Facilities	Health and Safety	Mineralogy
General Description of Collections/Facilities	Keynote	Security (M, P)	Malacology
Re-assessment Description, Format, and Goals	Evac	Emergency Management	Ornithology
Special Descriptions	Potential New Facilities	Collection Registration and Item Management	Geoscience
OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	Cleanest Control and Environment	Museum Libraries and Archives	Microscopy
Plan, Public, and Procedures	Main Building	Fluid Collections	Invertebrate Paleontology
Staff and Staff Training	RYBC	Research Collections	Paleontology
Condition for Collections Care	Warehouses	Anthropology	Vertebrate Paleontology
Buildings and Facilities	Fire protection	Archaeology	Educational Collections
Main Building	Pest Control	Ethnography	Fish
Visitor Buildings	Retail Sales and Special Events	Biosecurity	RECOMMENDATIONS
Departmental Facilities	Handwriting	Amphibian and Reptile	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
Storage Hall		Birds	APPENDICES

### Lessons learned

- Site visit is very intense and stimulating.
- An assistant is invaluable
- Develop relationships with museum colleagues who will help to move strategies forward
- Learn the players – there will be surprises

### Worth the work:

- Build relationships with wide range of staff
- Learn who the players are
- Most rapid and efficient way to learn about the facilities
- Raise interesting and pertinent issues
- Do not feel isolated

### Watch out for:

- Scheduling is difficult. Not everyone will be available.
- Collaborative efforts take longer than anticipated.
- Report writing takes much longer than anticipated.
- Not every one will be pleased with the results nor agree with your priorities.
- Many stakeholders will want immediate response to problems

My thanks to the many people who contributed to this effort.  
 • To the consultants [Cathy Hawks, Rob Waller, Ernie Conrad and Paul Krietler] who spent a great deal of time and energy in making the survey work.  
 • To all of my colleagues at CMNH in Administration, Public Programs, and especially the scientific sections, for your support and patience in bringing me up to speed.  
 • To my intern/assistant Tasha Mowery, who took copious notes and managed to keep all of the paper organized!



Rob Waller taking notes in the Alcohol House