

Introduction to Catalog: Oregon State Arthropod Collection

The purpose behind Catalog: Oregon State Arthropod Collection is to provide a means by which the Oregon State Arthropod Collection (OSAC) can record, disseminate and archive records, documents, datasets and information related to the collection, which are not often formally published/archived elsewhere. Because of this, these resources can be hard to access and easily lost over time.

Anyone who has worked closely with natural history collections is aware that in addition to the specimens themselves, these institutions generate and maintain a host of other records, documents and information related to the specimens and the research activities associated with them. In some cases, these records hold useful biological information related to specimen label data; in other cases they provide historical context about how specimens arrived (or left) the collection. These types of records are seldom published in any real sense and exist often as single copy files in file cabinets or sometime recorded in abbreviated formats in hand-written catalogs or as database entries.

The development of archived digital-only journals provides a flexible low cost option for storing these types of documents. Use of a journal format allows end users, data producers and archivists a long established mechanism for consolidating these records while making them vastly more available to the research community. In addition to increasing availability, a museum focused journal takes advantage of several established academic traditions: (1) journals provide a stable long-term and indexed structure for recording the information, (2) journals (electronic and printed) are known quantities for librarians and archivists, and thus the museum community need not re-invent standards for sharing and archiving this information and (3) it allows researchers making use of the information in scholarly works, an easy method of citing the information source. It is hoped that by making these records 'citable' in the standard sense, the important role that museums/natural history collections play in providing foundational data for research papers may become more visible via their inclusion in bibliographies of those papers.

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