

Partnering with scholars in the digital humanities to link an historic regional herbarium with its original collection and accession records.

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A challenge set forth by the Extended Specimen concept is the development of the curatorial practices and data integration techniques that can retain and build connections between natural history specimens and their diverse metadata. Here we report an ongoing collaboration that meets this challenge in the restoration and digitization of an historic US regional herbarium, its collection notebooks and accession records. In 2019, the George Mason University herbarium (GMUF) incorporated the orphaned Lord Fairfax Community College herbarium (LFCC) and began to restore this collection as a research resource. LFCC comprises ca. 12,000 herbarium specimens and over 4000 pages of collection notes and accession records that record textual and illustrative metadata about the specimens beyond that reported on the herbarium labels. In order to connect the herbarium specimens with their original written records, we collaborated with our university's digital humanities librarians in customizing Omeka S, a next-generation web publishing platform that is designed to interpret digital cultural heritage collections, for herbarium collections. We discuss how we modified Omeka S software using DarwinCore vocabulary to support advanced queries, created ARK identifiers for the notebook images, and integrated LFCC specimen and notebook datasets. We report challenges encountered in creating reciprocal linkages between Symbiota and Omeka S platforms and our discoveries about this collection, which are at the intersection of regional floristics and the history of science, that were uncovered as a consequence using this new web-based tool.

