

Reviewing the compactor storage of vertebrate collections at the Natural History Museum, London

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Background: This extensive re-storage project has resulted in the amalgamation of three major collections of marine reptiles and amphibians in one collections area in Basement East and provided the desired 10% expansion space for new acquisitions. In order to refurbish the space and fit compactor storage, over 4,000 specimens were packed and moved using protocols* created by SC & LS to holding areas within the Earth Sciences Department, the NHM site and NHM offsite storage then moved back in with the ichthyosaur collection from storage in Basement West. The 'parent' Conservation Centre Project Phase 2+3 was managed by the NHM Project Office but for the Earth Science Department's Compactor Project the Task Force supplied a full time assistant curator to pack and coordinate the move and the Task Force Manager to oversee the resourcing, communication, workflows and scheduling of the Earth Sciences side working with the curator in charge of the collections (SDC) and the Core Research Labs Department conservators. The Earth Science Department's team worked with the selected company to design and install the customised units. The ES team repurposed spaces in which to store entire or parts of collections and re-used the emptied cabinets to replace faulty units across the Earth Sciences Department.

*Packing drawers for movement and off site storage













*Packing mounted skeletons













*Packing shelved specimens

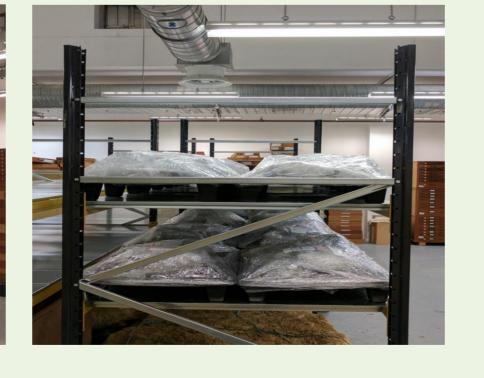




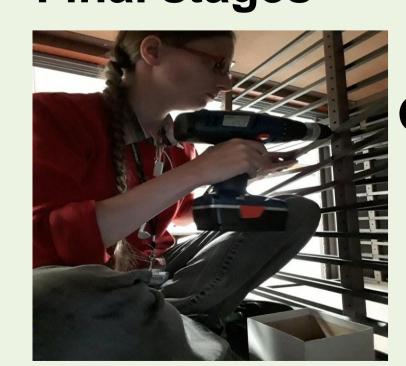


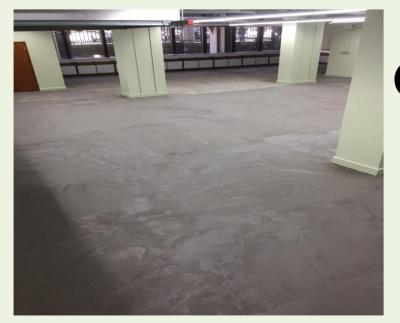






Final stages





Prepared 128m² space

Compactors



A network of curators, assistants, conservators, volunteers, interns, students, contractors, architects, electricians have worked to make this part of the 'parent' project happen within the wider framework of museum policies, concurrent projects and core collections work.

Project metrics: From start of physical work Preparing 3 collections for move to 4 holding areas 5.5 months Preparing extra collection for move to new units 2.5 months Contractors decant of packed drawers + shelves 15 days Contractor took 7 slabs, 19 pallets & Dippy model to offsite storage 2 days

NHM refurbishes new area & contractor builds units* 6.5 months *Installed 158 units with 12 configurations & maximum height of 2.4m Contractors decant 2 collections to move back to new area 15 days Unpacking specimens in new area by assisting curator & interns 40 days

Total time taken from start of physical work: 16 months Packed & decanted 1440 drawers + 646 shelves Other help NHM staff & students 42 person days Project assistant curator 14 months; Volunteers 66 person days Interns: 76 person days; Contractors 75 person days

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Legacy: Along with high quality custom built collections compactor storage that can be showcased in these very popular collections, this project has developed workflows and documentation protocols for large collection moves in the future and contributes to Earth and Planetary Science Centre readiness (NHM Strategy to 2020). Contact email: S.Chapman@nhm.ac.uk