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LOCAL MUSEUM JOINS GLOBAL 4-DAY EFFORT TO DIGITIZE CENTURIES OF DATA ABOUT LIFE ON EARTH

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— For centuries, scientists have explored and documented the natural world, collecting the billions of specimens lodged in museums, universities, and field stations worldwide. And now, Florida State and other institutions across the globe want to help make that information available to the general public.

But they need your help.

Florida State University's Robert K. Godfrey Herbarium invites members of the public to one of the many transcription parties that will be held next week during the Worldwide Engagement for Digitizing Biocollections (WeDigBio) Event. The WeDigBio Event will transform the often handwritten or typewritten data sequestered on the labels of plant, insect, fish, and fossil specimens into an open, globally accessible, digital resource with the help of the public.

"Never has it been more important for museums to open their specimen cabinet doors to the public," says local event organizer and Associate Professor of Biological Science Austin Mast. "Everyone should have the chance to see the rich textures of life on Earth in these collections. Public participation of this sort helps science bring those rich textures into sharper focus."

FSU's Robert K. Godfrey Herbarium contains more than 220,000 plant and microalgae specimens. These document the distribution and natural variation of the 2,400 species of flowering plants, ferns, conifers, and cycads found in northern Florida—one of North America's terrestrial biodiversity hotspots—and the microalgae of Florida's Gulf and Atlantic coasts.

The WeDigBio Event emerged within the museum community to accelerate the rate of digital data creation about the historical what, when, and where of the perhaps 9 million species on Earth. It has a core leadership team that includes researchers from the Smithsonian Institution, the Australian Museum, Florida State University, University of Florida, and the major online transcription platforms, including the U.S.-based Smithsonian Transcription Center, Notes from Nature, and Symbiota, the Australia-based DigiVol, the UK-based Herbaria@Home, and the France-based Les Herbonautes.

This one-of-a-kind event will be held from October 22–25 at 30 locations across the globe. While the local event at FSU offers a social setting where people can contribute and learn about the herbarium and local plant diversity, members of the public can contribute at any time from anywhere during the event at one of the participating online transcription platforms.

FSU specimens will be available for transcription at www.notesfromnature.org, and more information about the WeDigBio Event can be found on the event [website](#).

The Tallahassee-based transcription party will take place from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 24 in room 1058 of the King Life Science Building, 319 Stadium Drive.

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