A dried plant specimen, possibly a branch with leaves, is mounted on a light-colored, textured paper background. The branch runs vertically on the left side and horizontally across the bottom. The leaves are dark brown and appear to be pressed and dried.

Ten years of the Society of Herbarium Curators: past, present and future

Meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History
Collections, Gainesville, Florida USA

Small Collections Symposium - May 21, 2015

Andrea Weeks

Ted R. Bradley Herbarium (GMUF)

George Mason University Fairfax, Virginia USA



- Mission
- Brief history
- View from Virginia
- Future



Mission

“To promote and expand the role of herbaria in botanical research, teaching, and service to the community at large, to provide a forum for discussion and action on all issues confronting herbaria, and to extend its efforts and interject its influence toward the protection and preservation of endangered herbaria.”

Brief history of SHC

- 2001 Association of Southeastern Biologists symposium “Future of herbaria in the southeast [US]”
- 2002 Herbarium Committee formed within ASB to advocate for threatened herbaria.
- 2005 Incorporated as SHC.



- 2006 2X/yr newsletter
 - news from EB
 - featured herbarium
 - news from members

- 2012 Participation in national Botany meetings
- 2013 Student research grants program
- 2014 First chapter of SHC is constituted

The Vasculum

The Society of Herbarium
Curators Newsletter -
Volume 1, Number 1
January 2006

FROM THE EDITOR

As first Editor of *The Vasculum*, it gives me great pleasure to introduce you to this, the inaugural issue of our Society's newsletter. And, as you will soon see, its pages are overflowing with important items of special interest to the herbarium community. So, I will attempt to keep my comments brief. I must first express my appreciation to our President, Michael Woods, for having the confidence in me to ask that I direct this newsletter. However, my job is made much easier by having three Assistant Editors, whom Michael will introduce in his message that follows. I thank each of these persons for his/her current and future assistance in making this a quality product. I would also state that an organization's newsletter is only as good as the material submitted by its readers. For this reason, I encourage all of you to consider contributing information and story ideas under any of the major headings that follow. And any suggestions for other topics are welcome as well. Remember, this is your Society; so please feel free to participate! And, perhaps more importantly to the success of *The Society of Herbarium Curators*, encourage your colleagues to join and spread the word.

- Conley K. McMullen, James Madison University

SHC NEWS

The Society of Herbarium Curators
is Organized

The Society of Herbarium Curators (SHC), open to everyone, is a forum for discussion, action and support, especially of threatened herbaria. Born in the southeastern United States, SHC has gone on to form an umbrella organization, which aims to unite herbaria across the nation and around the world.

Mission: The purpose of SHC shall be to promote and expand the role of herbaria in botanical research, teaching, and service to the community at large; to provide a forum for discussion and action on all issues confronting herbaria; and to extend its efforts and interject its influence toward the protection and preservation of endangered herbaria.

In particular, regional networks will be used to reach out to groups that have been historically underrepresented in the botanical and conservation communities, namely land managers, state and federal agencies, and K-12 students and teachers. SHC will work to support herbaria of all types in these regions, to help develop community standards of curation, and to make certain that herbaria are fully utilized and not orphaned by their institutions.

History: For the past decade, the Southeastern Herbarium Curators' Committee, a group of curators in the southeastern United States has been informally meeting with *The Association of Southeastern Biologists* (ASB). The group organized a symposium entitled "The Future of Plant Collections in the Southeast" in



