Digitization of the historical paleontological collection

Chances and Difficulties

Naturmuseum Winterthur

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Overview

- Status Quo
- Projects involving Winterthur
- Methods and Equipment
- Examples/Short Stories
- Summary: Chances and Difficulties
- Outlook
- Discussion of your experiences

Current Situation

- Naturmuseum Winterthur is a municipal museum – embedded in a administration with low flexibility.
- No research, no experts, no direct connection to a university, no students
- Team Naturmuseum is responsible for running the museum, planning and realisation of events, new exhibitions, and the collection.
- Diverse collection: huge differences in object type, condition and documentation, approx. 130’000 objects

Human Resources

- Before and after SwissCollNet:
  - Curators of natural history collection: 2, each 40%
  - Curator of ethnological collection: 1, 21%
  - Taxidermist: 1, 80%
  - Technical staff: 3, together 120%
  - Directorate: 1, 100%
  - (administration 60%, Kindermuseum 50%, visitor service)
- During SwissCollNet:
  - + 5 motivated young scientists on hourly basis

Administrative Expense

- Writing of proposals
  - Budget, collaborations
- Recruiting new personel
  - Administration, working spaces and equipment, software, keys!, introduction and support
- Writing of reports

Projects involving Winterthur starting in 2022

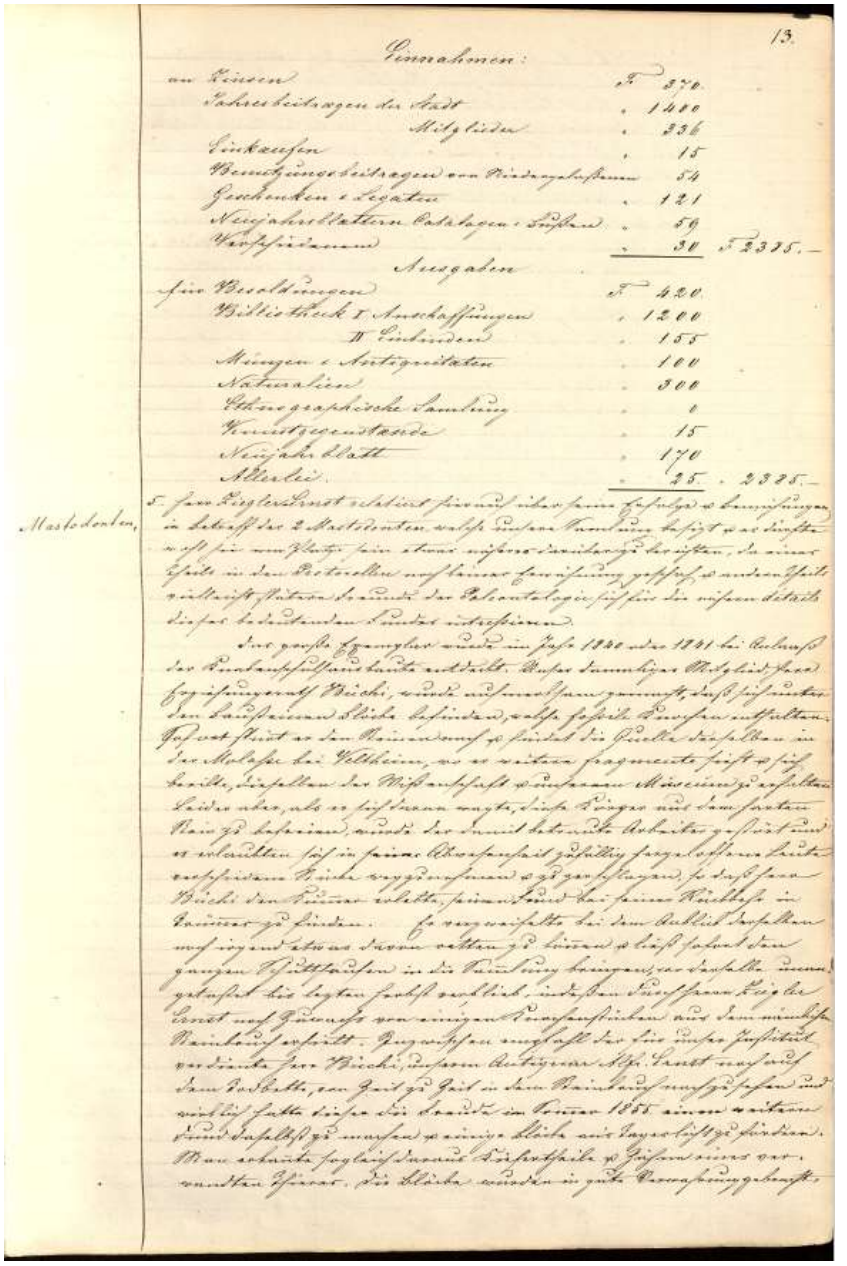
- **Conservation, digital recording and documentation of the historically important paleontological collection in Winterthur**
  (MA: Sandra Scherrer, Naturmuseum Winterthur)
- Digitization of fossil reference objects in natural history collections (MA: Loïc Costeur, Natural History Museum Basel)
- Digital documentation of the famous Glarus Fossils from the Landesplattenberg Engi (MA: Roland Müller, Natural sciences collections Glarus)
- Meteorites in Institutional and Public collections of Switzerland (MA: Matthias Meier, Nature museum St. Gallen)
- Digitisation of Herbarium specimens of the Museums of Natural History in St.Gallen and Winterthur (MA: Alfred Brülisauer, Nature museum St. Gallen)
- Re-determination, revision and databasing of four Swiss lichen collections to aid research (MA: Hannes Geisser, Naturmuseum Thurgau)

