

ADQUISITION POLICY FOR THE COLLECTIONS OF THE NATURAL SCIENCES MUSEUM OF BARCELONA

November 2013

The Natural Sciences Museum of Barcelona (MCNB) strives to generate and share knowledge of diversity and evolution in the natural world and to contribute to its conservation, and aims to work towards a society that is in general better informed and aware of and connected to its natural origins. This task is accomplished through collections that reflect the natural heritage present in Catalonia and neighbouring territories, through research into geology and biological diversity, and via experiments that stimulate exploration, learning, respect, enjoyment, dialogue and public participation in its broadest possible sense (Strategic Plan).

The Museum is heir to over a century of scientific study of natural history that has documented and interpreted our natural world. It is especially involved in research into the current biodiversity crisis and in local- and international-scale efforts aimed at studying, documenting and conserving the planet's natural diversity. Its scientific collection represents a permanent record of our natural heritage and of the research carried out by the Museum (Strategic Plan).

This document is thus a general overview of the procedures that will define the growth of the MCNB's collections over the coming five years.

The MCNB regards its heritage as all material that might provide a record of the biological and geological specimens originating from a particular place and from a particular moment in time. The Museum aims to conserve this natural heritage as a legacy of the past and the present.

The Museum's task is to conserve, safeguard and provide access to the specimens in the collections that it acquires.

Currently, the Museum's collection contains over three million specimens representing both the plant and animal kingdoms and the geological record, which date from the seventeenth century up to the present day. Ever since its formation, the Museum's collections have been consulted and studied by the Museum's own researchers, as well as by scientists from universities and other centres of learning, both from Catalonia and from further afield. In recent years has begun to adopt the standards regarding documentation and conservation used by the world's most important natural history museums.

Despite its long history, the Museum's collections are still incomplete in terms of the scope of the territory and collection sites they cover, and, above all, of certain groups of flora and fauna.

The main and obligatory function of the collection is to act as a reference tool for the scientific community. Unlike other types of collections, natural history collections have to continue growing, since it is essential to possess series of representative samples from different sites that reflect the changes occurring in the natural world. Likewise, the discovery and study of new sites also implies the generation of new specimens that have to be conserved in a museum.

The Natural Sciences Museum of Barcelona above all to acquire the following types of specimens in the understanding that it will preserve them and provide access to them:

Criteria for accepting material

The Museum will only accept material whose conservation it can guarantee in the short-, mid- and long-terms.

The Museum will give preference when accepting material to collections that are clearly related to areas of research and whose place and date of origin are sufficiently well documented.

The Museum will accept donations if the ownership of the material is clear.

The Museum will safeguard and classify all the documentation that accompanies donated material as proof of its origin and to be able to justify its presence in the Museum if so required by a third party.

The Museum reserves the right to decide if the donated material will form part of the Museum's permanent collection. If so, the Museum will decide if it will become part of its scientific collection, or put on public display, or used for pedagogical activities.

The Museum will only admit material that has been collected in accordance with current legal requirements regarding the protection of the natural heritage (European Union, Spanish State and Autonomous Community of Catalonia).

In general, the material of most interest for the Museum's collections are specimens that will be of use to the scientific community or that can be used as elements for raising public awareness. These include examples of:

- the flora and fauna from Mediterranean and alpine areas.
- the geological heritage of the Mediterranean area.
- The flora and fauna of invasive species, and specimens of protected species found dead in the wild.
- Type specimens that have to be deposited in public collections, to guarantee the access for study.

The Museum will apply the criteria herein described when deciding on possible donations and will inform donors accordingly of their decision.

The priorities regarding acquisitions in each of the Museum's collections is as follows:

MINERALOGY

- To complete the Museum's collection of basic specimens (with samples of the same quality as that of the existing collection) to fill gaps in its documentary collection and provide material for displays (systematic groups, crystal morphology and geodiversity).
- To acquire material from deposits in Catalan-speaking regions and neighbouring areas (Iberian Peninsula, Mediterranean countries, European alpine regions).

For the micromount collection:

- In terms of the Museum's systematic documentary collection, only new species or those that are not represented in the collection, and which are scientifically and/or morphologically significant, will be accepted.
- Examples from type localities will be accepted.
- Examples that complete material from a specific geographical area that is already represented in the collection will be accepted (with special emphasis on Catalan-speaking, Mediterranean and European alpine regions).

PETROLOGY

The material that will be accepted for the petrological collection over the next five years includes the following type of specimens (only well-documented material):

- Examples of rocks, thin sections and/or sands that complete the local collection of Catalan rocks.
- Examples that fill in systematic gaps in the petrological collection (regardless of their place of origin).
- Collections built up during investigation and research in Catalan-speaking regions, which can occasionally include material from outside of this region that complements the local regional collection.

- Collections resulting from investigation and research from shield zones that complement the Museum's collection of shield rocks.
- Sand from all over the world is accepted.

Occasionally, material that does not fulfil these criteria will be accepted if it is of great scientific and/or heritage interest, or if it has been generated by the Museum's research activities.

