

# The Malacology Collection at the Burke Museum: Coming out of its Shell

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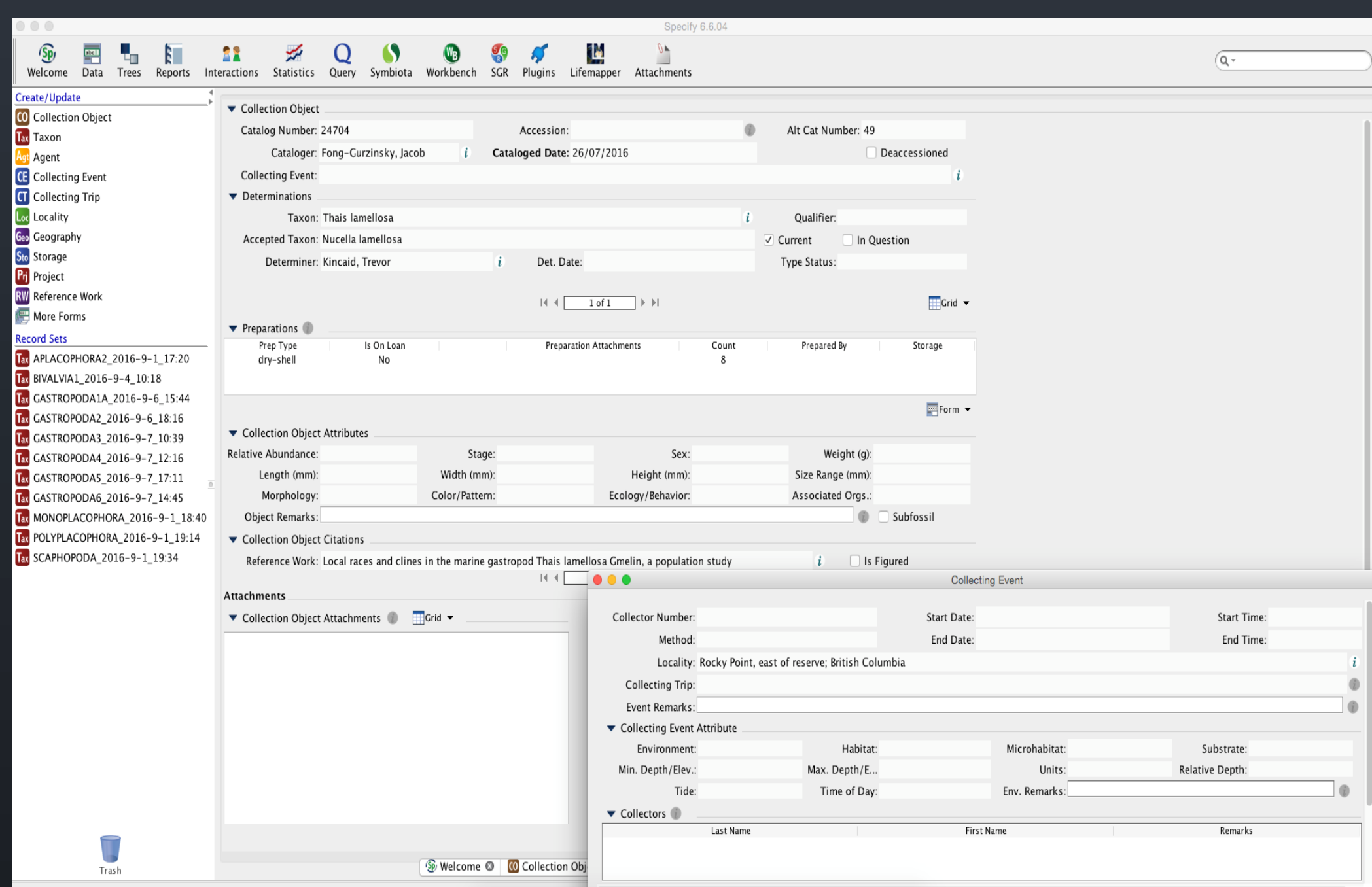
**Abstract.** The Burke Museum, designated the Washington State Museum in 1899, is located at the University of Washington in Seattle. The Malacology Collection comprises approx. 75,000 specimen lots of shelled gastropods, bivalves, chitons, scaphopods, and cephalopods from across the world, with an emphasis on Pacific Rim species. Today, the collection is experiencing a renewal: a new permanent collection manager position, dedicated volunteer support, and a three-year grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The Burke also provides an annual operating budget of \$7,250 for collection care and growth. Current activities include rehousing specimens in new containers and cabinets, and digitizing the collection to improve access (including online). While presently housed off-site, the collection will be moved to the New Burke, scheduled to open to the public Summer 2019.



**History.** The Burke's Malacology Collection dates to the 1880s, originating with the Young Naturalists' Society, a precursor to the museum. Over the past 50 years, the collection has grown steadily under the guidance of Adjunct Curator, Dr. Alan Kohn. In 2015, the Burke created a new collection manager position dedicated to Invertebrates, marking a renewed commitment to stewarding and showcasing the shell collection.

**Collection Characteristics.** Of the ~75,000 specimen lots:

- Taxonomic: 5 classes, 248 families
- Types: 1 holotype
- Geographical: worldwide, with NE Pac + Pacific Rim focus
- Ecological: ~83% marine/estuarine, 5% fw, 12% terrestrial
- Preservation: dry (shells) only
- Status: ~73% catalogued, 19% digitized, 0% georeferenced
- Current storage: off-site (but see below)



**Current Digitization Activities.** To reduce backlog, we aim to database and rehouse 7-10K specimen lots per year. Current workflow includes: data entry (Excel), cleanup (OpenRefine), and migration (Specify); an online portal links to the database. Collection work is supported by a team of 10-15 volunteers (= 1,500 hours per year). This summer, all collection activities are being carried out in the museum gallery to test an 'Inside-Out' approach and assess visitor engagement.

**Future Outlook.** With the building of a new museum, the shell collection is slated to move from off-site storage to the New Burke, starting Spring 2018. Future collection activity will include continued databasing and rehousing, coupled with georeferencing and imaging. Our goal is to improve access and increase use of specimens and data. We thank IMLS for their generous support thru a Museums for America: Collection Stewardship grant.