Projects involving Winterthur starting in 2023

- Digitalization of Dry Botanical Bulk Collections and Related Herbarium Sheets
  (MA: Alex Kocyan, Botanical Museum of the University of Zurich)
- Documentation and digitization of several entomological collections at Naturmuseum Winterthur
  (MA: Sabrina Schnurrenberger, Naturmuseum Winterthur)

Running Projects/Implementation

- Goals
  - Digitalization of local and important historical collections
- Project work
  - Systematic documentation of newly organized shelves for the local collections
  - Checking object conditions
  - Searching for information in the well-organized ;-) archive
  - Searching for additional information in the hand-written protocols

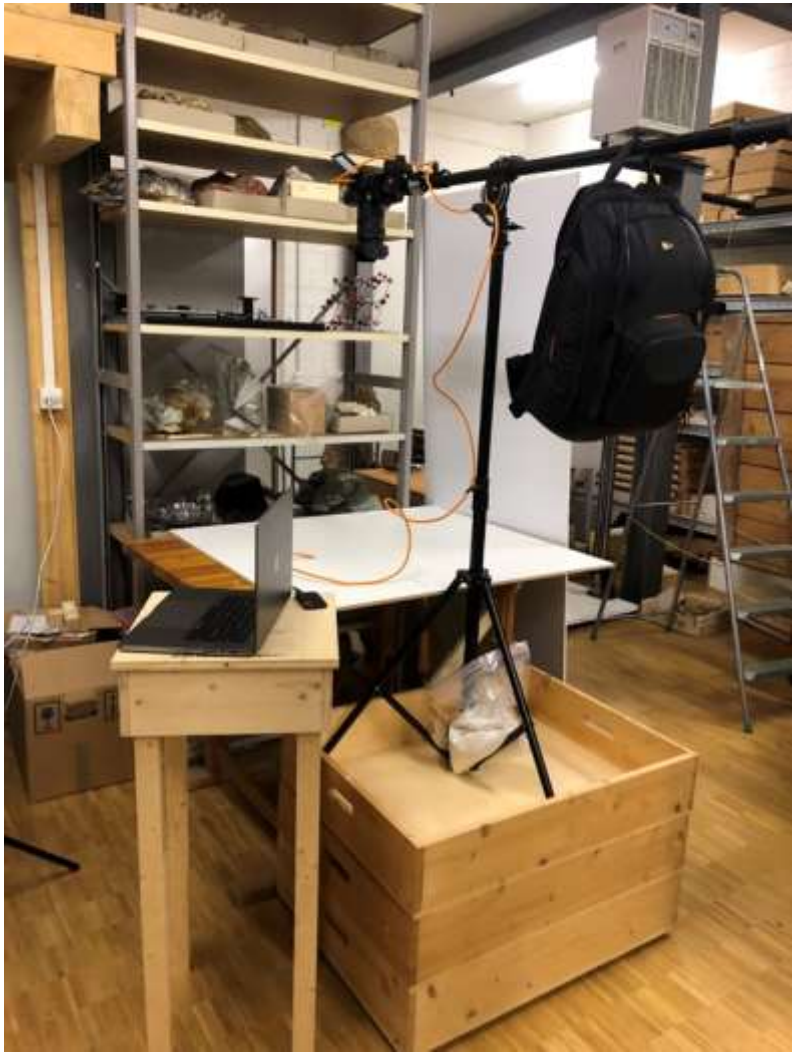


Running Projects/Implementation

- Preliminary work