www.herbariumcurators.org



Facebook
Twitter
LinkedIn



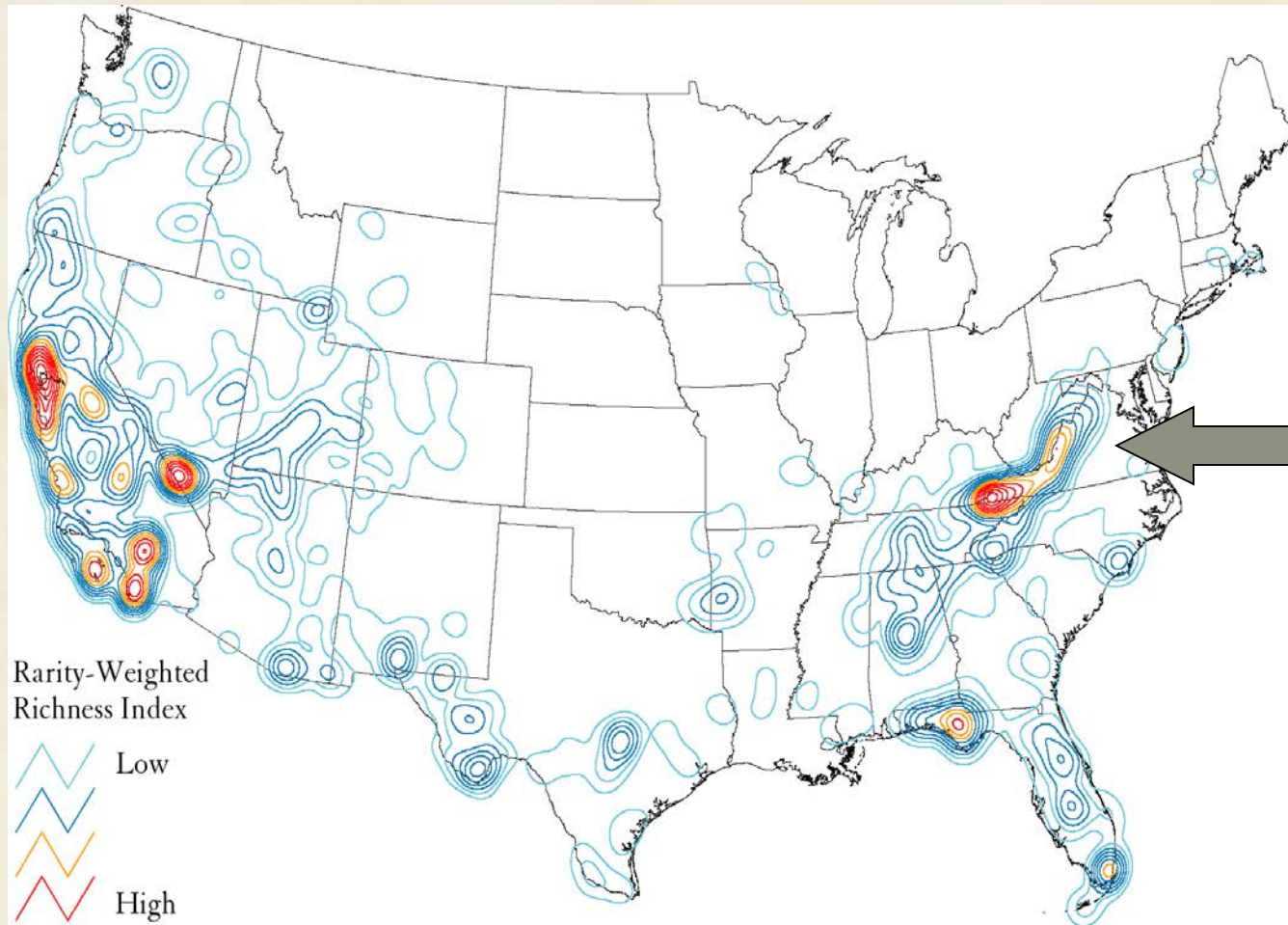
2015, ten years after its incorporation:

The Society of Herbarium Curators (501c3) is an international organization open to everyone for discussion, action and support of herbaria. The SHC mission is to unite herbaria across the nation and around the world.

Don't other societies have a similar mission?

- Yes, more narrowly and more broadly.
- This is a good thing.
- We need *more* conversations, *more* voices, *more* people valuing herbaria for fundamental research & education, *more* new ideas to push science forward, *more* ways of saving neglected herbaria.

