# **University Collections Strategic Plan**

December 2, 2019



## **Introduction**

Almost since the dawn of human civilization, human beings have collected objects—artifacts of their own making, or objects from the natural world. Humans have collected objects for their aesthetic value; as memories of people and events past and present; as records of their philosophical, religious, scientific, and literary achievements; and to illustrate their understanding of the natural world and universe. Today, these objects also include digital objects that were either created in a digital form or are digital copies made for purposes of dissemination or preservation.

All great civilizations have celebrated collections that reflect human cultural or scientific achievement. These renowned collections are housed in museums and libraries such as the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, the British Library in London, and the HathiTrust Digital Library, to name only a few. Other collections—including the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem and the account of slavery in the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.—chronicle some of the most lamentable episodes in human history. The list of great collections is all but endless, as is their diversity.

Collections are of immense value to humanity. But their destruction represents losses that are incalculable. This has been grimly underscored by three tragic events that have occurred in the last two years.

* The almost complete destruction in September 2018 of the National Museum of Brazil, said to have had “… one of the largest collections of natural history and anthropological artifacts in the world” as well as extensive other unique material.
* The fire in April 2019 that destroyed parts of the original medieval core of the iconic Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and which damaged or destroyed many priceless works of art there.
* The destruction of hundreds of thousands of master recordings and other audio and video material in a fire at Universal Studios, revealed by The New York Times in June of 2019 but which happened in 2008. The Times called it “the biggest disaster in the history of the music business."

Great universities are known for their great collections as well. University collections are vital tools for scholars and scientists from nearly all disciplines. They inspire students and are critical parts of their learning and understanding. They draw the people from beyond the university to view and study them. They have accumulated—in some cases, for centuries—unique and irreplaceable material of enormous value. Though not always thought of in these terms, they can be among a university’s most valuable resources.

## **Collections at IU**

Indiana University is home to some very well-known and heavily-used collections, including the Herman B Wells Library, the Lilly Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts, other campus libraries, the collections of the Eskenazi Museum of Art, and the Kinsey Institute collections.

More recently, IU’s collections have grown through the bold and visionary $15 million Media Digitization and Preservation Initiative (MDPI) that President Michael A. McRobbie first announced in his State of the University Address in 2013. Its ambitious goal was to digitize some 325,000 of IU’s most valuable, and in many cases unique, time-based audio and video objects as recommended by the faculty, and to do this by the IU Bicentennial. The digitization of these legacy collections ensures that all of this material will be made available to the broadest possible audience and that it is preserved in perpetuity. In this sense, it fully maximizes the value of all these collections to the IU community, the state, and beyond in the digital age. MDPI has been a great success. In this, IU’s bicentennial year, 99 percent of these time-based media objects—over 320,000—have been digitized, almost completing its original goal.

In June 2017, President McRobbie announced the second phase of MDPI: a $12 million project to digitize, and hence preserve, 25,000 of the most important films in IU’s extensive and internationally renowned film collection by the end of 2020. That digitization effort is now more than 50 percent complete.

All of Indiana University’s collections represent the investment, over many decades, of the people of the state of Indiana, the federal government, foundations, and businesses in research and scholarship at IU, as well as the generosity of donors who have entrusted vital collections to IU. The new vast amounts of born-digital data being generated today across nearly all disciplines represent their continuing investment.

But IU has many more collections of material objects—more than 200—across all campuses, with most being on the Bloomington campus. These include not only many significant art, cultural, and historical collections, but also a vast array of unique specimens that are part of IU’s 94 natural science collections ranging from astronomy to zooarchaeology. These collections support research, scholarship, teaching, public outreach, and historic preservation for the university and the broader community. These collections range in size, content, and use. Some have not been adequately inventoried, but it is estimated that, including the holdings of University Libraries, they contain more than 50 million individual material objects.

Historically, most of these collections have operated within individual departments or administrative units on each of IU’s campuses, with little to no attention from the university and with few university-wide policies governing them. As a result, and through no fault of those who oversee and curate them, a number of these collections are under-developed, under-utilized, and in need of more professional curation and maintenance.

