

Swiss National Strategy for Natural History Collections

Alice Cibois & Michelle Price



Background

-SCNAT collections group formed in 2017 with SwissCollNet formalized in 2018

-National workshop «Initiative National History Collections in Switzerland»
14 March 2018

-Collections survey sent out to Swiss institutions via GBIF.ch in 2019

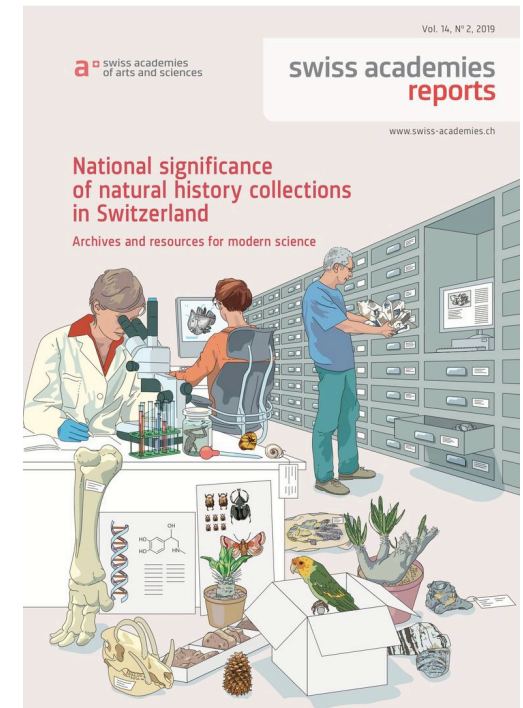
Recognition of importance of a national vision and strategy by SwissCollNet Experts Board

-> Task force from the Experts Board drafted a strategy document

-> Questionnaire sent to all members of musnatcoll to get input on key strategic points

-> Return of the questionnaire sent out to respondents and SwissCollNet bodies

Process put on hold - Application of SwissCollNet to the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation - SERI within the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research for 12.37 million CHF



SwissCollNet

Collections use and access strategy

Coordination of digitisation efforts

Collaboration and sharing of resources

Common management policies

Common data policies and data standards

Create training and education opportunities

Craft a unique platform for the scientific use of collections



Swiss National Strategy for Natural History Collections



Swiss National Strategy for Natural History Collections



Vision

Swiss institutions holding natural history collections unite their strengths and expertise in order to manage, maintain, enhance and develop the use of the natural history collections in their charge, promoting exchange between institutions, data interoperability and unified physical and virtual access to collections by Swiss and international researchers, thus contributing to scientific research and scientific excellence.



-> to be refined as the strategy advances



Swiss National Strategy for Natural History Collections

Aim

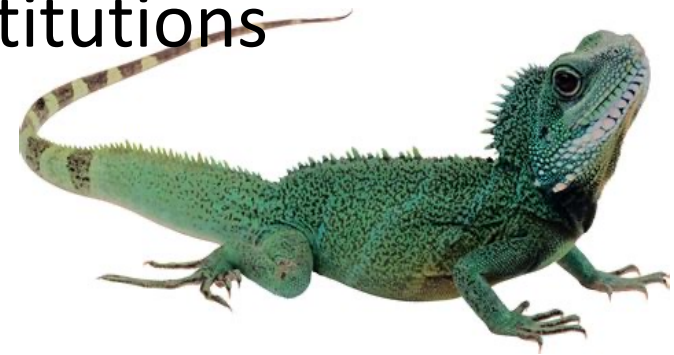
To ensure the long-term maintenance and development of natural history collections across Switzerland and support the scientific use of Swiss natural history collections for research, education and societal needs.



Swiss National Strategy for Natural History Collections

Strategic priorities

1. Standardized management practices
2. Databasing and digitisation of specimens and the unifying of digital specimen data
3. Physical and virtual access to biological and geological specimens
4. Scientific use of natural history collection
5. Training, education and societal impact
6. Collaboration, support and networking between institutions
7. International connectivity
8. Consolidating and managing funding



Questionnaire via Musnatcoll – 1 May 2020

1. What are the three main management and/or scientific priorities for your collections over the next 10 years?
2. What activities and/or actions do you think are important for natural history collections on a national level?
3. What activities and/or actions do you think are important for natural history collections on a national level?
4. What key strategic issues or national priorities should be addressed within a national collections strategy for Switzerland?



