

## THE CATALOGUING OF MUSEUM COLLECTIONS.

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The system by which specimens are catalogued in most museums of natural history is open to criticism. Insufficient data concerning the collections are buried in bulky volumes or files to such an extent that one may usually be considered fortunate if after a period of several hours the locality and date of collection of a specimen can be ascertained. Notes concerning the name of the person by whom the specimen was identified, date of identification, etc., are rarely present. The task of a systematist wishing to find the material in a given museum belonging to a particular group (phylum, class, etc.), or obtained from a given locality (country, state, etc.) is usually a most difficult and oftentimes an impossible one.

The use of the card index system, the value of which was long since recognized in business methods, will go far toward obviating the difficulties mentioned. A standard card of 4 x 6 inches has proved to be the most servicable. Following a chronological order the data which should be rendered accessible in an adequately catalogued collection, can be separated into three groups. These are:

(a) *The Accession Catalogue*, arranged numerically, containing a general record of all material received as whole. Consequently one accession card usually covers a large number of specimens.

(b) *The Department Catalogue*, arranged numerically, giving a complete history of each specimen or group of specimens (of a given species) acquired by each department (Zoology, Botany, Anthropology, etc.).

(c) *The Reference Catalogue*, arranged alphabetically, having the names of all specimens (genus and species in Zoology and Botany) in a given department at the top of the card.

The final disposition of each specimen is indicated, consequently it is an easy matter to at once locate any desired material.

While the Department Catalogue is the principal one, the other two are important and represent a comparatively small amount of labor, inasmuch as a single card contains data for a large number of specimens. Classification of material into groups (e. g., Protozoa, Porifera, etc., in Zoology) can be indicated by using cards with appropriate tabs in different positions, while geographical distribution can be represented, if desired, by different colored cards.

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