Case example: A view from Virginia



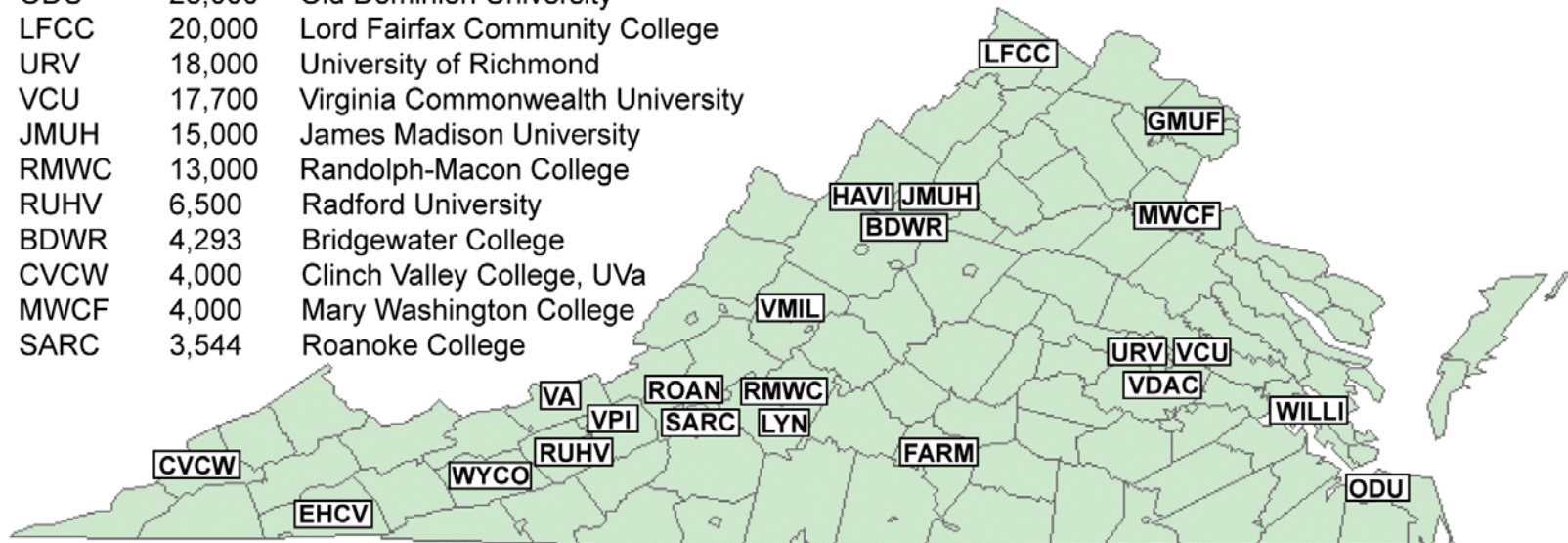
More than half of VA herbaria are uncurated

13 not curated; *some large, most small

9 curated by plant systematists, no teaching release time

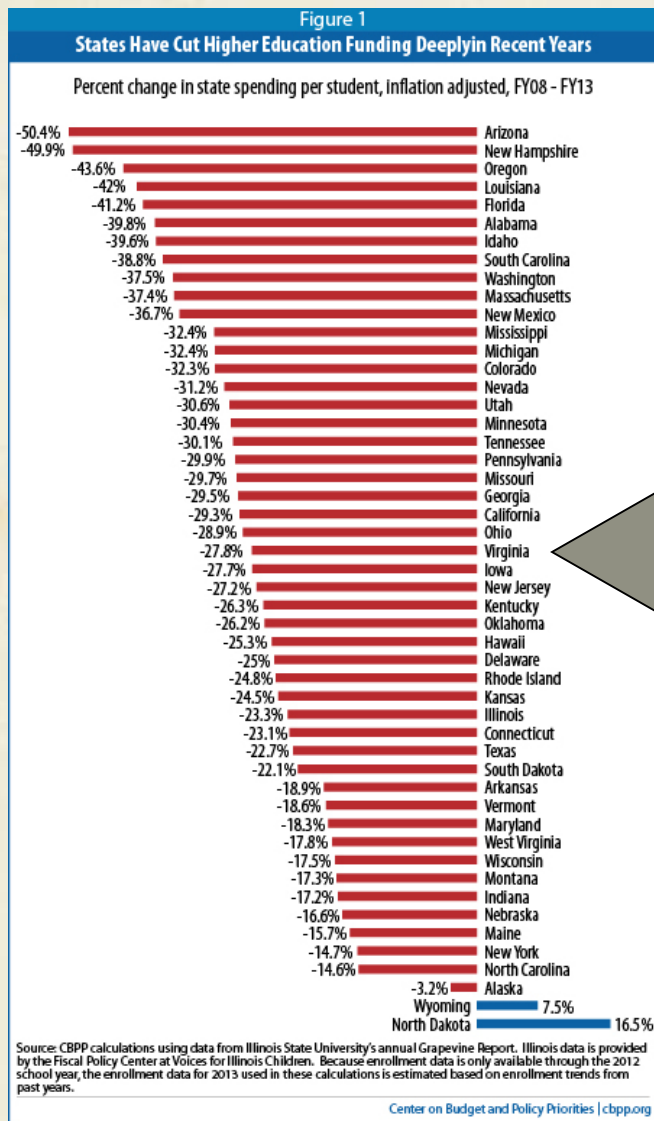
1 full-time curator, 1 half-time curator

