Florida Museum of Natural History celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. In 1966 when the museum’s first malacologist, Fred Thompson was hired, the mollusk collection was small and composed of mostly local species. In 50 years, the collection has grown into a global collection of 500,000 lots of 2.5 million specimens.

Biodiversity Surveys

Florida Museum staff and associates conduct biodiversity surveys globally using many specialized collecting techniques. The collection encompasses the largest non-marine mollusk collections from several regions including Hispaniola, Mexico-Central America, Madagascar, and Pakistan, and large holdings from the southeastern US, West Indies, Andean South America, Southeast Asia, and Oceania. Marine holdings are especially strong for Florida and the Caribbean and rapidly growing for the Indo-Pacific.

Type Collection

The collection contains 1,200 primary types and 7,200 secondary types, mostly from biodiversity surveys and historic collections.

Habitat and Class

- Freshwater: 20%
- Marine: 40%
- Terrestrial: 40%
- Bivalvia: 19%
- Gastropoda: 80%

Ecological Associations

Our collection also houses other invertebrate taxa and we capture data about relationships between species including parasitism and mutualism. Database records for each specimen are linked to one other.

Advantages of Youth

Collection growth coincided with revolutions in computing, molecular biology and digital photography. As a result, all cataloged lots are available electronically at http://specifyportal.flmnh.ufl.edu/iz/ and many have associated tissues and digital photographs.

Challenges

We are investigating methods to rapidly catalog our backlog of 55,000 lots, including crowd sourcing using sites like Notes from Nature. We also need to retroactively add or improve coordinates for nearly 90,000 localities and to find ways of coping with rapidly changing molluscan nomenclature.