From Scraps to Cache:
A Case for Structured Education Collections

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Structured Education Collections

- What is an education collection?
- How are education collections valued?
- How does this value affect use?
- What should the future of education collections look like?
What is an Education Collection?

✓ Specimens intended for **hands-on learning experiences**.

✓ Specimens that are **consumable**.

✓ Typically managed by **education staff**.

Often *misfits*...

- **No** record.
- **No** use metrics.
- **No** thematic organization.
What Does This Mean for Education Collection Use?

Lack metadata = No use

? Every object has inherent information that can inform interpretation.

- Taxonomy
- Morphology
- Relationship to other objects within collection
- Relationship to institutional mission
How Do We Structure Object Information?

Metadata records!

- Reference institutional and knowledge-based standards
- Apply collections management standards to every collection type

Through structure, we give specimens tangible value.
How are Education Collections Valued?

Measure value through:

- **Use** in programming
- **Type** of patron
- **Number** of patrons served
- **Loans** records provide further metrics about the external *impact* of your collections
Let Thy People Touch!

If we apply the same management practices as "real" specimens, **should we let visitors touch?**

- The more accessible the specimen's metadata, the more patrons care about maintaining the quality of future collections.

**Knowledge:** What is this?

**Meaning:** Why should I care about it?

**Conservation:** How can it be protected?
Problem

- Unorganized
- Lacked identification
- No use records

Solution

✓ Identify
✓ Organize
✓ Interpret
IGWS Education Collection

2016-2018

• Applied Darwin Core and institutional vocabulary
• Assigned unique identifiers
• Created an inventory of 2,200+ rock, mineral, and fossil specimens
Enables us to **track** specimen activity & provide richer **context** to patrons.

- Using structured Ed Collection specimens in outreach programming has led to **239% increase** participation over past 3 years.
Future of IGWS Education Collection

Develop more Traveling Trunks--
Increase external metrics

Digitize more specimens--
Include metadata context

Highlight collection online--
Increase digital engagement

Learning Lab--
Open storage discovery center
Why Should You Collect Education Collection Metrics?

- Provide more qualitative assessment of collections & programming.
- Measure engagement beyond exhibition.
- Enhance your understanding of the impact you have on your visitors.
- Provide basis for discussing importance of natural history collections on personal level.
Questions for Discussion

How do you assess the way your objects are used in...
- external loans?
- exhibition?
- educational programming?
- digital engagement?

How does your institution label EC specimens?

What are some hurdles to using Education Collections?