

# Recruiting, Supporting, and Retaining Small Collections in Biodiversity Digitization

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# <http://scnet.acis.ufl.edu>



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Small Collections Network (SCNet). At the top is a navigation menu with links for Home, About SCNet, Webinar Series, Workshops and Symposia, and Site map. Below the menu is a blue banner with the SCNet logo (the text 'SCNet' in a white oval), the title 'Small Collections Network', and the tagline 'Serving, Supporting, Connecting Natural History Collections'. To the right of the text is a circular diagram with 'SCNet' in the center, connected to icons of a lizard, a fish, a mushroom, a leaf, and a seed. Below the banner, the page is divided into two columns. The left column is titled 'Quick Links' and contains a list of links: Blogs and News, Listserv, Webinar Series, Workshops and Symposia, Working Groups, and Related Wikis and Links. The right column is titled 'Blogs and News' and features a post titled 'iDigBio Initiatives for Small Natural History Collections' by Anna Monfils and Gil Nelson. The post text states that iDigBio participates in several initiatives to serve, support, and connect small natural history collections, including collection-themed symposia and workshops, and the establishment of two networks: the North American Network of Small Herbaria (NANSH) and the Small Collections Network (SCNet). A 'Read more' link is provided at the end of the post.

Home About SCNet Webinar Series Workshops and Symposia Site map

**SCNet** Small Collections Network  
Serving, Supporting, Connecting Natural History Collections

## Quick Links

- [Blogs and News](#)
- [Listserv](#)
- [Webinar Series](#)
- [Workshops and Symposia](#)
- [Working Groups](#)
- [Related Wikis and Links](#)

## Blogs and News

### iDigBio Initiatives for Small Natural History Collections

**By: Anna Monfils and Gil Nelson**

iDigBio participates in several initiatives designed to serve, support and connect small natural history collections. These initiatives include collection-themed symposia and workshops and the establishment of two networks: the [North American Network of Small Herbaria \(NANSH\)](#) and the [Small Collections Network \(SCNet\)](#).

[Read more](#)

Presentation with links will be available as “ASB 2014 Presentation” under Blogs and News

[https://www.idigbio.org/wiki/index.php/Digitization\\_Resources](https://www.idigbio.org/wiki/index.php/Digitization_Resources)

The screenshot shows the iDigBio Wiki interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for "About iDigBio", "Portal", "Technical Information", and "Education". Below this is a secondary navigation bar with "iDigBio Home", "Wiki", "Working Groups", "Workshops", and "Wiki Formatting Help". The main content area features a search bar and tabs for "Page" and "Discussion". The page title is "Digitization Resources". The main text states: "This page provides resources and information for the series of digitization training workshops being conducted by iDigBio as well as a plethora of digitization information and resources. Included is a growing list of links to documents, websites, videos, presentations, and other important information related to biological collection digitization." Below the text is a "Contents [hide]" section with a numbered list of 15 items: 1 iDigBio Intro, 2 Interest/Working Groups, 3 Digitization Workshop Wikis, 4 Workshop Summaries, 5 General Digitization Resources, 6 Leveraging the Library and Other Institutional Resources, 7 Example Digitization Protocols, 8 Imaging Documents and Resources, 9 Image File Types and File Specifications, 10 Imaging Station Equipment and Specifications, 11 3D Imaging and 3D Printing Resources, 12 Camera Manuals & Specifications, 13 Links to Workflows--iDigBio and Elsewhere, 14 Workflows and Protocols, and 15 Georeferencing Resources. A left sidebar contains a "Wiki Home" menu with links to "Digitization Resources", "Workshop Summaries", and "Working Group List". Below this is a "iDigBio Working Groups" section with a list of groups: aOCR, BIM, CitSci, CYWG, E&O, GWG, MISC, NANSH, and WDD. Further down are "Navigation Tools" and "Tools" sections with links like "What links here", "Related changes", "Special pages", and "Printable version".

# “Small Collection”

- $\leq 100,000$  specimens (though varies by collection type)
- Regional in scope (typically)
- Ecological, taxonomic and geographic bias

*“If you feel small, you are one of us!”*

*-Gil Nelson*



# Value of Small Collections to Scientific Community

- Unduplicated specimens
- Intense regional sampling
- Unrepresented temporal sampling
- Focused sampling of community composition
- Best source of data for biological hotspots (Biological Field/Research Stations)
- “Hidden source” of specimens representing curator’s expertise

Have the potential to significantly expand out  
knowledge of landscape-level Biogeography



# Unique Challenges of Small Collections

- Limited institutional resources
- Director = curator = curatorial assistant
- Managing a transient undergraduate workforce
- Lack of systematic expertise for all or part of collection
- Not part of “official” job responsibilities
  - Not linked to reappointment, tenure or promotion
- Difficult to “justify” collection



What? Now we have to digitize!!!

