

BREATHING LIFE INTO HASWELL'S HISTORIC EDUCATIONAL ZOOLOGICAL COLLECTION

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BACKGROUND

The Haswell collection contains thousands of significant teaching-focused specimens amassed more than a hundred years ago by William Aitcheson Haswell, the first Professor of Zoology at the University of Sydney. The collection is unique for the quality of specimen preservation, its emphasis on Australian fauna, and the number of prominent Australian biologists who have contributed. The value of collections like Haswell's are being reassessed by educators and scientists seeking to offer unique, authentic learning experiences for our Australian students. Offering the collection as an online searchable database, with key objects offered digitally, will allow the enormous value of this collection to teaching, research and scientific heritage to be realised.

APPROACHES

Over the past three years we have been conducting the first digital audit of Haswell's historical collection, noting that our team includes undergraduates across biology and museum studies. The online catalogue we envisage will be based on the work undertaken for this audit and also offer photographs and interactive digital content e.g. 3D scans and gifs.

FINDINGS

Digitally repackaging Haswell collection offers contemporary reimagining of Haswell's work and will not only support the learning of our local students, but allow Haswell's legacy to be shared globally. Students have documented their respective learning journeys on social media (Haswell Project Team, 2016) and in this way our project adds to a discourse on students-as-partners via new media (Healy, Flint & Harrington, 2014; Rifkin, Longnecker, Leach & Davis, 2011), whereby students are major protagonists in digital repackagings of traditional teaching resources.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The final hurdle is to place the collection online, and here we are in negotiations with our University Library.

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