acronym	size	institution	acronym	size	institution
VPI	115,000	Virginia Tech	VDAC	3,400	VA Dept. Agriculture & Consumer Services
* FARM	75,000	Longwood University	VA	3,000	University of Virginia, Mountain Lake
WILLI	73,500	The College of William and Mary	EHCV	2,500	Emory and Henry College
GMUF	60,000	George Mason University	HAVI	2,500	Eastern Mennonite University
LYN	60,000	Lynchburg College	WYCO	2,500	Wytheville Community College
* VMIL	30,000	Virginia Military Institute	ROAN	1,200	Virginia Western Community College
ODU	28,000	Old Dominion University			
LFCC	20,000	Lord Fairfax Community College			
URV	18,000	University of Richmond			
* VCU	17,700	Virginia Commonwealth University			
JMUH	15,000	James Madison University			
RMWC	13,000	Randolph-Macon College			
RUHV	6,500	Radford University			
BDWR	4,293	Bridgewater College			
CVCW	4,000	Clinch Valley College, Uva			
MWCF	4,000	Mary Washington College			
SARC	3,544	Roanoke College			



GLEN & VSUH: discarded

In Virginia, inflation-adjusted state appropriations for higher education have declined 30% since 2001^a.



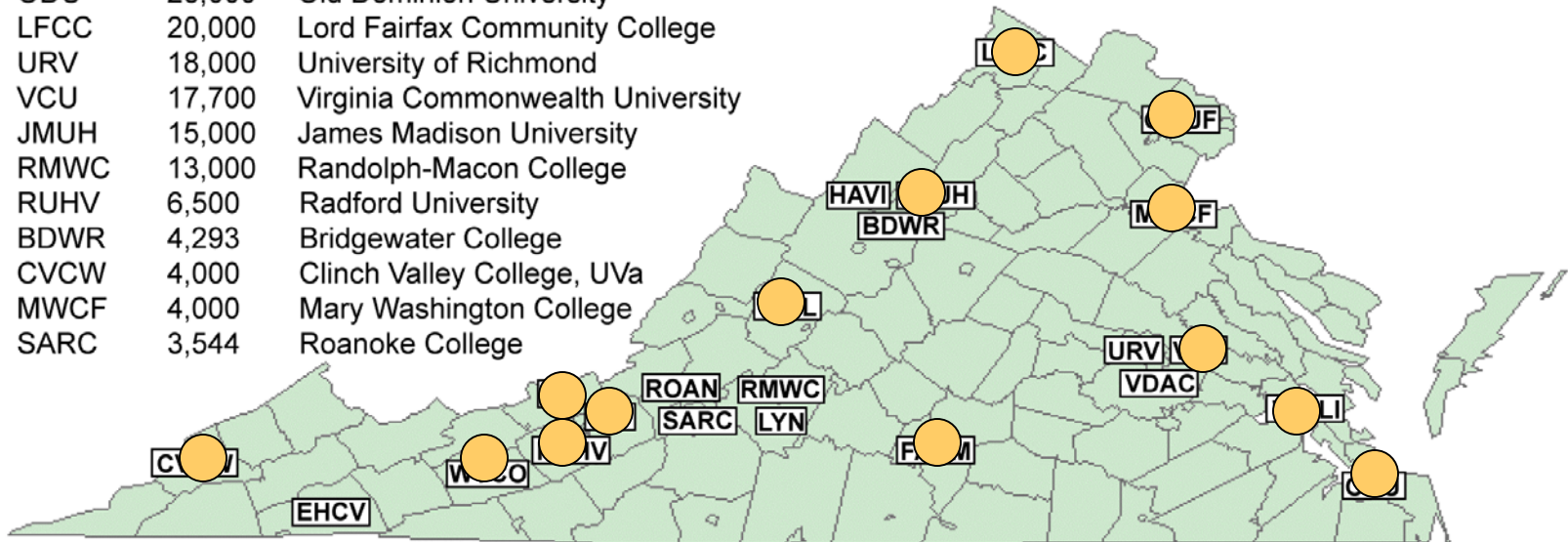
VA about median,
nationwide^b

^a Mulhern et al. (2015) *The effects of rising student costs in higher education: evidence from public institutions in Virginia*. Ithaca S+R.
^b Mitchell et al. (2014) *States are still funding higher education below pre-recession levels*. Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

How is this related to Virginian herbaria?

80% of VA specimens are held in state colleges/universities

acronym	size	institution	acronym	size	institution