Together, these collections constitute a resource of immense scholarly, educational, and cultural importance for the IU community. They hold enormous potential to open up new opportunities for study, scholarship, and exhibitions, and to thus become even more important to IU’s research and teaching missions.

There could be no better examples than the three recent tragedies described above of the enormous importance of IU’s collections and the need for a coherent university-wide approach as to how they are managed, organized, and housed in the best way to ensure both their most effective use in research and teaching within and without IU, and to ensure they have the specific care and preservation each requires.

In his 2017 State of the University address, President McRobbie created a new position—Executive Director of University Collections—and launched a sustained effort to ensure that all of IU’s collections are properly housed, maintained, utilized, and curated; more closely linked to IU’s research and teaching missions; and more widely accessible to all members of the IU community, scholars everywhere, and the public.

In the two years since the President’s call to action, substantial progress has been made towards enhancing the stewardship, accessibility, and use of IU’s collections. These initiatives include:

* Completing the Auxiliary Library Facility 3 (ALF-3) storage facility where many of IU’s most precious collections are stored in a climate-controlled, secure facility;
* Completing the extensive renovations of the Eskenazi Museum of Art, supported by the generosity of Sid and Lois Eskenazi;
* Renovating the Lilly Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts, supported by the generosity of Lilly Endowment Inc.;
* Establishing a new IU Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (IUMAA) from the existing collections of the Glenn Black Laboratory of Archaeology and the Mathers Museum of World Culture as well as completely renovating and remodeling the building in which they are housed, supported by the State of Indiana and private donors;
* Establishing a new Collections, Teaching, Research, and Exhibition Center (C-TREC), to be housed in the historic McCalla School building which is being completely renovated, supported by the State of Indiana;
* Renovating the Geology Building which houses the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences and its collections as well as developing new facilities for the Indiana Geological & Water Survey (IGWS), which together are home to more than 75 collections on the Bloomington campus, supported by the State of Indiana; and
* Renovating the Anderson Library and Calumet Regional Archives at IU Northwest which houses the history of Indiana’s Lake and Porter counties.

IU has launched a new website, *collections.iu.edu*, that for the first time ever, begins to bring together IU’s collections under one public-facing portal. This will continue to be developed to eventually provide comprehensive details on all of IU’s major collections (see III below).

IU’s first Executive Director of University Collections, Heather Calloway, was hired in August 2018. In her first 14 months on the job, she and her colleagues have contributed to the above initiatives and also worked to, among other activities:

* identify all of the collections housed at Indiana University (222, up from the 50 originally identified);
* meet with all of the collections managers across the university;
* establish a collections advisory council (see Appendix A);
* identify security and other protection issues affecting IU’s most significant collections;
* begin the process of valuing IU’s most significant collections;
* plan and implement a traveling collection in celebration of IU’s Bicentennial;
* address urgent issues with specific collections; and
* establish the office and hire two additional staff members.

## **University Collections Strategic Plan**

Another key part of President McRobbie’s 2017 State of the University address was a call for development of a University Collections Strategic Plan to guide the university’s effort to enhance the university’s stewardship of all of its collections, consistent with IU’s research and teaching missions, and to ensure that all collections are accessible to the entire university community, scholars everywhere, and the public. While this is already the case with many of IU’s largest and best-maintained collections, such as those maintained by University Libraries and the Eskenazi Museum of Art, there remains substantial work to be done across IU’s many smaller, less well-supported collections.

The plan that follows will help IU achieve these goals. It will help ensure that IU’s collections have a clear and coherent focus; that their mission is consistent with the university’s mission; that they are professionally managed, curated, and catalogued; that they are appropriately maintained and preserved; that they are guided by robust accession and deaccession policies; and that they are accessible to the greatest extent possible.