  - Checking previous database entries
  - Sorting of specimens and labels (former exhibitions, «new» entries, envelopes with labels)
  - Numbering of unlabelled objects
  - Checking for radioactivity – adequate storing
  - Unboxing historical specimens
  - Rearrange shelves and objects
  - Cleaning

Methods and Equipment

- Taking photographs: 2 Photo stations
- Database entries: BioOffice and new laptops



Database Entry

- BioOffice
  - Only a certain amount of (predefined/migrated) fields

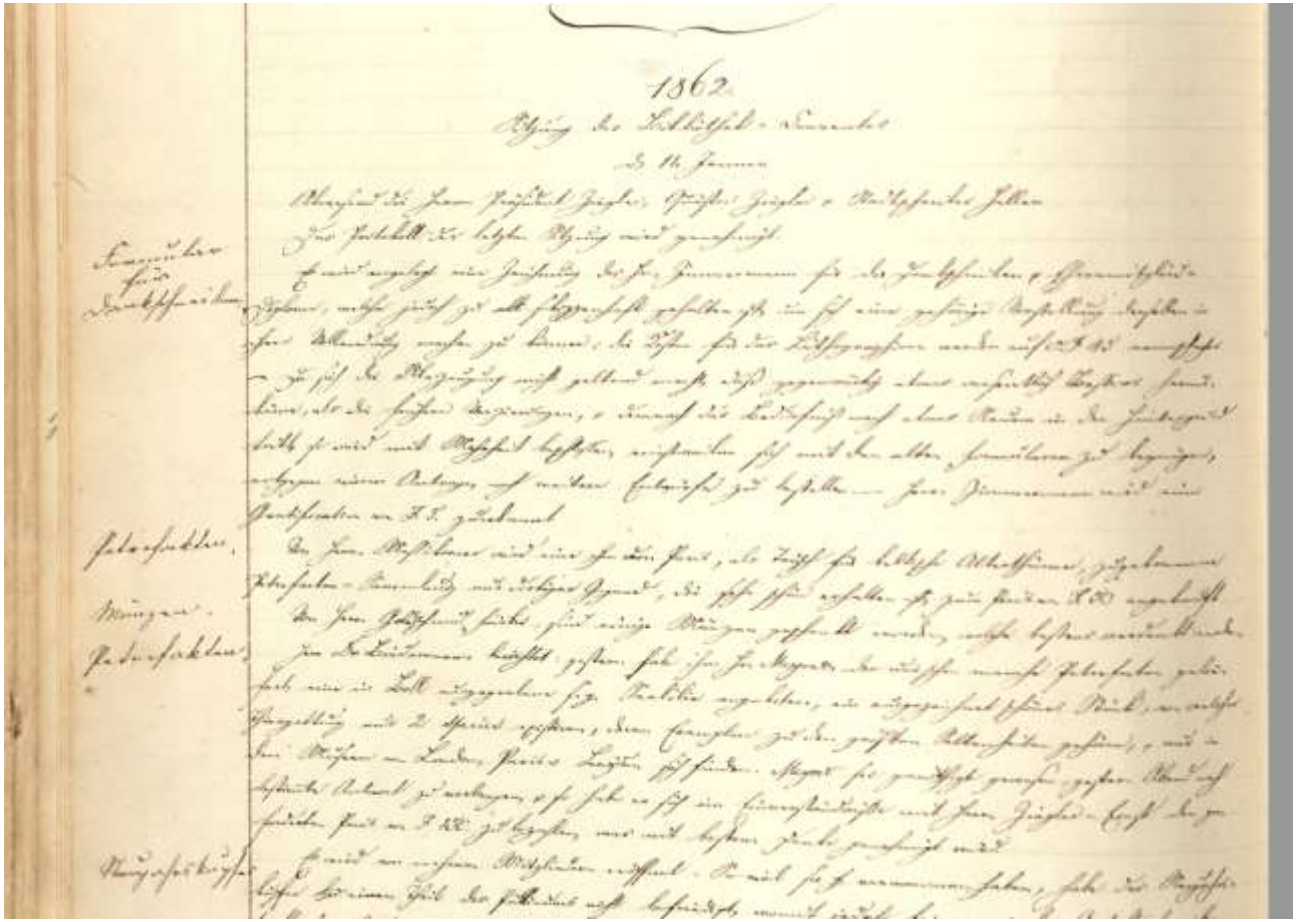
    → What is really important?
- How to correctly document an object?
  - Taxonomy, determination history, historical aspects, donations, number of objects…
  - How to handle «non-standard» entries (Geological phenomena, indirect biological markers, Meteorites???)