PALAEONTOLOGY

As has been the practice since it was established, the decision to add to the Museum's palaeontological collection will be taken with the following three factors in mind:

- the possible creation of a national natural history museum that will possess an as-complete-as-possible record of the species represented in the Catalan fossil record, as was the case when the Martorell Museum was home to work on the Geological Map of Catalonia (1918-1923);
- the research activities of the Museum's curators, currently centred on the palaeological environment of the Tethys (from the Himalayas to the Caribbean), with a special emphasis on the fossil flora and fauna from the sedimentary basins that make up this region;
- palaeological methodology – based on a comparison of as many morphospecies as possible – that aims to gather as many fossil species as possible from the whole of the Earth's geological record.

SOUND LIBRARY

The order of priority for adding material to the sound library (Fonoteca) is as follows:

- Recordings of the autochthonous fauna of Catalonia and the Iberian Peninsula to complement existing identification and documents.
- New recordings for the Museum's research into bioacoustics.
- Completing of the existing collection of recordings from other ecozones. Currently, the Palaearctic is the best-represented region in the sound collection.
- Technology is an important part of all stages of the recording, conservation and diffusion of sound documents. Thus, the policies aimed at expanding the Museum's sound library must take into account at all times the technological conditions under which a sound that may be played repeatedly was recorded.
- Priority will be given to documents that fulfil the diffusion criteria of the Sound Space of the Museu Blau.

ARTHROPODS

The study of the Arthropoda in the MCNB's collections has historically provided a great amount of material for a number of different lines of study. This collection is of great scientific value due to the large number of type specimens it contains and the breadth of its geographical range. Thus, it is vital that the collection acquires:

- specimens of Anobiidae and Tenebrionidae from the whole world;
- material from subterranean habitats from the whole world;
- Neuropteroidea from the whole world;
- for the remaining groups (e.g. Lepidoptera, Himenoptera, Diptera, Hemiptera) specimens from the Western Palaearctic region are of most interest to the Museum. The Museum will also accept specimens of the fauna of other regions (Nearctic, Neotropical, Afrotropical, Indo-Himalaya and Australasia) if they are of great scientific value or are potentially important, for example, for awareness-raising activities or for exhibitions.

NON-ARTHROPOD INVERTEBRATES

The specific priorities for acquisitions are as follows:

- specimens or collections used for research that has generated work whose results have been published or are about to be published.
- collections without homes or at risk that belong to other scientific institutions.
- private specimens or collections complementing geographical areas or taxonomic groups already represented in the Museum's collections that will broaden its scope (taxa-spatial-time).
- priority will be given to well-preserved wet samples.
- possibility of contributing to an awareness-raising project that has been programmed or is already underway.
- specimens resulting from public biodiversity prospection campaigns.

VERTEBRATES

Priority will be given to:

- specimens of native fauna with perfectly documented collection dates that will enhance the scientific collection and tissue bank.
- animal taxa not well represented in the Museum that can be used for exhibitions and public activities. Above all, priority is given to private collections from Catalonia.
- The Museum will accept well-preserved specimens for its zoological and tissue collections of species that are not well represented in its scientific or public collections.
- species linked to particular environments that are valuable as bioindicator species and whose spatial and temporal representation in the Museum will guarantee the generation of long-term series of specimens.
- The acquisition will always be dependent on the availability of space.

Acquisition procedures and protocols

The different ways of adding material to the Museum's collection are as follows: collection, donation, purchase, inheritance, awards, ownership and exchange. Nevertheless, the vast majority of acquisitions correspond to one of the first three categories.

Recollection forms part of the Museum's research projects, while indirect collection consists of the specimens brought to the Museum by researchers, amateur naturalists and people who find animals or capture live animals whilst in the field. The collecting activities carried out by the Museum always comply with existing legislation regarding the collection of animals; the Museum never undertakes collecting activities without having the appropriate permits. Researchers and collectors must ensure that collected specimens are accompanied by all the relevant data. An effort must be made to ensure that all acquired material is associated with correct and up-to-date information. Data can be supplied in digital format.

The Museum receives annually many donations from institutions and private individuals. Agreements are signed with all institutions wishing to provide material over a period of time (e.g. Barcelona Zoo, recovery centres). In the case of donations by private individuals or institutions for which no agreement has been signed, a donation document will be drawn up with all the relevant information.

In the cases in which the material has been collected by the Museum itself or has been donated, no financial transaction takes place between the donors and the Museum.

Material is purchased in the case of the mineralogical or plant collections. In the case, the purchase of specimens is a more habitual practice whenever all ethical and legal considerations can be fulfilled.

The Museum receives offers of material from private institutions and private individuals and in some cases this material is of great quality. Using the information gathered during the visit to view the

material, a report is drawn up that will be used in the decision regarding whether to acquire the collection in question or not.

The other ways of acquiring material that occur are always accompanied by the appropriate documentation that guarantees the Museum the ownership of the specimens in question.

Position of the Museum regarding the acquisition and return or restoring of specimens whose ownership is questioned.

The Museum will only accept or return material to owners if the pertinent documentation is complete and/or the legal ownership of the specimens in question has been clearly demonstrated.

Specimens will be removed from the collection if they are damaged in any way and can no longer be used for scientific research or as part of an exhibition.

The removal of duplicate material or of specimens that no longer fulfil any function in the Museum will only be carried out in collections that have been fully catalogued. A report must be drawn up of the material that has been removed during the proceeding year. All such cases will be detailed in the Museum's Annual Report.

The Museum will always attempt to comply with the criteria herein described regarding its acquisition policy.