

# Small Museums **with Moderate Collections** and Minimal Resources: **Challenges and Solutions**

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**Sternberg Museum of Natural History**

**Fort Hays State University, Hays, KS**



Challenges:



# Challenges:



**Staff**



- **NCAA Division II**
- **On-campus: 4,800**
- **Virtual College: 5,860**
- **China program (sister campus): 3,165**
- **Very active field biology and paleontology programs**



# Sternberg Museum of Natural History

## Zoological Collections (began in 1960's)

**Mammalogy – 42,000+ specimens (~5,000 tissues)**

**Ichthyology – 26,000+ lots**

**Herpetology – 17,000+ specimens (~10,000 tissues)**

**Entomology – 100,000+ specimens (no database)**

**Ornithology – 7,000+ specimens (no database)**

**Invertebrate Zoology – 1,000+ specimens (no database)**

# Museum Staff



# Zoology Curators

**Dr. Richard Packauskas**



**Entomology**

**Dr. Greg Farley**



**Ornithology**

**Dr. Elmer Finck**



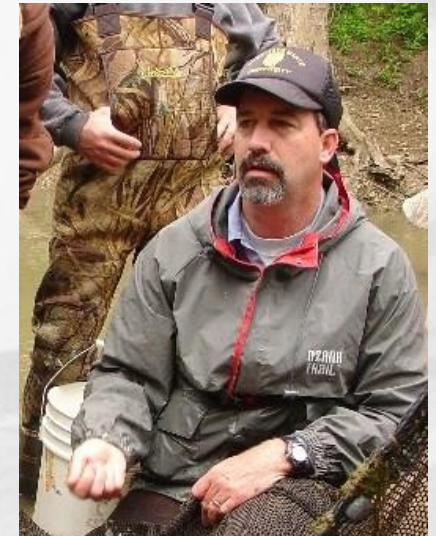
**Mammalogy  
Ornithology**

**Mr. Travis Taggart**



**Herpetology**

**Dr. Bill Stark**



**Ichthyology, Herpetology,  
Invertebrate Zoology**

# Problem #1





# Problem #2

General collecting + research vouchers + class collections

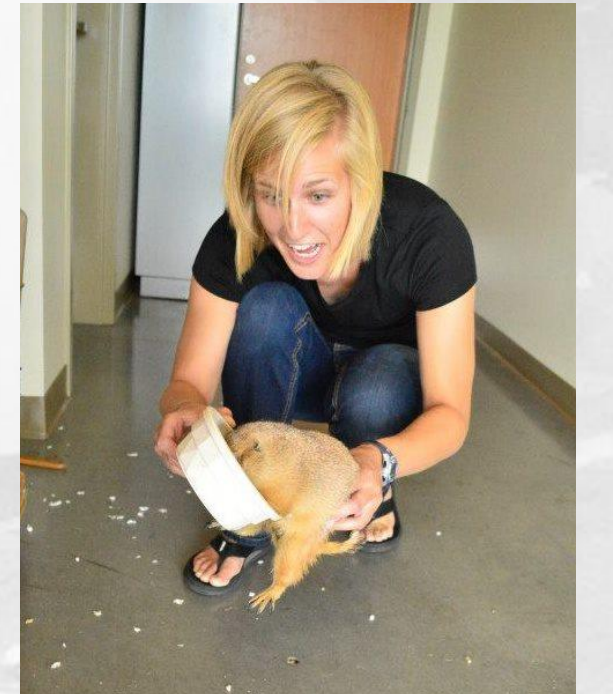
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**HUGE BACKLOG OF SPECIMENS!!**



# Solution #1

- Graduate Curatorial Assistants



# Problem #1 Revisited

- **Had students to work on the collections....but didn't have curators to train them!**
- **Resulted in work still not getting done, OR getting done incorrectly!!**
  - Specimen preparation
  - Data management
  - Database entry - Specify

