Annual Meeting of the US Virtual Herbarium.

July 31, 2016

Botany 2017/ Savannah, GA.

5:30 P.M.

## Introduction

* Mary Barkworth brought the meeting to order and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

## US Virtual Herbarium Report (Mary Barkworth)

* The subject of keeping herbarium information in *Index herbariorum* up to date was discussed.
* Overall, the numbers of digitized herbarium specimens are impressive. Progress is being made, but problems remain. There is much to do. Currently in the US there are 600 herbaria/collections [herbaria may be counted more than once if they contribute to multiple networks], but the potential is there to bring additional herbaria online.
* At the current rate of digitization, it is projected to take 47 years to complete data basing; 727 years to complete Lat/Long; and 210 years to complete imaging. It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that additional specimens will continue to be added to those figures.
* There is an issue with duplicates in the system, which needs to be resolved.
* NSF funding provides the core support for the major networks. SEINnet is the largest herbarium network.
* Barkworth asked members to consider additional sources of labor, and mentioned inmates as a potential source. She explained that she employs inmates at $1.00/hour, which is reasonable. It feels like exploitation, but allows inmates a financial benefit that is greater on the inside than on the streets.
* The question was asked, “What is the role of the USVH project?” Members answered with various responses, but the prevailing response was: “The coordinating committee should have a goal of helping us all work together”. The importance of updating publication to iDigBio was emphasized, whether it is done by collection managers or network managers.

## iDigBio Report (Pamela Soltis)

* Pam Soltis reported updates since the 2015 annual meeting. Ben Legler has developed a draft of capabilities to be available in a Herbarium portal that draws on data in iDigBio. Development costs will be paid for by iDigBio. Development of the portal has not been started because of Ben’s schedule, but the papers have been processed for funding of the project, and work is scheduled to begin this fall or in the winter. Ben needs to complete his current obligations before he can start work on the new portal.

In response to questions, Soltis commented that regional consortia contribute date to iDigBio. There is no portal specific utility for botanists, nor is there a universal search term for specific vascular plants but APIs can be used to pull data out of multiple databases. The portal is not Symbiota.

## Open Discussion

* Discussion ensued on the limitations of iDigBio. It was suggested that people should be emailed when changes are made, and that other networks should then be made aware of those same changes with the ability for people to respond. Another comment was made that people should not have to retype collection data, in other words, some duplicate discovery abilities were needed but, as Mark Mayfield commented, iDigBio is building a presentation interface rather than a data management interface.
* Barkworth again emphasized the need to accelerate digitization. This will increase visibility. All data entries should be combined into one portal.
* Brent Mishler emphasized the need for concerted efforts by direct contact to regional consortia. He specified the need for one person to encourage herbaria to join iDigBio.
* Barkworth explained that digitizing is a two-step process involving imaging and data capture. There are 150,000 new geo-references. We need data pool for all these collections. Image everything and then check for duplicates. The processing could be done centrally.
* Pam reported there were close to 30 million plant records in iDigBio. That data comes directly from other institutions. Joanna McCaffrey will upload data from any institution.
* Barkworth suggested we go over the list of herbaria who contribute data, and contact those who don’t. She mentioned that the NSF supports data-driven research, and encouraged administration for continued support. Some herbaria are closed collections and don’t wish to contribute, but there are more engaged herbaria than ever before. Many are small herbaria in community colleges with only one or two cabinets.
* Zack Murrell (Appalachian University, SERNEC TCN) discussed Biospec – a software tool developed by Austin Mast. Murrell feels the herbarium community needs to encourage software development, and a steering committee needs to be formed to help Symbiota. The rationale for a Symbiota Steering committee are: 1) It’s a struggle to keep everyone up to date with Symbiota needs and changes. 2) We’re all communities or networks of communities. 3) We need to communicate and make decisions to move this project forward.
* It was pointed out that some smaller collections remain property of original owners but may become part of larger collections.
* Eric Knox – (Indiana University which is not part of a TCN) – gave history of collection. IU committed to digitize and curate every single sheet. We need to reach out to IT people and get them to agree it is institutional data. Digital repository – IU is leading the way with IT development. He suggested that changes need proliferate all the way through the networks and pointed out that there is federal funding through the state library system. We need communication, collaboration, and inspiration.

The meeting adjourned at 7pm.

We thank Sara Wilkinson-Lamb for recording the meeting’s minutes.