You have got to be kidding me!



# Value of Digitization to Collection and Associated Researchers

- Expand accessibility

*“If you are not in the portal  
you don’t exist”*

*- Stinger Guala*

- Enhance impact of data in holdings
- Ensure inclusion in larger research initiatives
- Increase connectivity between researchers
- Greater institutional visibility
- Fundability





# Which has contributed to the decision at your institution to not digitize? (n=16)\*

- Time (73%)
- Money (68%)
- IT support (37%)
- Institutional support (35%)
- Reliable workforce (31%)
- Required expertise (29%)
- Necessary equipment (29%)

\* Results from 2014 survey, "Recruiting and sustaining small collections in the digitization efforts."

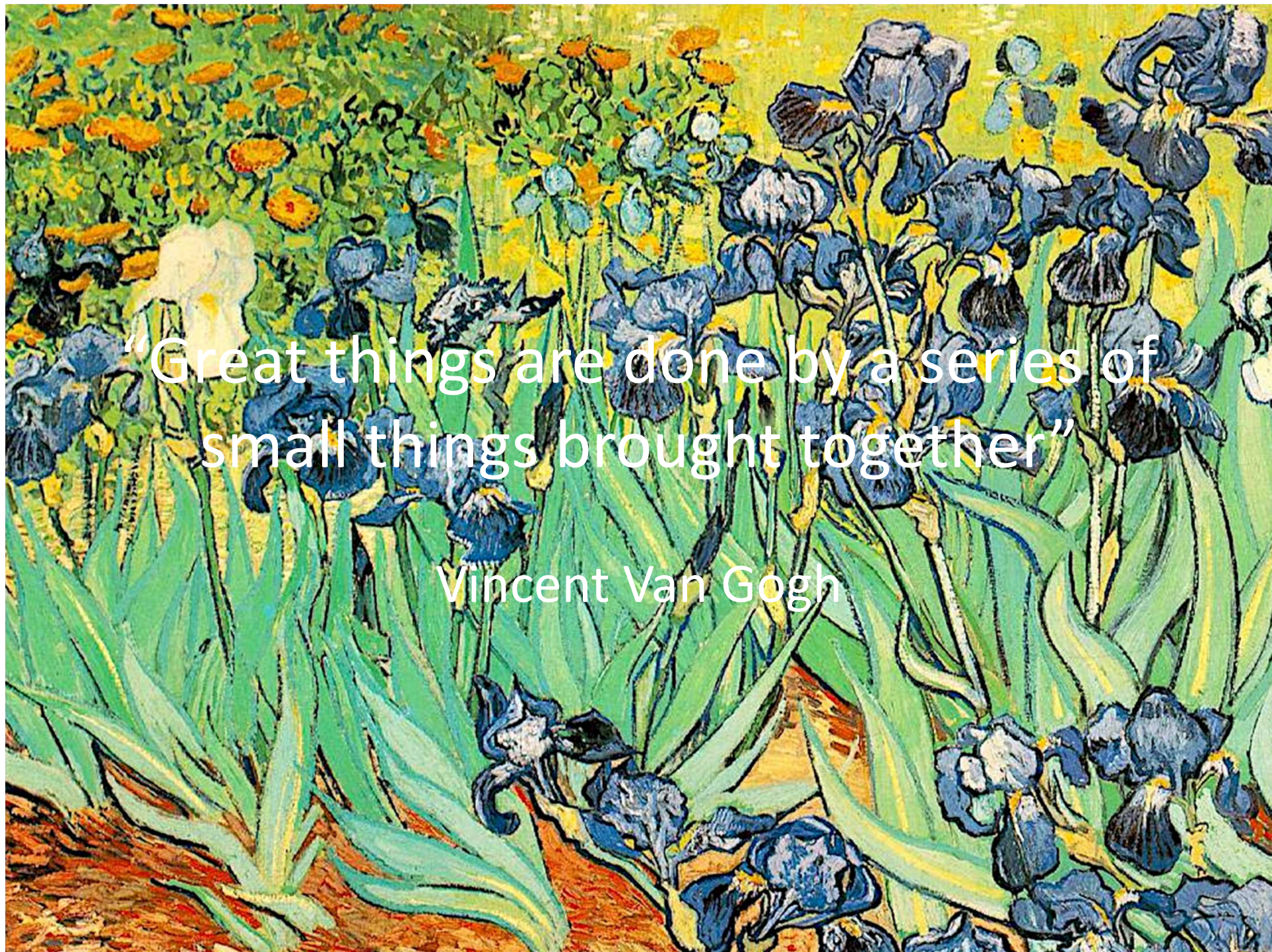


# What would convince you to begin digitizing your collection? (n=16)\*

- Funding (100%)
- Institutional buy-in (50%)
- Decreased work load to facilitate digitization (44%)
- Training (38%)
- Clear positive outcomes (25%)
- Sense of long term sustainability (25%)

\* Results from 2014 survey, "Recruiting and sustaining small collections in the digitization efforts."





