BISS Biodiversity Information Science and Standards

Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 2: e28233
doi: 10.3897/biss.2.28233

OPEN ACCESS

Conference Abstract

Global Plants: A Model of International Collaboration

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Received: 07 Jul 2018 | Published: 17 Jul 2018

Citation: Ryan D (2018) Global Plants: A Model of International Collaboration . Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 2: e28233. https://doi.org/10.3897/biss.2.28233

Abstract

Global Plants (http://plants.jstor.org) is a community-contributed database that features more than two million high resolution plant type specimen images and other foundational materials from the collections of more than 300 herbaria in 70 countries. Complementing the high resolution specimen images are extensive flora and other reference materials, collectors' correspondence and diaries, and tens of thousands of paintings, photographs, drawings, and other images.

Global Plants is the outcome of the African Plants Initiative (API), the Latin American Plants Initiative (LAPI) and the Global Plants Initiative (GPI) which was funded generously by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for over a decade. The vision of creating a digital library of type specimen images and related material available to students and researchers around the world has largely been realized. What has the impact been on herbaria? What is the status of digitization across the partner institutions such as NYBG? How can we continue to keep the network flourishing and ensure all partners can continue to contribute? How has/has the financial model worked to achieve the correct balance between accessibility and sustainability?

Looking to the future, we are interested in exploring how the foundation established by Global Plants can be built upon to explore future digital projects that both support and expand upon the existing field of researchers. Existing initiatives include “Global Plants in the Classroom: Botany 101” (http://botany101.jstor.org/), an open teaching resource that

introduces botany and the plant sciences to a new audience, and “Livingstone’s Zambezi Expedition (beta)”, a project built with the JSTOR Labs team that explores a different approach to bringing together specimens and historic materials around a specific botanical expedition. Other initiatives in progress include a partnership with Dumbarton Oaks and a new digital collection from JSTOR called Plants & Society, both of which seek to create a space through which scholars from the sciences, social sciences, and humanities can come together in the study of plants and their relationships to humanity.

Keywords

digitization, specimens, botany, taxonomy, collaboration

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