This plan outlines the critical goals for the next three years and a delivery timeline for each. It does not attempt to describe every activity that will need to be undertaken, but rather focuses on those key deliverables necessary to achieving IU’s long-term vision for its collections. These activities require the close cooperation of collections managers individually and through the Collections Advisory Council; university, campus, library, school, and department leadership; faculty; and others, as well as the office of University Collections. Many of these activities are already underway. The plan is intended to be a living document, updated regularly to take into account changed conditions and to take advantage of new opportunities.

## **Mission**

The mission of University Collections is to ensure the appropriate stewardship of Indiana University’s collections in service of the university’s teaching, research, and service mission.

## **Goals and Deliverables**

### **I. Collections Management and Care Framework**

University Collections will provide leadership in formulating clear, consistent, and efficient guidelines for collections management and care. This initiative will also address collections management systems for individual collections and a systemwide policy and document repository.

* 1. Required Plans and Policies
     1. Develop templates for collections management policies that will be required for all university collections by July 1, 2020, including:
        1. mission statement;
        2. strategic plan;
        3. management plan;
        4. security plan;
        5. emergency preparedness plan;
        6. collections review schedule ensuring reviews in compliance with reporting unit requirements, but not less than once every five years;
        7. collections development policies; and
        8. accession and deaccession policies.
     2. Multiple templates may be required for different types and sizes of collections and to take into account different resource levels.
     3. Provide counsel regarding development and implementation of these plans and other critical needs as they arise.
     4. Develop University Collections standards and work with collections managers and funders to ensure collections have the necessary resources to comply fully with these standards.
     5. Work with collections managers to ensure that every collection at IU has developed and is implementing these plans and policies by April 1, 2021.
     6. Ensure that collections maintain holdings that enhance IU’s mission of teaching, research, and service; for collections that do not, evaluate whether they should be deaccessioned.
     7. Report to university, campus, and school leadership on progress towards goals by October 1, 2020, and May 1, 2021, and as necessary thereafter.
  2. Collections Management Systems
     1. Evaluate collections management systems presently being used at IU and other systems that should be considered for future acquisition and implementation by October 1, 2020.
     2. Work with collections managers and Collections Advisory Council to determine next steps for deploying compatible collections management systems for those collections that lack them, by June 1, 2021.
     3. Expand Collections@IU to facilitate searching across all of IU’s collections of both material and digital objects.
  3. Policy and Document Repository
     1. Create a secure repository of all collections documents across IU by December 2019.

### **II. Environmental Stewardship Assessment and Guidelines**

Many IU collections have unmet needs in terms of storage, environmental controls, and risk management. To guarantee the stability of all collections, University Collections will work with collections managers to assess every collection’s environmental conditions and related risks and develop appropriate responses to address unmet needs. This includes the areas of climate (such as proper temperature and humidity), pest control, security, disaster planning, and proper item housing.

* 1. Develop a template for assessing collections storage, environmental controls, and risk management by January 31, 2020.
  2. Work with collections staff to ensure that all collections are assessed by November 1, 2020.
  3. Develop and implement a routine assessment schedule to assure that all collections are maintaining appropriate environmental standards, or are actively pursuing plans to remediate shortcomings, by June 1, 2021.
  4. Work with preservation and conservation staff in the Eskenazi Museum of Art and IU Libraries to develop and provide training to collections staff across IU in environmental management, pest control, security, disaster planning, and other collections needs by May 1, 2021.
  5. Recommend changes to collections storage locations or facilities to IU leadership, as needed, to ensure appropriate physical and environmental conditions, ongoing through January 2021.
  6. Supervise collections-specific logistics during moves from and into the ALF-3 facility, the IUMAA building, the Geology building, C-TREC at the McCalla School building and the IGWS facilities.
  7. Establish a workflow for monitoring environmental standards across collections, Summer 2021.

### **III. Digital Access to Collections**

University Collections will work with collection managers to make sure that each collection has a dedicated web page that provides, at minimum, a collections description, mission statement, and contact information. Currently, 82% of collections have a basic online presence and 25% include a mission statement. If a collection does not have the resources to maintain a basic web page, the page will be housed via the Collections@IU website. As the amount of available online collections material continues to grow, IU collections will contribute to efforts to make these collections more accessible and discoverable for all users across IU and externally via the Collections@IU web portal. The long-term goal is to ensure that collections make their key holdings accessible and searchable online.