“Great things are done by a series of small things brought together”

Vincent Van Gogh

# Herbarium Digitization Training Workshop

Valdosta State University  
September 2012



# Great Lakes Small Collections Workshop Central Michigan University October 2012



<http://www.micob.org/mshi/Pages/workshop.html>

# Workflows and Challenged in the Digitization of Biological Specimens Symposium & Workshop Association of Southeast Biologist Spring 2013



# North American Network of Small Herbaria (NANSH) “interest” group Summer 2013



*North American Network of Small Herbaria*

**Homepage**

- [Search Collections](#)
- [Dynamic Checklist](#)
- [Dynamic Key](#)
- [Image Library](#)
- [About Network](#)
- [Resource Links](#)
- [Symbiota Help Page](#)

**Other Networks**

- [Great Plains](#)
- [Intermountain](#)
- [MABA Flora](#)
- [SEINet](#)
- [SERNEC](#)

[Log In](#)

[New Account](#)

[Sitemap](#)

**North American Network of Small Herbaria**

The North American Network of Small Herbaria is an open access data portal provided by Symbiota and intended to foster digitization of small collections and facilitate collaboration among institutions. The establishment of this portal is the result of collaboration between Symbiota and iDigBio's Small Herbarium Working Group ([https://www.idigbio.org/wiki/index.php/Small\\_Herbarium\\_Interest\\_Group](https://www.idigbio.org/wiki/index.php/Small_Herbarium_Interest_Group)). To learn how to join the working group or network, contact Anna Monfils ([monf1ak@cmich.edu](mailto:monf1ak@cmich.edu)) or Gil Nelson ([gnelson@bio.fsu.edu](mailto:gnelson@bio.fsu.edu)).

Small herbaria constitute a major source of information for understanding North America's plant diversity. These collections are typically regional in scope with strong ecological, taxonomic, and geographic biases. They frequently hold specimens that are unduplicated in larger herbaria and usually represent intense samplings of community composition that significantly expand our knowledge of landscape-level biogeography. As a result, they are singularly important to the study of regionally and nationally significant natural communities.

Until recently, access to the wealth of biodiversity data stored in small herbaria has been hampered by travel requirements, insufficient staff, and long-term loans that render specimens unavailable for extended periods. With the advent of biodiversity collections digitization, small herbaria are now poised to overcome these obstacles by making label data and specimen images readily available online through searchable electronic databases. As more institutions take advantage of open-source, community-supported digitization software, the online presence of small collections will rapidly increase and with it the volume of available biodiversity data.

**Plant of the Day**



**What is this plant?**  
Click here to test your knowledge

<http://nansh.org/portal/>



# Mobilizing Small Herbaria Workshop Florida State University December 2013





# Workshop on Recruiting, Supporting and Sustaining Small Collections in the National Digitization Initiative Central Michigan University April 2013



# Small Collections Network (SCNet)



## Listserv and Twitter

SCNet distributes notices of activities via Twitter and an iDigBio-sponsored listserv.

To receive automated meeting/webinar announcements, reminders, and other notices, or to post topics to the list, please join the SCNet listserv by sending an email to [listserv@lists.ufl.edu](mailto:listserv@lists.ufl.edu) with the following command in the body of the email:

subscribe IDIGBIOSCNET-L first\_name last\_name.

Meetings and seminars are also announced via Twitter. Follow @idiggilnelson.

<http://scnet.acis.ufl.edu>



# Small Collection Mini-Symposium

## Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC)

### June 2014



# Small Herbarium Workshop

Botany 2014

July 2014



Small Collection Symposium  
Society for the Preservation of Natural History  
Collections (SPNHC)  
June (May) 2015



# If you have digitized your collection, what is the greatest benefit? (n=95)\*

- Increased access (79%)
  - Included world-wide, researchers, public and internal access
- Aid in collections management (25%)
- Facilitate research (21%)
- Increase visibility and value of collection/institution (16%)
- Reduce need for loans (14%)
- Resource to engage students (5%)

\* Results from 2014 survey, "Recruiting and sustaining small collections in the digitization efforts."



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- CMU Institute of Great Lakes Research
- Hanes Foundation
- FSU Godfrey Herbarium
- iDigBio

# 2014 Survey on recruiting small collections to the digitization effort

- Participants (144 responses):
  - 72% University or College affiliated
    - 14% Government supported
    - 10% private collection
  - 53% Herbaria
    - all collection types represented
  - 45% less than 100,000 specimens
  - 49% not affiliated with a collections network
  - 88% are digitizing

