research. Perhaps the most instructive exhibition policy would be to preserve some small corner of every old exhibition hall which would allow the public to see that which their predecessors saw, and which would allow the museum to see what it stood for in the public eye. In the next generation of British Museum exhibits, maybe we will see evolution not as untestable, unscientific theory, but as a more complex though rather less testable theory than cladistic relationship, and as complex and considerably more testable than creationism.

W. KOHLBERGER

Department of Geology and Geophysics,
Yale University, New Haven,
Connecticut, USA

Cafeteria feeding

SIR — A. S. Cole (*Nature* 2 April, p.356) objects to the phrase "cafeteria feeding", applied to experimental selection of "palatable items of food" by rats. I disagree: it seems an unobjectionable, indeed mildly amusing, and appropriate piece of jargon — for once, easily understood. The only criticism might be that, in the original usage, the *palatability* of items on offer is not a *sine qua non*.

J. R. BAKER

NERC Culture Centre of
Algae and Protozoa,
Cambridge, UK

Ten years of natural history

SIR — In 1972, the trustees of the British Museum (Natural History) approved a proposal prepared by a panel of the museum's scientific staff, chaired by the then director, for a new approach to the visiting public. This proposal sought to replace the then existing exhibition which rigidly reflected the divisions of the museum into the five separate scientific departments of Botany, Entomology, Mineralogy, Palaeontology and Zoology. The new approach was timely because it coincided with, *inter alia*, changes in biology teaching in schools and an increasingly sophisticated treatment given to natural history on television.

The aims of the new exhibition scheme were summarized as follows: "To present the public with an integrated view of modern biology. All known forms of life will be included, but the new exhibition will do much more than merely demonstrate the diversity of nature. It will show how living things interact with each other and with their physical environment; it will describe the chemical and physical processes that keep them alive; it will introduce the concepts of heredity and evolution, of ecosystem and energy cycles; and it will examine man's role in the living

world¹. A long-term aim was, and still is, to include a greater number of organisms from a wider range of groups than had been shown in the past, combining both recent and fossil organisms in a single evolutionary arrangement.

The trustees have maintained a continuous and close interest in the implementation of this policy, and have conducted a careful review from which they concluded that the museum's Public Services Department has made a bold and largely successful start on implementing the long-term plan. The trustees now consider it appropriate to outline their plans for the next ten years so that those who visit and use the museum may be aware of changes and of the underlying rationale. The trustees have concluded that the scheme should proceed as shown in the table below.

The trustees believe that the implementation of this programme will be beneficial. It will, for example, allow fossil and recent mammals to be brought together in a single rational system for the first time in the museum, and it will not only give greater space to the insects but it will also relate them to the other arthropod groups.

In addition, the Department of Public

Services is developing a proposal for an exhibition devoted to British Natural History to be brought forward to the earliest feasible time. This gallery would be designed to meet the needs of committed naturalists to whom the trustees acknowledge a responsibility, although the prime commitment of the exhibitions must be to the visiting public in general.

The new stages of the exhibition proposed above will have much in common with the older galleries because they will concentrate on the museum's traditional subject matter, the diversity of living organisms. Eventually diversity exhibits are likely to comprise about two-thirds of the completed exhibition scheme. Some parts of the existing displays from, for example, British Insects and Fossil Mammals, will be used in the new exhibitions.

The trustees are also aware of the need for an exhibition related to the museum's interests in geology and have accepted in principle proposals by a Joint British Museum (Natural History)/Natural Environment Research Council Study Group for a co-ordinated display of minerals, gemstones, rocks and meteorites in the BM(NH) and the Geological Museum.

These proposals will necessarily involve a considerable upheaval in the public galleries during the next decade. In order to minimize the effects of this disruption: (1) A temporary display will be provided when any major group of organisms is not represented in a permanent display for a substantial period of time. (4) Access to the Whale Hall will be maintained even though work may be in progress there; thus the Blue Whale will be continuously on display to the public. (3) The larger fossil mammal specimens will be inaccessible only during the period of transit from one gallery to another, as was the case with dinosaurs. And (4), the insects will be off display for a matter of weeks only.

Changes of this magnitude will cause many difficulties and the museum welcomes constructive suggestions, either now or as the work proceeds. The trustees are aware of the controversy aroused by the first phases of the new policy. However, a paper by Dr G. C. S. Clarke and Dr R. S. Miles² of the museum's Department of Public Services explained the ideas behind the changes which had provoked the controversy and invited constructive criticism. No replies were received. The museum has continuously monitored the effectiveness of the new exhibition and the responses of the visiting public and has good evidence that the vast majority of the visiting public, especially schoolchildren and their teachers, greatly appreciate the new exhibitions³. Suitable modifications have been made when they would lead to improvements.

To assist visitors to understand the complicated changes which are taking place the museum is preparing a small temporary exhibit of the plans.

T. R. E. SOUTHWOOD
(Chairman of the Board of Trustees)
R. H. HEDLEY
(Director)

British Museum (Natural History),
London SW7, UK

1. *Report of the British Museum (Natural History), 1972-74*, p.3 (Trustees of the British Museum (Natural History), 1975).
2. Clarke, G. C. S. & Miles, R. S. *Biologist* 27, 81-83 (1980).
3. Alt, M. B. *Mus. J.* 80, 10-19 (1980); also unpublished reports on the school use of the Natural History Museum, 1979 and 1980.

Exhibitions planned in the next ten years

Subject	Location
<i>Origin of Species</i> (to be opened in May 1981)	Upper South-West Gallery
<i>Mammal diversity</i> (1) — cetaceans, artiodactyls, perissodactyls, hyraxes, sirenians, elephants, rodents and related fossil orders	Whale Hall
<i>Mammal diversity</i> (2) — mammal-like reptiles, monotremes, marsupials, edentates, carnivores, insectivores, bats and fossil groups	Galleries now used for insects and marine invertebrates
<i>Mammal diversity</i> (3) — primates	West balcony of Central Hall
<i>Arthropod diversity</i> (1) — insects centipedes, millipedes and Onychophora	East Pavilion and South-East Gallery
<i>Arthropod diversity</i> (2) — Crustaceans	South-East Gallery
<i>Arthropod diversity</i> (3) — spiders, scorpions, ticks, mites and trilobites	South-East Gallery
<i>Unity in diversity</i> — an introduction to all the museum's exhibitions	Entrance to South-East Gallery