    → Constant adaption to specific needs

Zeitungsbericht in Sulzer-«Horizonte», August 1988

Differences among our Collections

Examples/Short Stories



«Herr Dr. Biedermann berichtet: gestern habe ihm Hr. Meyrat, der uns schon manche Petrefacten geliefert, **eine in Boll ausgegrabene s.g. Seelilie** angeboten, ein ausgezeichnet schönes Stück, von welcher Thiergattung nur 2 Species existiren, deren Exemplare zu den grössten Seltenheiten gehören, und nur in den Museen von London, Paris und Leyden sich finden. Meyrat sei genöthigt gewesen, gestern Abend noch bestimmte Antwort zu verlangen, und so habe er sich im Einverständnisse mit Herrn Ziegler-Ernst den geforderten Preis von Fr 150. zu bezahlen, was mit bestem Danke genehmigt wird.»

NATUR
MUSEUM
WINTERTHUR

?

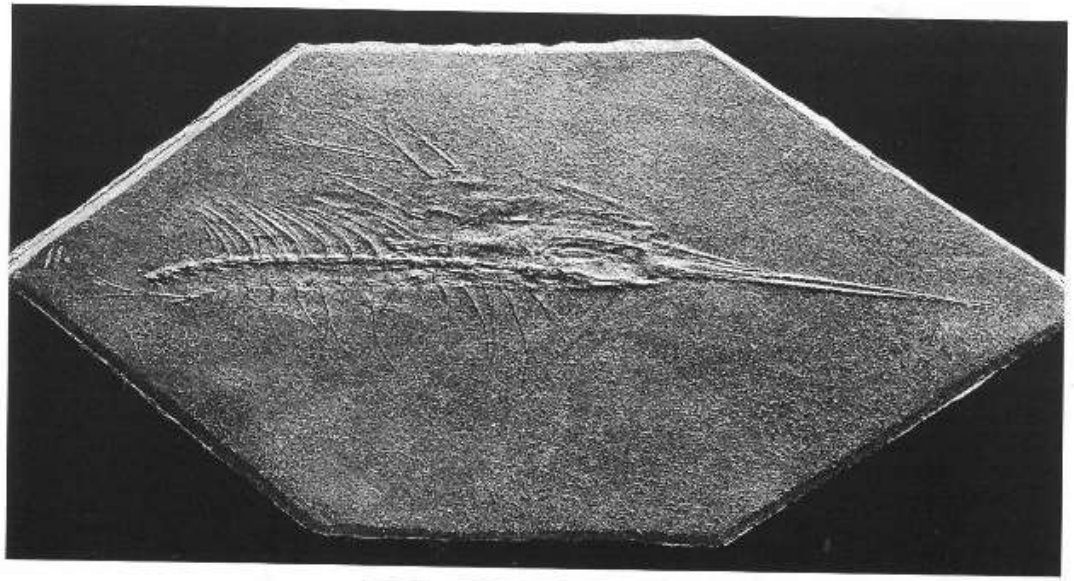

Copie
ein fossiles Oberschenkelstück von einem
vorsündflutlichen Pferde

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach
1752-1840
(Quelle: Wikipedia)

Johann Rudolf
Schellenberg
1740-1806
(Quelle: Wikipedia)

Johann Heinrich Ziegler
1738-1818
(Quelle: winbib, Winterthur Glossar)

Johann Jakob Scheuchzer
1672-1733
(Quelle: Wikipedia)



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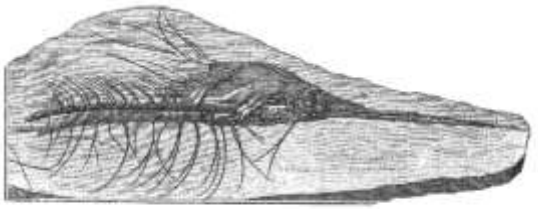
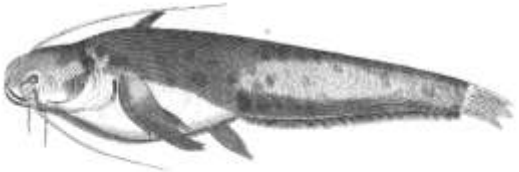
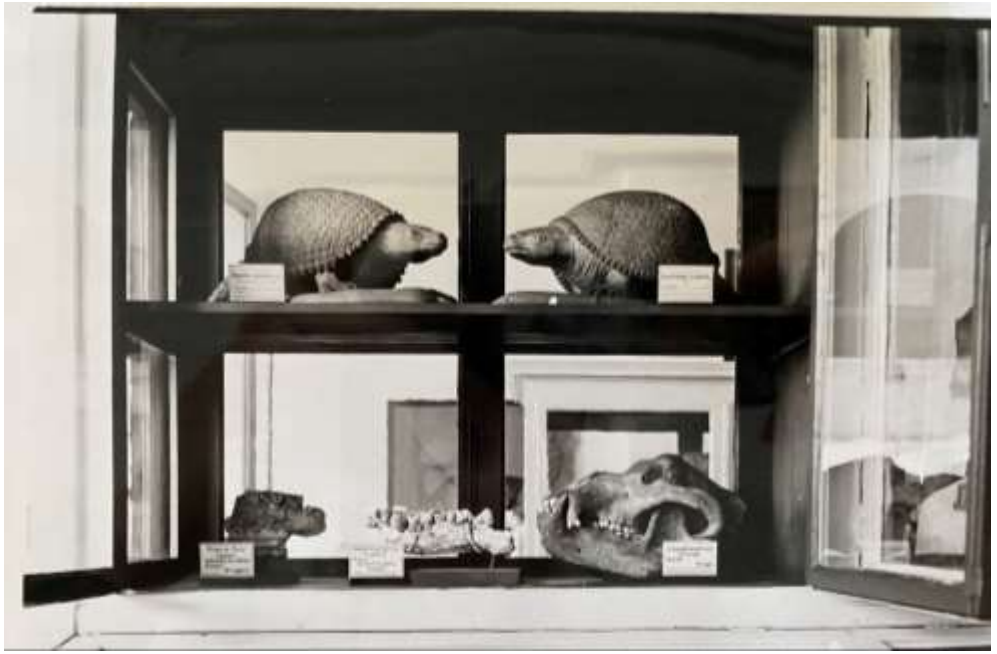


33 Vorderteil einer Schnabelmakrele von Engi (Palaeorhynchus glarisianus), aus: J. J. Scheuchzer: Herbarium diluvianum, Taf. 9, Fig. 6. Zürich 1709.