* 1. Maintain and expand the Collections@IU website, to guarantee that up-to-date and accurate collections information is available to scholars and to the public by December 1, 2019.
  2. Work with collections managers to establish collections descriptions, representative images, contact information, and web links for all collections that currently lack information on the Collections@IU website by July 1, 2020.
  3. Provide input and advice for digital platform delivery decisions, with an eye toward functionality, search capability, and, where appropriate, access to digital scans of key holdings.
  4. Expand ongoing relationships with MDPI, University Information Technology Services (UITS), and IU Libraries that focus on outreach potential of digital resources and online discoverability, beginning Spring 2020.
  5. Work with collections managers to establish a digitization plan that will include priorities and goals for digitizing key portions of their collections by July 1, 2022.
  6. Work with the IU Libraries and UITS to develop digital preservation services.

### **IV. Increasing the Use of Collections in Research and Teaching**

The university maintains collections to contribute to its research, teaching, and service mission. An active and ongoing challenge is to enhance the role that collections play in research and teaching in particular. Increasing digital access to collections is obviously one important step in increasing both access and usefulness, but there are other steps that can be taken to ensure maximum impact.

* 1. Launch the new Collections, Teaching, Research, and Exhibition Center, to be housed in the historic McCalla School building, to provide central laboratory, teaching, collaboration, conservation, and exhibition spaces that all of IU’s collections can share.
  2. Leverage relationships with campus and school partners, including the Center for Rural Engagement, Faculty Colloquium on Excellence in Teaching (FACET), Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, and the appropriate Vice Provosts and Vice Chancellors, to expand awareness about IU’s collections and their usefulness in research and teaching.
  3. Work with collections managers to facilitate closer connections between collections and relevant schools and departments to share information about each other’s needs and resources.
  4. Search for and disseminate practical examples of, and new ideas for, how collections can be used in research and teaching, including ways of combining collections materials across collections and/or from multiple campuses, beginning January 2020 and ongoing.
  5. Work with collections staff and school and campus development officers to expand collections-based fellowship resources, starting in November 2019 (see below).
  6. While all of these activities should be on-going, it will be particularly helpful to report annually to university, campus, and school leadership on progress and obstacles in these efforts starting in May 2020.

### **V. Funding Collections’ Financial Needs**

Few of the universities’ collections have adequate resources, and while the university has been extraordinarily successful in increasing resources committed to collections in recent years, most collections continue to have unmet needs, including ongoing facilities maintenance, supplies, preservation and conservation requirements, and staffing. Moreover, new initiatives to enhance digital access and the role of collections in research and teaching will require additional support. Thinking creatively and working collaboratively across the university to find those resources is a key task for University Collections.

* 1. Work with collections managers, school and campus development officials, Corporate and Foundation Relations, and the Office of Business Partnerships to identify new potential funding opportunities for individual collections and for the activities of the individual collections more broadly. These could take the form of grants, gifts, contracts, sponsorship, or other forms of support.
  2. Identify IUF and IU development officers to help provide training in fundraising for appropriate collections staff.
  3. Work with Research Development to provide training in grant writing, assist collections managers in identifying appropriate grant calls, and facilitate campus partnerships necessary for grant completion.
  4. Survey collection managers to assess past successes in generating financial support and key factors that contribute to that success or impede it by August 1, 2021.
  5. Report results of the surveys to collections managers and university leadership by October 1, 2021.

## **Conclusion**

Indiana University has amassed collections that would leave many nations envious. As President McRobbie stressed in his 2017 State of the University address, we have a responsibility—to art, culture, history, science, and to the citizens of Indiana and the world who have helped us build these collections—to do all that we can to document all artifacts, share them through exhibitions here and around the world, and preserve them with the best tools available. To do anything less would fail our mission as a public research university.