

Summary of Responses to Collections Task Force Action Form

On 6 May 2025, iDigBio hosted a [webinar](#) jointly with staff and students from Duke University entitled, “*From Specimens to Stories: Defending Herbaria and Reconnecting Science with Society.*” As part of this webinar attendees were invited to share their thoughts about the current state of their own collection, and about what actions a possible Collections Task Force might take to help navigate future difficulties ranging from budget cuts to natural disasters. The responses collected through the Collections Task Force Action Form are summarized below.

As of 15 May 2025, there were 51 respondents to the questionnaire (approx. 12% of those who signed up for the webinar).

Interest in the Task Force

100% of respondents wish to be kept informed about the work of the Task Force; of these, 66 are interested in participating actively.

Concerns About the Future

Seven respondents see no warning signs at their institution about reduced support for collections. Nineteen have concerns about the future of their collections, but no more so than in the past five years. Fifteen are more concerned now about the future of their collection than they have been in the past five years. Two respondents have definitive information that her/his collection will close within five years.

Which of the statements below best characterizes your current sense of your collection's future
43 responses



Suggestions for Task Force Actions

Provide information to Collections

- Hold more webinars that will help collections form collaborations and find alternative funding sources
- Offer guidance on the financial stabilization of collections

- Create a “get ready” document that would help collections manage the transfer of a collection. For example, what kind of data to transfer, how to pack fossils for transport, how to find an appropriate repository for a collection.
- Provide guidance and examples for demonstrating the value of the collection to its consumers/stakeholders/institutional decision-makers
- Help collections managers and curators communicate effectively about the value/need for natural history collections. Provide nationwide metrics or anecdotes that help to make the case.

Coordinate emergency response to collections in peril

- Develop a strategy for rescuing a collection that is suddenly at risk (e.g., natural disaster, unexpected closure due to administrative decisions)
- Develop a disaster response team similar to AIC's Heritage Emergency Response Team but for emergencies caused by cultural/political/financial disasters
- Develop or publish workflows for rescues of various material types

Connect people who can help one another

- Connect people who can advocate for collections, help each other conduct collections work, and assist each other in emergencies or losses
- Explore ways to strengthen existing networks so collections can regionally and locally advocate for themselves
- Provide a pathway for collections to document the concerns about the future so they might solicit advice and support from colleagues as well as national and global networks

Suggestions for how to organize the Task Force

- Create regional working groups within the task force
- Have the Task Force coordinate and communicate with existing networks to solicit or distribute information

Future Actions

In response to the comments on this form, the Collections Action Task Force is considering a webinar series to provide the type of information that respondents have suggested they need. We have created a new form where you can indicate which webinar topics would be most useful to you, and to suggest other topics that are not listed on the form. You can access this form through this URL or QR code: [Collections Task Force Webinar Topics Form](#)



(Scan to access webinar topics form)