VPI	115,000	Virginia Tech	VDAC	3,400	VA Dept. Agriculture & Consumer Services
FARM	75,000	Longwood University	VA	3,000	University of Virginia, Mountain Lake
WILLI	73,500	The College of William and Mary	EHCV	2,500	Emory and Henry College
GMUF	60,000	George Mason University	HAVI	2,500	Eastern Mennonite University
LYN	60,000	Lynchburg College	WYCO	2,500	Wytheville Community College
VMIL	30,000	Virginia Military Institute	ROAN	1,200	Virginia Western Community College
ODU	28,000	Old Dominion University			
LFCC	20,000	Lord Fairfax Community College			
URV	18,000	University of Richmond			
VCU	17,700	Virginia Commonwealth University			
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RMWC	13,000	Randolph-Macon College			
RUHV	6,500	Radford University			
BDWR	4,293	Bridgewater College			
CVCW	4,000	Clinch Valley College, Uva			
MWCF	4,000	Mary Washington College			
SARC	3,544	Roanoke College			



About 500,000 herbarium sheets

Privately-held Virginian herbaria are not immune

20% of VA specimens held by private colleges



Sweet Briar College closed 2015
despite \$85M endowment
SWBR transferred to LYN in 1993

In the US, liberal arts colleges are endangered.^a
110 have closed since 1994 (212 → 102).

[what has happened to their collections?]

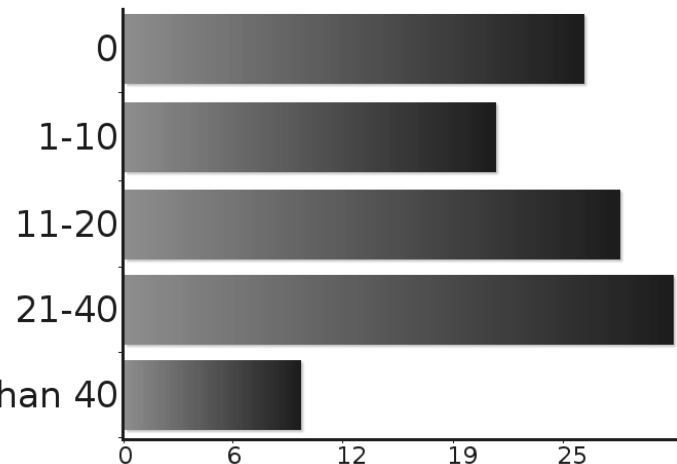
Defunding is changing these institutions

- How they are run
 - budgetary concerns shift institutional investment
 - expectations of faculty are rewritten
- How students spend their time
 - students work more hours to pay increased tuition

A poll of ca. 100 biology undergraduates in my Fall 2014 course.

