

THE HERBARIUM RESOURCES OF OHIO: INTRODUCTION^{1,2}

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Documentation of the diversity of plant life is contained in the world's herbaria. These collections of plant specimens provide a reference system to the occurrence of plants in many different parts of the world. Herbaria are extremely important for suggesting the existence and specific localities of plant materials that may serve as future resources for human needs. New pharmaceutical products, new building materials, and new foods are only some of the many uses in which plant products are important for the survival of our human species. The current increase of the human population is placing increasing pressures on the flora of our planet and makes these existing collections even more meaningful, as well as argues strongly for acquisition of new specimens while they are still available. Herbaria, therefore, are important in many ways to aid the continued survival of mankind.

Because of the importance of herbaria as resources for information about plants, the International Association of Plant Taxonomists has been surveying over the past several decades the existence of herbarium collections throughout the world. These summaries, known as various editions of the *Index Herbariorum* (the latest, ed. 7, Holmgren et al. 1981), have been extremely useful in documenting the occurrence and content of the major plant collections in various countries of the world. Because

of the large scope of this project, it has not been effective in revealing the existence of smaller herbaria, especially those in private teaching institutions. The Native Plant Society of California recognized this need for its state and produced recently an index to the herbaria of California (Duncan 1980). Following the success of that venture, it became clear that it would be most useful to survey the herbarium resources of Ohio.

Although it was known generally that most of the plant collections in Ohio are contained in the larger universities of Ohio State, Miami, Cincinnati, Kent State, etc., it was also suspected that many other herbaria exist in smaller institutions and in private hands. The recent activities of inventorying the rare and endangered plant species of Ohio by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources had revealed some of these smaller collections and made it even more important to know the existence of others within the state. Furthermore, most all herbaria have programs of collection and exchange of specimens, and better coordination among our institutions in Ohio might be most useful to understand better our individual priorities and to limit duplication of effort in these economically stringent times. These concerns led to the preparation of the *Survey of the Herbarium Resources of Ohio* by Cusick and Snider (1982), which was distributed at The Ohio Academy of Science meeting in Columbus on 23 April 1982. At that same time, a one-half day symposium was held to discuss some of the issues of common concern for the herbaria of Ohio, such as the history of our herbaria, their regional importance, their relevance to ongoing projects in the state, and the need for their continued development. The papers presented here result from this symposium.

¹Revised and updated from a presentation at a symposium, "The Herbarium Resources of Ohio: Present Status and Future Directions," organized for the meetings of The Ohio Academy of Science, Columbus, Ohio, 24 April 1982. Manuscript received 26 April 1984 (#84-18).

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The natural historical heritage of our state is significant for our citizens, and our herbaria form an important part of this history. The only way of documenting accurately the changing patterns of our floristic resources is to provide careful and thorough documentation and understanding of plants growing within our state's boundaries. The symposium papers given here attest to the significance of our collections and the need for their continued

development and proper protection in the future.

LITERATURE CITED

- Cusick, A. W. and J. A. Snider 1982 Survey of the herbarium resources of Ohio. Organization of Herbaria in Ohio, Columbus. 43 p.
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- Holmgren, P. K., W. Keuken and E. K. Schofield 1981 Index herbariorum. Part I. The herbaria of the world. *Regnum Vegetabile* 106: 1-452.