

Conference Abstract

Collections do not have to Remain Ambiguous Forever: Seven steps to getting the correct people into your data

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Abstract

People are involved with the collection and curation of all biodiversity data, whether they are researchers, members of the public, taxonomists, conservationists, collection managers or wildlife managers. Knowing who those people are and connecting their biographical information to the biodiversity data they collect helps us contextualise their scientific work. We are particularly concerned with those people and communities involved in the collection and identification of biological specimens. People from herbaria and natural science museums have been collecting and preserving specimens from all over the world for more than 200 years. The problem is that many of these people are only

known by unstandardized names written on specimen labels, often with only initials and without any biographical information. The process of identifying and linking individuals to their biographies enables us to improve the quality of the data held by collections while also quantifying the contributions of the often underappreciated people who collected and identified these specimens. This process improves our understanding of the history of collecting, and addresses current and future needs for maintaining the provenance of specimens so as to comply with national and international practices and regulations.

In this talk we will outline the steps that collection managers, data scientists, curators, software engineers, and collectors can take to work towards fully disambiguated collections. With examples, we can show how they can use these data to help them in their work, in the evaluation of their collections, and in measuring the impact of individuals and organisations, local to global.

Keywords

disambiguate, herbarium, museum, collection management system, ORCID

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