

NSC Alliance Washington Report

NSC Alliance Washington Report, Volume 1, Issue 13, October 29, 2010

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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. 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

Interior IG Includes Collections Management as a Top Agency Priority

A new report by the Inspector General (IG) for the Department of the Interior calls for the prioritization of management of museum collections within the department. The report, which outlines major management and performance challenges facing Interior, reflects “what the Office of Inspector General considers significant impediments to the Department’s efforts to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its bureaus’ management and operations.” Collections management is included within “resource protection and management,” which is one of eight broad priorities outlined in the report.

The recommendation to improve accessioning, cataloging, and inventorying of Interior collections was first made in an IG report in December 2009. The IG “found that DOI is failing to fulfill its stewardship responsibilities over museum collections,” due to “poor program management, ineffective oversight, poor reporting, and an insufficient allocation of resources.” The ongoing nature of these problems, many of which have been documented for twenty years, makes collections unavailable to researchers and the public, and has left artifacts and specimens subject to theft and deterioration. Despite some progress by the Department of the Interior over the past 11 months, the department has not yet fully implemented the 13 recommendations made by the IG.

DOI is the second largest holder of museum collections, with an estimated 146 million artifacts and pieces of artwork at 625 DOI facilities and at more than 1,000 non-DOI facilities. Interior's collections are comprised mostly of documents (60 percent) and archeological objects (35 percent).

To download the IG report, visit <http://www.doioig.gov/images/stories/reports/pdf/X-SP-MOI-0008-2010%20Performance%20Challenges.pdf>. For more coverage on the December 2009 IG report, visit <http://nscalliance.org/?p=235>.

NSF Launches Wiki for Advancing Digitization of Biological Collections Collaboration

The National Science Foundation (NSF) Directorate for Biological Sciences has launched a Wiki to facilitate collaboration on proposals for the Advancing Digitization of Biological Collections solicitation. The website is a social network that will enable researchers to communicate about collaborative proposals. According to NSF, researchers, collection managers and others will be able to briefly describe their expertise and interest in developing collaborative proposals on the Wiki.

A large number of proposals to NSF and active participation on the Wiki will help to demonstrate to NSF the broad community interest and support for this new initiative. Join the discussion online at <https://extwiki.nsf.gov/x/FQB1>. First-time users must register for an account.

A "Dear Colleague Letter" from Joann Roskoski, Acting Assistant Director for Biological Sciences, about the new Wiki is available at http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2011/nsf11007/nsf11007.jsp?WT.mc_id=USNSF_25&WT.mc_ev=click. Questions regarding the ADBC solicitation, FAQs or Wiki should be sent by e-mail to biodigit@nsf.gov.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Review Committee Seeks Nominations

The National Park Service is soliciting nominations for two members of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Review Committee. The Secretary of the Interior will appoint the two members from nominations submitted by national museum organizations and scientific organizations. Committee members serve a four year term. The Review Committee normally meets face-to-face two times per year, with each meeting lasting two or three days. Nominations must be received by December 20, 2010. For more information, visit <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/2010-26464.htm>.

IMLS Has Released "Connecting to Collections: A Report to the Nation"

Marsha L. Semmel, Acting Director, IMLS (Institute for Museum and Library Services), has announced the release of "Connecting to Collections: A Report to the Nation." According to an IMLS release, "the 2005 IMLS-supported Heritage Health Index provided a comprehensive look at the state of collections held in libraries, museums, archives, scientific organizations and historical societies. The sobering results led IMLS to embark on a multi-year, far-reaching strategy to increase public awareness and inspire action."

The report describes work at the national, state, local and international levels with public and private partners dedicated to caring for collections. "With data, stories and arresting images, this publication provides vivid documentation of the spirit and energy that we encountered throughout the nation and around the globe, involving thousands of institutions who shared expertise, tapped new resources, and made new connections around best practice in collections stewardship," said Semmel.

This report will be delivered to every member of Congress, policymakers, public and private partners, and the cultural heritage professionals around the world who participated in the initiative. You can download a copy of the publication at <http://www.ims.gov/pdf/CtoCReport.pdf>.

New International Website on Biodiversity and Policy

A new website, "Biodiversity Policy and Practice," is a one-stop shop for information on international efforts regarding the conservation of biodiversity. The site provides the latest biodiversity policy news and summaries of ongoing international activities. For more information, visit <http://biodiversity-l.iisd.org/>.

Census of Marine Life Releases Report

A ten year effort to explore and document the world's oceans has resulted in a treasure trove of scientific information. The Census of Marine Life, an international effort by 2,700 scientists from 80 countries, has revealed what, where, and how much lives and hides in the world's oceans. The effort has discovered close to 6,000 new species and described 1,200 of them. Thirty million observations of species and their distributions have been digitally archived and are now available in the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (www.iobis.org), an online, open-access, globally distributed network of systematic, ecological, and environmental information. The project also served to establish a baseline of human impacts on marine ecosystems.

To download the Census of Marine Life "Highlights of a Decade of Discovery" report, visit <http://origin.coml.org/pressreleases/census2010/PDF/Highlights-2010-Report-Low-Res.pdf>.

New Article Chronicles Development of Sternberg Museum of Natural History

A new article published posthumously by Dr. Jerry Choate on the history of the Sternberg Museum of Natural History at Fort Hays Kansas State University is now available free of charge on the website of the *CLS Journal of Museum Studies* of the University of Oklahoma. The CLS Journal is an ejournal that is designed to develop topics on museology and share these freely with the world's museums and collections personnel, including curators, educators, administrators, museology students, and others. Articles may be copied and used as need requires for classes, sharing with colleagues, and for similar purposes.

To access the article and accompany videos, please visit <http://www.ou.edu/cls/jms/current.html>

Join Collection Colleagues on LinkedIn

A new online group has formed to encourage networking among natural science collections leaders. This group offers an opportunity for individuals from collections across the nation to identify and discuss common public policy issues, or other common challenges they face as natural science collections professionals.

To join this group you must first join LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com). There is no cost for creating a profile on this site. Once you have registered, simply search the Groups function for "Natural Science Collections Leadership." Membership in this group is limited to natural science collections professionals, but there is no cost to join or participate in group discussions or events.

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.

Note: You are receiving a copy of this electronic report as part of your membership in the NSC Alliance. Contact the Alliance office with any email address or member representative name changes send an email to spotter@aibs.org.