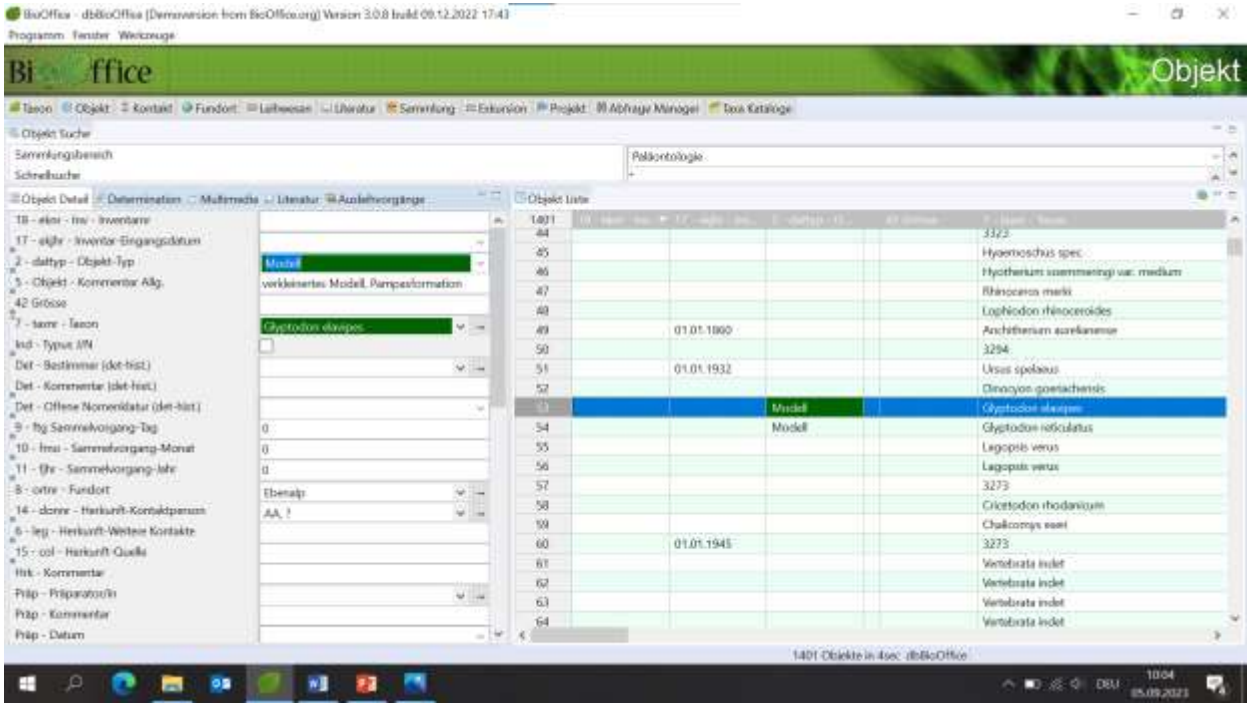


34 Wels (Silurus), aus: F. Willughby: De historia piscium, Taf. H 5, Fig. 2. Oxford, 1686.



https://dinosaur-protection-group.fandom.com/wiki/Glyptodon

«Lost Objects» and other inconsistencies



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Summary: Chances and Difficulties

- Enormous administrational effort
- Timeframe: start delayed, too short to document everything, extention needed (cost neutral)
- Data entry uncertainties

- Documentation of historical collection
- Restauration of problematic specimens
- Collaborations
- Motivation

Outlook

- We are ready for collaborations, objects are documentated for future studies by external scientists.
- 0% → 100% → 0%
- What happens with the leftover money?
- Who transforms and migrates the data for the future One Swiss database?

Discussion

- What were your experiences?
- What problems have you encountered?
- What are your urgent needs?