The Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN) is a five-year national initiative funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF DBI 1441785) to support the development of a new, sustainable community of practice that will ensure that all U.S. biodiversity collections are digitally available for research, education, informed decision-making, and other scholarly and creative activities.

Scientists have amassed, annotated, and curated more than one billion specimens in more than 1600 institutions across the United States. Although these specimens and their associated data are heavily used for research and education, their benefits could be exponentially increased if the data could be accessed and mined online.

BCoN is an outgrowth of recent scientific meetings in which scientists have articulated a need to digitally capture biological specimens and associated data held in natural science collections for use in research, education, and for the public interest. The initiative was founded by the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, and the Natural Science Collections Alliance.

Goals for establishing a biological collections network.

• Establish an organizational and governance structure that will provide the national leadership and decision-making mechanism required to implement the national strategy.
• Advance engineering of the U.S. biodiversity collections cyber-infrastructure to support efficient workflows, innovative research, effective policy, and educational engagement.
• Enhance training of existing collections staff and create the next generation of biodiversity information managers.
• Increase buy-in and participation from a broader range of stakeholders.
• Establish an enduring and sustainable knowledge base.
• Infuse specimen-based learning and exploration into formal and informal science education.

Join the BCoN community!
bcon.aibs.org
Supporting Organizations

American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists
American Society of Plant Taxonomists
Angelo State Natural History Collections
Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas
Bishop Museum
C.A. Triplehorn Insect Collection, The Ohio State University
Central Michigan University Herbarium
Chicago Botanic Garden
Denver Museum of Nature and Science
Florida Museum of Natural History
Florida State University, Institute for Digital Information & Scientific Communication
Harvard University Museum of Comparative Zoology
H.A. Stephens Herbarium, Emporia State University
Herbaria 3.0
iDigBio
Illinois Natural History Survey Biological Collections
Milwaukee Public Museum
Museum of Southwestern Biology, University of New Mexico
Natural Science Collections Alliance
New York Botanical Garden
North American Network of Small Herbaria
Robert K. Godfrey Herbarium, Florida State University
Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History
Small Collections Network
Society for Preservation of Natural History Collections
Society of Herbarium Curators
SouthEast Regional Network of Expertise and Collections (SERNEC)
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Symbiota Collections of Arthropods Network
Systematics, Evolution, and Biodiversity section of the Entomological Society of America
The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University
The Field Museum
University of Alaska Museum of the North
University of California Museum of Paleontology
University of Florida, Biodiversity Institute
University of Michigan Herbarium
University of Wisconsin Insect Research Collection
Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History

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