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Using digital resources to enhance georeferencing of herbarium collections

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ABSTRACTS – Posters

Using digital resources to enhance georeferencing of herbarium collections

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As part of recent and ongoing international efforts to digitize natural history collections' specimen information, georeferencing, or the assigning of spatial information (latitude and longitude coordinates) to specimen collection sites, has received increased attention. The value of ascribing spatial information to historic collection data enables range mapping over space and time, greatly enhancing a collection's potential scientific utility. The natural history community has developed digital tools, such as Geolocate (www.geo-locate.org, Tulane University), and related protocols for determining georeference coordinates based on descriptions of collection locations. Other government institutions provide public access to aerial imagery, historic maps and land records through web interfaces. Strategically combining multiple sources of spatial information for collections established prior to the availability of global positioning systems technology allows more collections to be assigned accurate georeferenced coordinates. Wake County, North Carolina offers a robust publicly available and comprehensive land records system that has proved an invaluable resource to the Larry F. Grand Mycological Herbarium's ongoing georeferencing activities. Several examples of georeferenced collections housed at the herbarium demonstrate approaches to access and use these often overlooked sources, particularly with aerial imagery and public land and tax records.