1) institution main management and/or scientific priorities



Key points

Digitization (label data first, but also specimen image)

Databasing

Online public access

Increasing scientific use

Expanding collection (targeted to areas or groups)

Types specimens

Supplementary elements

Relocation

Storage conditions

Pest control

Completing inventory

Establishing permanent exhibition

3) important actions at the national level



Key points

Public online access of collections data

National common database

Facilitating scientific access to collections

Standards for collection management (including thesauri, legates)

Political lobbying (mostly to provide federal funds)

Reinforcing the link universities/museums

Common vision and strategy, involving the small collections as well as the big, even if resources are different

Supplementary elements

Having permanent staff

Offering training (taxonomic, technical, legal)

National network of taxonomic expertise (in particular for Swiss taxa)

National network for exhibition loans

Prioritizing digitization of specimens from Switzerland



2) institution challenges and needs



Key points

Storage space and conditions

Manpower

Long term funding

Choosing database software

Checking and harmonizing the data

Training new taxonomists and collection technicians

Supplementary elements

Specimen restoration

New storage rooms /space

Conducting preliminary inventories



4) key issues and priorities for a national strategy

Key points

Insuring long term preservation (storage, manpower and funding)

Digitization and accessibility of the collections

Creating a virtual national collection

Participating to international networks and initiatives

Helping small museums, with a network within Switzerland

Reinforcing academic training related to natural history

Supplementary elements

Defining national standard

Developing a scientific roadmap

Raising public awareness on the importance of collections

Promoting scientific output of collections

Types specimens

Identifying and filling the gaps in the collections of Switzerland

Coordination of collection strategies

Collection risk mitigation (e.g. distribution of types / duplicates)



Questionnaire outcomes : 27 reponses

Swiss National Strategy for Natural History Collections

Strategic priorities

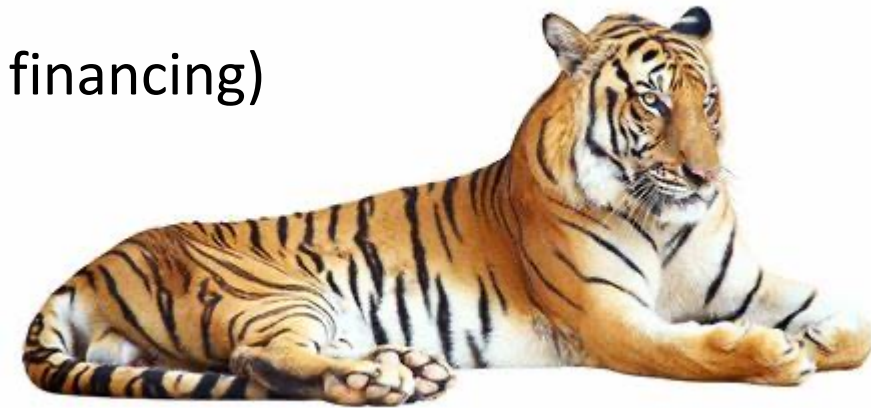
1. Standardized management practices
2. Databasing and digitisation of specimens and the unifying of digital specimen data
3. Physical and virtual access to biological and geological specimens -> *Swiss Virtual Natural History Collection*
4. Scientific use of natural history collections
5. Training, education and societal impact
6. Collaboration, support and networking between institutions
7. International connectivity
8. Consolidating and managing funding



Swiss National Strategy for Natural History Collections

Final part of the strategy – what is next for SwissCollNet?

- Be clear on the reasons for us to continue with the SwissCollNet initiative
- Define where we want to go, why, how and with what means
- Identify the benefits that a sustained initiative will bring (and to whom)
- Reflect on how the initiative should be sustained (and by whom)
 - > establish a Business Plan (functioning, governance, financing)
 - > seek political support
 - > seek funding



Swiss National Strategy for Natural History Collections

Adapt to progress and the shift in the landscape ->

Update the current strategy document after recent successes and progress

- financing of the SwissCollNet initiative
- publication of the handbook
- advances with the VNHC
- collaborations and advances in the funded projects

Community contributions on future-looking issues :

- sustainability of the network
- developing research capacity
- use of collections in training and education
- political support / communication and outreach



Breakout Groups

NHC Strategy for Switzerland



Group discussions on the three themes

- Empowering the Swiss network of natural history collection for the future
- Promoting Swiss Natural history collections as a research tool
- Valorising Swiss natural history collections as a training, educational and cultural resource



Group discussions : theme 1

Empowering the Swiss network of natural history collection for the future

- How should we develop on top of SwissCollNet ?
- How should activities be governed?
- How should a future network be funded ?
- What political role should a future network play?



Group discussions : theme 2

Promoting Swiss Natural history collections as a research tool

- What can be done to encourage research on collections in CH?
- How can we ensure that expertise is maintained?
- How can we ensure that collections are enriched?
- How can we sustain/manage the infrastructure for data aggregation?



Group discussions : theme 3

Valorising Swiss natural history collections as a training, educational and cultural resource

- As a network, how can we better valorize our collections ?
- How can we use/promote them as a training resource?
- How can we use/promote them as an educational resource?
- How can we use/promote them as a cultural resource?

