

Running a Museum on Empty: Creative ways to maintain a museum and create new exhibits on a shoestring budget

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(YS) Year of the Student: Attracting College Students to Campus Museums, Lecture Theatre 3, Appleton Tower, 11 Crichton Street, EH8 9LE, June 8, 2022, 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

The Biology Natural History Museum, when it was founded, had its own building and designated exhibit space. Over the subsequent 150+ years, the cases have been moved to different campuses and different buildings. We currently have built-in cases in one science building and the same display cases from the 1800s scattered throughout an older, connected science building. The current “museum” consists of disparate cases throughout multiple floors in two buildings. There are definite challenges with maintaining and renewing the exhibits in this setting, as well as having no specific budget or funding source for this work. Identifying individuals in other departments kind enough to help with art, signage, and printing has also required creativity. Most of the exhibit work (restoration, updates, and new exhibits) has been undertaken by undergraduate students at Colby College. They have created innovative, interdisciplinary, and creative ways to tackle budget, resource, and logistics challenges. This presentation will highlight some of the challenges and creative ways used to meet those challenges.

