iDigBio's Public Participation Platform Survey

Thank you for taking the time to consider and respond to the following questions. iDigBio will make your responses available to the natural history collections community, both as an online resource available to anyone, and as a reference specifically for participants in our upcoming Public Participation in Digitization of Biodiversity Collections course.

Please return your completed survey to Michael Denslow (michael.denslow@gmail.com). And thank you for your time!

Questions:

1. Name and email of person responding to this survey:

Austin Mast

2. Name of public participation platform:

BIOSPEX

3. Website:

biospex.org

4. Company or group responsible for maintaining platform:

iDigBio at Florida State University.

5. Long-term funding structure for maintaining platform (e.g., grants, membership, private):

Grants (funding is currently secure through 2026).

6. Brief summary highlighting the market niche for this platform:

BIOSPEX is a base camp for launching, advertising, and managing targeted efforts to digitize the world's 3 billion biodiversity research specimens in ways that involve the public. As of 2021, the production site is tailored to support public engagement activities on the Zooniverse platform but successful support for activities at GEOLocate's Collaborative Georeferencing platform have also been developed in a forked version of BIOSPEX with plans to fold those into the production site in the future.

7. Types of biodiversity specimens most common on the platform:

Herbarium specimens are by far the most common, but project organizers have also digitized insects, fungi, and fossils.

8. Types of tasks supported by the platform (e.g., transcription, measurement, georeferencing):

The platform queues up specimens for digitization at Zooniverse, helps project organizers manage activities during the public engagement phase, then provides an efficient expert review interface for the resulting data. By far, most projects using BIOSPEX are using Zooniverse for transcription, but at least one project has used it to produce data for an AI experiment.

9. Other disciplines that utilize the platform (e.g., camera traps):

Only biodiversity collections community members have used BIOSPEX to date.

10. Example of the types of institutions/collections using your platform:

Herbaria, museums, botanical gardens.

11. Any restrictions as to who can use the platform:

No.

12. Primary language(s) supported:

English, though we have the creation of a French version on our to-do list to accommodate the needs of Canadian institutions.

13. Primary volunteer base or core users of the platform:

The core users of the platform are project organizers. Volunteers are not engaged in digitization at BIOSPEX, though they might visit BIOSPEX to engage with a project dashboard, event scoreboard, or online game.

14. Brief description of method(s) for quality control/quality assurance available on the platform:

BIOSPEX implements the code produced Julie Allen and colleagues that reconciles multiple transcriptions by different users (the approach taken at Zooniverse). BIOSPEX provides the red-flagged field values from that code in an "expert review" interface in which the expert can see the specimen image and relevant information about any flagged field(s) for that specimen on a single page for expert decisions about the field(s). The reconciliation code that is implemented is available here:

https://github.com/juliema/label_reconciliations

15. Types of media supported by the platform (e.g., image, video, 3D):

Digital images only.

16. File formats supported by the platform. Indicate both input and output as appropriate:

The data is ingested as a Darwin Core Archive with export as a csv.

17. Workflow customization available to the user:

See answer to 8 above. The user can choose to either include or skip an Optical Character Recognition processing of all images as new ones are added to the project.

18. Costs to collections to use the platform:

Use of BIOSPEX is free.

19. Representative for potential users to contact:

Austin Mast (amast@fsu.edu)

20. Best resources for additional information about the platform (e.g., presentations, brochures, recorded webinars, peer-reviewed papers):

There is a Resources menu item at biospex.org with a FAQ and links to short help videos.

21. Data ownership or usage policies (e.g., publication, sharing of data, public access):

None as of November, 2021.