Forward, Marsh!
Growing Ecology Collections at the University of South Florida Libraries

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• The Green Swamp straddles five counties and feeds four major rivers

• From a distance, its waters don’t seem to move much at all

• Yet fresh water percolates insistently from a natural spout in the aquifer

• In the hydrological cycle, it is a kind of rebirth
From this mysterious source the Hillsborough River supplies drinking water to millions and vital fresh water to the fragile estuaries in Tampa Bay.
Our experience of building ecological collections bears some resemblance to the Hillsborough River or other Florida waterways:

- It begins slowly with no clear direction.
- It finds a path in the landscape.
- Twists in its path can impede progress (there are no straight rivers in nature).
- It flows into the ocean, freshening its environs.
The Landscape

USF Special Collections

- Florida Studies a pillar of collections
- Emphasis on history and humanities
- USF Libraries and aspirations for ARL
- Failure of previous strategic initiatives in SPC
- Consolidated of emphasis narrowed to:
  - Florida Studies
  - USF Archives
  - Florida Environment and Natural History Collections
  - LGBTQ+ Studies
  - Children and Young Adult Literature
  - Journalism
  - Civil Rights
Growing Collections

- Staff open to new subjects and challenges
- The strength of a single thread
- Gradual/grudging buy-in from above
- Effective networking and large acquisitions: Audubon Florida
- Success inspires new strategic direction
- Florida Environment and Natural History (FLENH) prioritized in 2018
Swimming with the Current

- The scientific study of Florida is young, but maturing
- Records accumulating as activity intensifies and scholars retire
- Existing scientific publications are the tip of the iceberg, with old data/papers often left behind
- Neglected materials may be worthy of (re)discovery
- Statewide emphasis on STEM fields
- Challenges for non-STEM fields
- The Humanities: understanding the human condition
Paddling with the Current

- Archives and Academic Libraries are uniquely positioned to preserve and enhance scientific papers
- Salvage the human side of scientific study through archival material
- Harvest contextual/scientific information/metadata directly from creators and donors
- Recontextualize existing Florida Studies collections: synergy
- Curation and creation: oral history and digital exhibits
- Make natural history and ecology approachable for non-science scholars
- Data Management and open access publishing
Symbiotic Relationships

- Memos of understanding / partners
- Usually cash-poor partners
- Ingestion of digital material
- Digitizing archival material
- Collaboration on grants, projects and events
Winding Rivers

- STEM and SPC expertise
- Digital aspirations vs. realities
- The metadata question

- Acquisitions: How much is enough?
- SPC gets attention/funding: BIPs
- Hiring new subject specialists
Making Connections

• Multiple software migrations and new capabilities
• Challenges of cleanup and establishing best practices
• Centralizing and categorizing
• Understanding researcher perspective

C-03. Florida Environment and Natural History Collections

As a strategic collecting area, Special Collections seeks Environmental and Natural History Research Collections that further understanding of environmental history of both Florida and beyond. Collections including, but not limited to, materials about the State of Florida, the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico will strengthen existing holdings of Audubon Florida and the pioneering ornithologist Robert Porter Allen.

Found in 29 Collections and/or Records:

Spotlight: Florida’s Phosphate Industry

The phosphate industry in Florida dates back to the late 19th century when Albertus Vogt, known as “The Duke of Dunellen,” discovered hard rock phosphate while managing water flow on his groves. This led to an era of development in Central Florida, in addition to the pebble phosphate industry. The 2021 leak at Manatee County’s Piney Point phosphate plant has underscored the importance of studying historical documents and both past and present environmental impacts of the industry. The gallery below shows a preview of related materials from the Ship Greedy collection, Hampton Dunn collection, and BMC Agrico Phosphate Company Collection.
Formalizing Links

- Improved specialized metadata
- Increasing keyword returns
- Linked bibliographies
- Importance of cross-training
Emphasizing the 'H' in FLENH

- Reaching a new audience
- Embedding resources in instruction
- Serving traditional departments: History and English
- Connections between strategic collecting areas

Topics in Environmental History

HIS 3002 - Research and Methods
The River Widening: Students & FLENH

- Metadata
  - Research
  - Contextualizing collections

- "The human side of scientific study"
  - Connecting published papers to archival materials
Dr. Ogden Caribbean and Coral Reef Collection

- Researchers retiring, have accumulated materials from their careers
- Need for repositories to protect and share their collections
- Dr. Ogden influenced by colleagues who had donated their collections to libraries
Dr. Ogden Caribbean and Coral Reef Collection

- Metadata
  - Species identification
  - Research using field guides for marine species
  - Reading the text-based journals to understand the images

The Human Side of Scientific Study

• Connecting published papers to archival materials
• The Story of the Sea Turtle

Journal Excerpt:
• "On the way back it [the turtle] would give heavy sighs and viscous tears rolled out of her eyes....The crew—generally a hard-bitten, cynical lot has cast their lot with the turtle. There is a movement building and the dissection had better get going before it peaks."
Florida Ornithological Society - Processing

- Transferring to Hollinger Boxes
  - Retaining order
- Building the finding aid
  - Increasing access for FOS members and the public
- Future potential for increased metadata
  - Identifying those in photographs
  - Providing additional context about the material
- Image: Dusky Seaside Sparrow, Nesting Record, FOS Collection
Highlighting Significance

• Supporting the FOS
  • Curating materials for their 50th anniversary celebration
• Researching what Florida bird populations have been like in the past
  • Able to inform current policies and conservation efforts
• The Dusky Seaside Sparrow
  • Photo credit: USFWS/Science Source
Downstream – FLENH Goes Digital

FLENH

The Florida Environment & Natural History Portal
Nesting Access Points

- Special Collections
- Digital Collections
- Calling: Earth
- Faculty Publications
- Digital Exhibits
- Data Management Access
- Partner Resources

Audubon Florida Records, 1900-1970
This digital collection contains the daily journals of Audubon wardens and statewide reports on certain sites and projects cover activities from 1900 to 1970, with most of the materials concentrated between the 1930s and 1950s.

The Center for the Integrated Modeling and Analysis of the Gulf Ecosystem (CIMAGE) Collection
The Center for Integrated Modeling and Analysis of Gulf Ecosystems (CIMAGE) was a research consortium of 19 U.S. and international partners focused on effects of oil spills on marine environments. The CIMAGE consortium completed an unprecedented study of the Deepwater Horizon blowout of 2010 through funding from the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GoMRI). The overarching objective of CIMAGE was to advance understanding of marine blowouts as response agencies and production companies were unprepared to deal with the unique challenges of Deepwater Horizon. Data is made freely available to ensure society is better prepared to mitigate any future occurrences.

The Catesby Collection

Dr. John Ogden Florida and Caribbean Reef Collection
This collection consists of over 30 years of data from USF marine science professor, Dr. John Ogden’s research excursions throughout the Caribbean. Dr. Ogden’s extensive fieldwork documents changes in coral reef condition and the flora and fauna that depend on this fragile underwater ecosystem. The content includes field diaries and notes, illustrations, maps, charts, and photographs of reef, seagrass and mangrove habitats that support a wide range of marine species, including grey and yellowtail snapper, grunts, parrotfish, sea turtles, starfish and sea urchins.

Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program Collection
New Pathways – Eco-Literacies for Climate Action in Florida

• Environmental literature meets the archives
• Grant-funded partnership
• Multi-modal K-16+ educator resources
Digitization Investments

- Prioritizing FLENH materials
  - Data
  - Water
  - Ornithology
- Outsourcing
- In-house digitization
- Accessibility
Lessons Learned?
Adapt & Evolve

Questions?