How many hours per week do you work at a job?

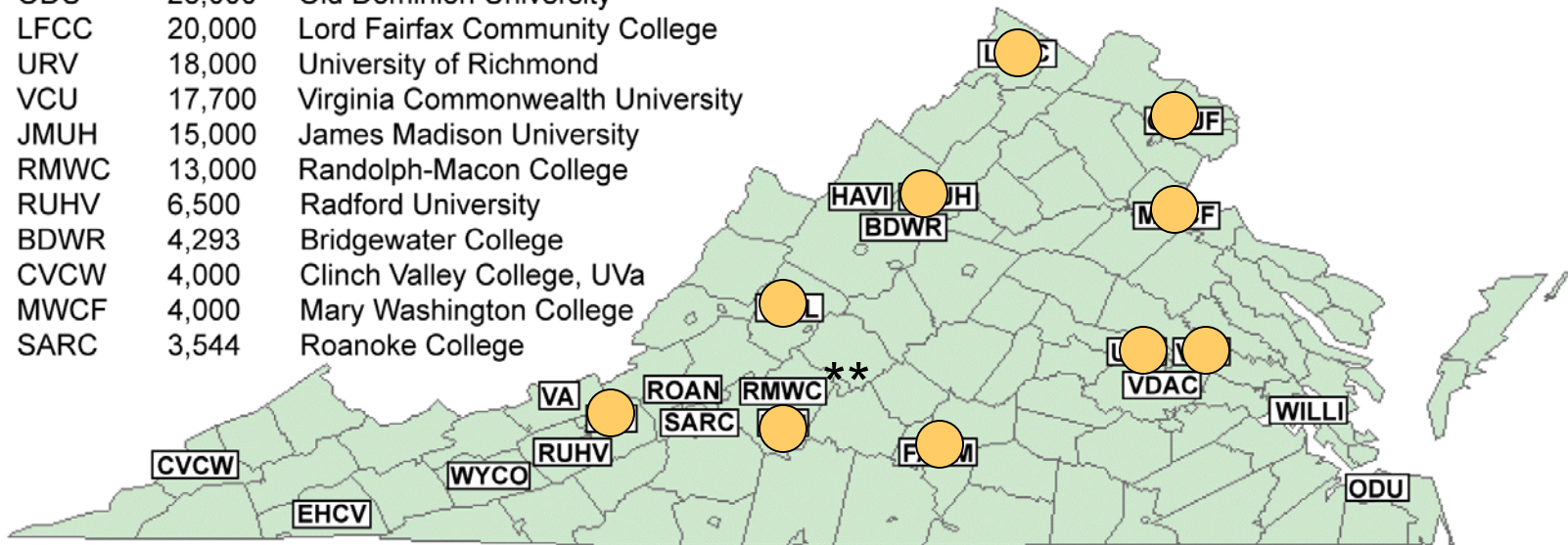
Start this poll to accept responses




- Herbaria are *new* to each generation of botanists

“...the best way out is always through [together]”
 -Robert Frost, “A Servant to Servants”

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BDWR	4,293	Bridgewater College			
CVCW	4,000	Clinch Valley College, UVa			
MWCF	4,000	Mary Washington College			
SARC	3,544	Roanoke College			





Schwartz et al (2008)^a - benefits of societies

- 1) Information exchange through meetings, publications
- 2) Collective representation of shared interests
- 3) Professional networks and professional recognition

And a new fourth benefit ...

- 4) A form of long term protection insurance for [herbarium] collections.



Future of SHC

- 200 members and growing
- Presence at national meetings
(come see us at our booth at Botany2015)
- Student research grants, every year
- Advocacy (e.g., DOI call for comment)

Acknowledgements

Symposium organizers: Gil Nelson, Anna Monfils

SHC past-presidents: Michael Woods, Zack Murrell

SPNHC conference attendees

Thank You