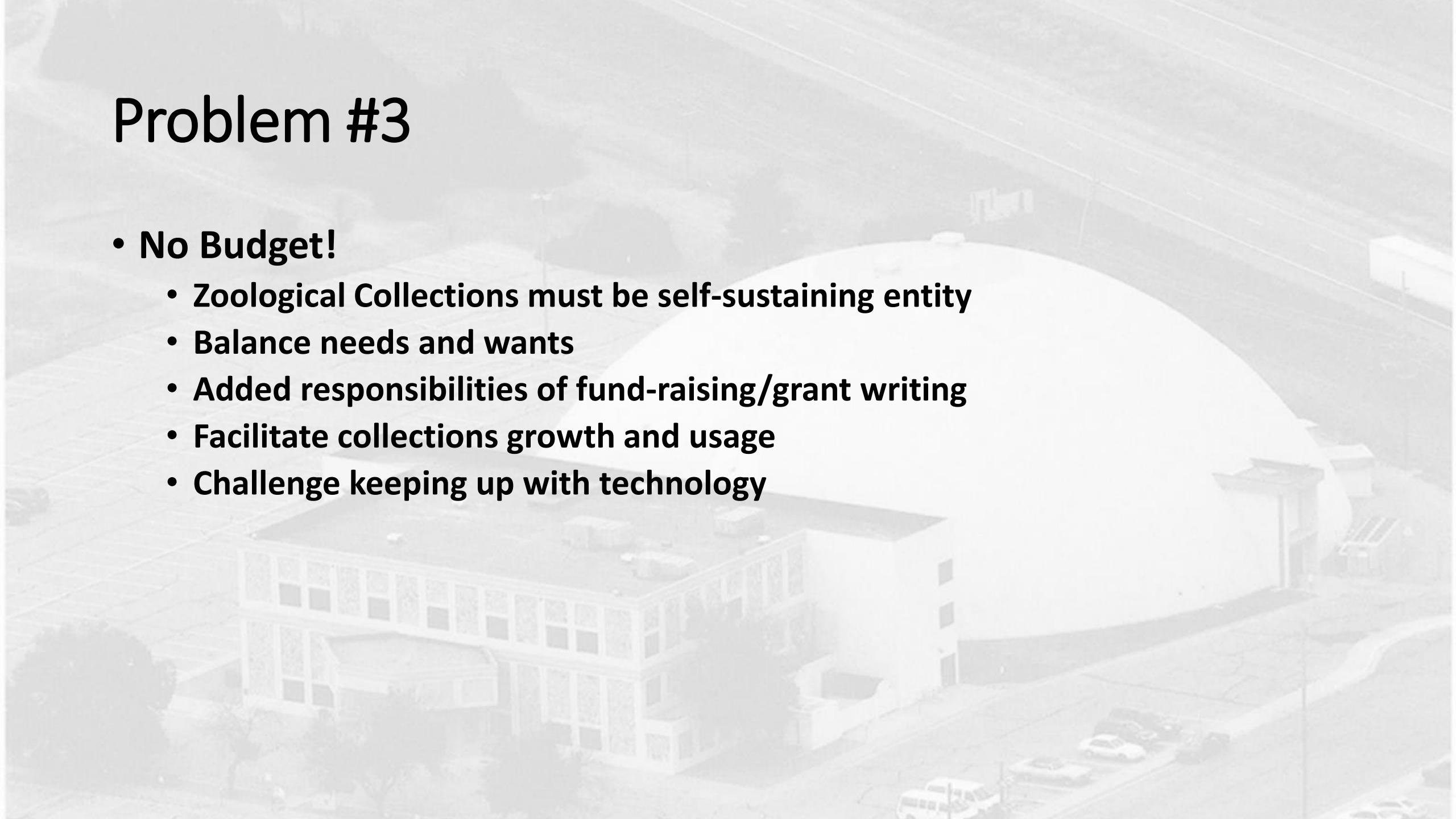
# Solution #2

- **In 2011, Sternberg Museum hired its first Zoological Collections Manager!**
  - **RESTORE ORDER -- backlogs**
  - **Curate the collections**
    - **Data cleaning, sorting, labeling, database mgmt.**
  - **Train curatorial assistants and volunteers**
  - **Oversee collecting activities (IACUC, COE)**
  - **Facilitate Collections Growth and Usage**
  - **Work to bring collections into 21<sup>st</sup> century**



# Problem #3

- **No Budget!**
  - **Zoological Collections must be self-sustaining entity**
  - **Balance needs and wants**
  - **Added responsibilities of fund-raising/grant writing**
  - **Facilitate collections growth and usage**
  - **Challenge keeping up with technology**



# Problem #4: Trouble keeping pace

- **Advancing Technologies**
  - Computer hardware and software
  - Digitizing equipment
  - Collection storage (i.e. tissues)
- **Contemporary Strategies**
- **Finding Funding Sources**
- **Recruiting help**



# Digitization and the Modern Museum

- **Presents a MAJOR challenge to small museums, with small staff, limited budget and sizeable collections. (Field museum example)**
  - **Where do I start?**  
**One collection at a time. Other collections lag behind.**
  - **What are the priorities? How do I balance with other duties?**
  - **What outside resources are available to help?**

# Solution #2

- **NSF-funded programs and initiatives**
  - **iDigBio**
  - **Vertnet**
    - **Workshops**
    - **Webinars**
    - **Collaborations**
- **Providing instruction and support for even the smallest collections.**



# Take-Aways

- **Solution 1:**

- **Make collection managers a priority**
  - Organization is the key
  - Training is essential

- **Solution 2:**

- **Find a way to keep small collections relevant**
  - Continue programs for instruction, support, and collaboration

Thank you!

