

NSC Alliance Washington Report, Volume 6, Issue 1, January 7, 2014

In this Issue:

- NSC Alliance Announces 2014 Accomplishments
 - New Smithsonian Initiative to Focus on Genomics
 - Join Us, Visit Congress This Spring
 - Help Inform the Future, Participate in the NIBA Community
 - Deadline Extended for the Heritage Health Information 2014 Survey
 - Image of Insect Collections Among Photo Contest Winners
 - Article on Value of Curators
 - AMNH Debuts New Video Series on Collections
-

Policy News from NSC Alliance

Through the NSC Alliance partnership with the American Institute of Biological Sciences, we are pleased to provide NSC Alliance members with the following public policy update. With proper attribution to NSC Alliance, all material from these reports may be reproduced or forwarded. We encourage you to share this report with colleagues at your institution. Anyone interested in receiving copies of the NSC Alliance Washington Report may subscribe at www.NSCAlliance.org -- it's free!

If you have any questions or require additional information regarding any of the following items, please contact NSC Alliance director of public policy Dr. Robert Gropp at 202-628-1500 x 250 or at rgropp@aibs.org.

NSC Alliance Announces 2014 Accomplishments

In 2014, the NSC Alliance engaged in a number of notable activities to raise the profile of natural history collections with policymakers, researchers, and the general public. A few highlights are presented below:

- Partnered with the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections to launch a national initiative to build a biocollections community that is able to fully implement and achieve the goals of the Network Integrated Biocollections Alliance. The project is supported by a five-year grant from the National Science Foundation.
- After years of advocacy from NSC Alliance and the scientific collections community, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy issued a directive to federal agencies to develop policies to improve the management of and access to federal scientific collections.
- Sponsored a symposium with iDigBio on the future of scientific collections. The event furthered community discussions related to national digitization efforts.

- Provided testimony to House and Senate Appropriations Committees in support of increased funding for research, curation, and digitization of natural history collections from the National Science Foundation and the Department of the Interior.

Read all of NSC Alliance's accomplishments from 2014 at http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/nsca_2014_summary.pdf.

New Smithsonian Initiative to Focus on Genomics

The Smithsonian Institution has launched a new initiative to better understand biodiversity genomics.

“Our goal is to pioneer novel genomic approaches, integrate them into biological endeavors throughout the Smithsonian and serve as a resource for genomics research around the world,” said Pierre Comizzoli, research biologist and Director of the Grand Challenges Consortia for Science at the Smithsonian. “The Institute for Biodiversity Genomics will be a platform to convene both the leading scientists in this emerging field as partners, as well as post-doctoral students and fellows for training and education.”

The four areas of focus for the research initiative will be:

- Diversity genomics: What are the origins of life and how are species related across the globe?
- Evolutionary genomics: How does the blueprint of life vary among individuals and species and what does this mean for their ability to adapt?
- Ecological genomics: How do ecosystems work and what makes them resilient to change?
- Conservation genomics: How do we sustain biodiversity and protect species and ecosystems?

Join Us, Visit Congress This Spring

Scientists, collections managers, and graduate students who are interested in communicating the importance of federal investments in scientific research and education to lawmakers are invited to participate in the Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition (BESC) Congressional Visits Day in Washington, DC.

This event is an opportunity for scientists to meet with their members of Congress to discuss the importance of federal funding for biological research and education. Event participants advocate for federal investments in biological sciences research, with a primary focus on the National Science Foundation, as well as other federal agencies.

This year's event will be held on 13-14 May 2015 in Washington, DC. The first day of the program is a training program that will prepare participants for meetings with congressional

offices. The second day is spent on Capitol Hill meeting with members of Congress and their staff.

There is no cost to participate in this event, but space is limited. BESC and its member organizations are not able to pay/reimburse participants for their travel expenses.

Learn more about the event and express your interest in participating at http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_visits_day.html. The deadline to sign up is 13 March 2015.

Help Inform the Future, Participate in the NIBA Community

The NSC Alliance has partnered with the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, American Institute of Biological Sciences, and iDigBio in an initiative dedicated to building a networked community of practice that is able to advance and sustain digitization of biocollections. The effort is supported by a five-year grant from the National Science Foundation.

The initiative's initial Advisory Council has been established. It will hold its second meeting next month. Among its initial actions will be to assess the current status of various national initiatives and to consider what additional expertise may be needed on the Council. The Council will also begin considering the establishment of working groups that will provide a mechanism to engage more members of the community in efforts to identify needs and opportunities, and to suggest actions that various stakeholders may need to take to advance digitization of the nation's biocollections.

In the coming weeks, the group will begin reaching out to the community via its new website (www.niballiance.org) to gather suggestions, information, and ideas. The website will also serve as a forum for community input and as a clearinghouse for documents and resources.

The Advisory Council encourages everyone with an interest in biological collections to become a part of this initiative by creating a profile on the NIBA website. This will provide interested individuals with an opportunity to engage with the project, comment on documents, share ideas, and be part of a growing community pressing forward the frontiers of science and education.

Deadline Extended for the Heritage Health Information 2014 Survey

The deadline for the Heritage Health Information 2014: A National Collections Care Survey has been extended to 13 February 2015. If you have not had the opportunity to complete your survey, now is the time.

Invitations to participate were sent to institution directors in October. These invitations included personalized login information, which may be entered at www.hhi2014.com. If you need your invitation re-sent, please contact hhi2014survey@heritagepreservation.org or (202) 233-0824.

Heritage Health Information 2014 is sponsored by the Institute of Museum and Libraries Services and the National Endowments for the Humanities & Arts. The Natural Science Collections Alliance is serving as an allied partner in the effort.

Image of Insect Collections Among Photo Contest Winners

Daniel Le, the Botany Collection's Digital Media Specialist at The Field Museum, won Second Place in the Faces of Biology Photo Contest. His photo depicts Allie Stone working with tropical butterflies from the museum's vast collections. Stone and Le collaborated on a project to digitally image natural history specimens.

The Faces of Biology Photo Contest is sponsored by the American Institute of Biological Sciences. See the winning photos at <http://www.aibs.org/public-programs/news/winners-selected-in-2014-faces-of-biology-photo-contest.html>.

Article on Value of Curators

An article in the December 2014 issue of *CLS Journal of Museum Studies*, published by the University of Oklahoma, highlights the value of curators to university and museum collections. The article presents the results of a survey of curators. Read "Preliminary Quantification of Curator Success in Life Science Natural History Collections" for free at http://www.ou.edu/content/dam/cls/documents/CLS_JMS_Dec2014.pdf.

AMNH Debuts New Video Series on Collections

The America Museum of Natural History (AMNH) has created a new video series that will explore the museum's scientific collections. The first episode of "Shelf Life" highlights the diversity of the 33 million items in the collection. New episodes will premiere monthly at <http://www.amnh.org/shelf-life>.

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit association that serves as an advocate for natural science collections, the institutions that preserve them, and the research and education that extend from them for the benefit of science, society, and stewardship of the environment. NSC Alliance members are part of an international community of museums, botanical gardens, herbariums, universities, and other institutions that house natural science collections and utilize them in research, exhibitions, academic and informal science education, and outreach activities. Website: www.NSCAlliance.org.

The NSC Alliance Washington Report is a publication of the NSC Alliance. For information about membership in the NSC Alliance, please contact spotter@aibs.org.