

Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections (IWGSC)

Scientific collections, both living and non-living, are critical components of the Federal government's R&D infrastructure, essential for ensuring national security, protecting the public's health and its safe food supply, promoting innovation and economic growth, and protecting the environment, among others.

Hundreds of U.S. federal collections, maintained within 16 departments and agencies, are among the largest and most diverse sets of materials in the world, ranging from natural history collections in the Smithsonian; USDA living plant, animal and microbial collections; medical research and cell culture collections at NIH; NASA moon rocks; to the NSF ice core facility. These collections maintain the raw materials that serve as drivers for the bioeconomy and have become increasingly critical as reference materials for AI efforts.

IWGSC encourages federal agencies to focus attention on integrated support and planning for the care and use of federally held scientific collections. Current projects include:

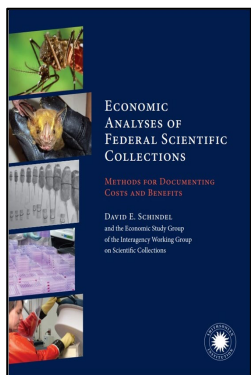
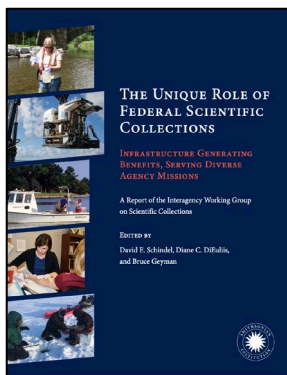
- Support opportunities to make collection information publicly available.
- Explore opportunities for collection digitization (including image & genomic information).
- Improve interfaces between federal collections and AI efforts.
- Create a clearinghouse on legal, policy, and regulatory issues, especially relating to access and use of biological materials.
- Promote the use of GRSciColl to maintain federal scientific collection information.



Smithsonian natural history collections



USDA plant, animal, and microbial collections in liquid nitrogen



NSF ice core facility