

Unlocking Evidence: Scientific Collections and Environmental Change

SPNHC Prospectus

Scientific Collections International & the Natural History Museum, London

Event:

Scientific Collections International (SciColl) and *The Natural History Museum London* (NHM) will host a breakout session at the *Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections* (SPNHC) 2014 Annual Meeting, held during the afternoon sessions on 25 June 2014, Cardiff, Wales. The main theme is the integration of scientific collections into current environmental change research.

Theme:

Evaluating and predicting change in the global environment is the largest scientific and policy challenge of our time. Forecasting the effects of future change depends on our understanding of changes in the past. Natural history and other scientific collections, such as core, soil and genetic libraries, offer relatively under-utilized or under-integrated sources of critical evidence about the past, and hold the potential for refining our understanding of how natural systems respond to environmental change.

Goals:

The major goal is to demonstrate the research value of scientific collections by engaging collections professionals and discussing the following topics:

- What would a collections-based environmental change research program look like?
- Who participates in a collections-based environmental change research program?
- What kinds of data are produced/needed and how do you make it available for environmental change research?
- What funding sources and other resources are available to collections professionals?
- Are there currently established procedures for integrating collections-based data into environmental change research?

Additional goals include highlighting the role of SciColl in enabling collaborative work in this area and highlighting the leading role played by the NHM in this area.

Outcomes:

The breakout session at SPNHC will give SciColl and NHM a chance to interact with collections professionals from a wide variety of disciplines, institutions, and countries. Discussions, ideas, and further questions will be utilized by SciColl and NHM during a synthesizing workshop, to be held 15-16 September 2014 at the Flett Theater, NHM, London, England. This second event will be open to anyone interested, and ideally will include some SPNHC Annual Meeting attendees in addition to other environmental change researchers not directly affiliated with natural history collections.

About the Organizers:

Scientific Collections International (SciColl) is a global independent non-profit founded as a coordinating mechanism for object-based scientific collections across the full spectrum of scientific disciplines. Future

generations of interdisciplinary research need access to collections across traditional disciplinary boundaries. Through four broad-scale research initiatives and the development of an online registry of collections, SciColl will facilitate a new generation of interdisciplinary research that builds on evidence from scientific collections in different fields. This workshop and conference are an output of the SciColl *Environmental Change Initiative*. Additional initiatives include *Human Migrations, Zoonotic and Human Diseases* and *Food Security*.

The Natural History Museum London (NHM) is one of the largest repositories for biological and mineralogical collections. The NHM *Climate Change Working Group* produced a landmark study and several papers on the use of natural history collections in environmental change research (Johnston et al. 2011; Lister et al. 2011; the 'London Collection Protocol' Scientific Initiative Fund Report). The NHM volunteered to lead the proposed Environmental Change workshop and conference as part of the NHM research initiative on *Origins and Evolution* and as part of its SciColl membership responsibilities.