

New Digital Project Gives Global access to Linnean Society Collections

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The Linnean Society of London is creating a digital archive of over 10.7 Terabytes of unique material relating to its historic collections, enabling full global access. The Society is guardian of the priceless collections of specimens, manuscripts and letters of the great Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778).

A distinguished scientist and doctor, Carl Linnaeus developed the binomial naming system of plants and animals that we are all familiar with today and which provides the fundamental framework for knowledge of the biota of the Earth, supporting effective conservation measures and the sustainable use of biodiversity.

Inspection of the collections for research purposes is currently only possible to those who are able to travel to the Society's rooms in London where they are stored. The provision of on-line access to these priceless collections will make this important resource available to the global community. In 2007 the Society is delivering on three major elements of its CARLS Programme (Computerised Access to the Collections of the Linnean Society) through making accessible:

- the Linnaean letters
- the Linnaean Herbarium
- the Zoological Collections (insects)

To realise this exciting project, The Linnean Society of London has contracted with the University of London Computing Centre (ULCC) to create the content management system that will deliver the collection of images and data to the world. The Centre has played a leading role in major digital archives projects and initiatives over the past 10 years. With extensive facilities and resources available, ULCC will also be providing image preservation and hosting services. It is anticipated the project will be launched by the end of 2007.

The total cost of bringing this stage of the Linnean Society's CARLS Programme to fruition is over £1,000,000 and has been made possible by generous funding from the Lisbet Rausing Charitable Fund and from the Society's own resources.

The announcement of the creation of a digital archive comes during the worldwide celebrations for the Tercentenary of Linnaeus' birth. The Linnean Society is hosting a comprehensive programme of

exciting promotional events, scientific meetings, awards, exhibitions and projects. Other projects within the CARLS Programme that will be launched this year include the 'Linnean Plant Name Typification Project' and the publication of 'Order out of Chaos'.

The President of the Linnean Society, Professor David Cutler said that the digital archive project is particularly important because it provides access to these priceless collections to those working in taxonomy in developing countries, and distant parts of the world who might not otherwise be able to see them. The image quality is such that few will need to handle the priceless specimens to obtain the information they seek. Viewing the virtual images rather than travelling also reduces carbon emissions.

"We will be working closely with the University of London Computer Centre to preserve the digital images of the collections into the future and to develop and host the content management system that will deliver the images and related data to the World Wide Web."

Much more work still remains to make the Linnean Society's collections and premises fully accessible. Once further funding has been secured, the Society will undertake additional ventures. These include:

- the digital imaging of the remaining zoological collections (shells, fish, and bryozoans)
- digital imaging of the Smithian Herbarium
- providing additional online library resources, such as on-line access to portraits, archives, manuscripts, Fellowship records and certificates.

For more information, photos, or to arrange interviews with Julia Hoare, Linnean Society, please contact Elaine Shaughnessy, Head of Development, Linnean Society on 020 7434 4479. www.linnean.org

Notes for Editors:

Founded in 1788, **The Linnean Society of London** is the national academy for biology and the oldest such organization in the world. The Society holds Linnaeus's original library and collections. It is named after the great Swedish naturalist, Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) who developed the system of binomial nomenclature. This system today provides the fundamental framework for knowledge of the biota of the Earth, supporting effective conservation measures and the sustainable use of biodiversity. Our more than 2000 Fellows come from all walks of life, and represent the range of professional scientists to amateurs interested in natural history. The Fellowship is international and includes world leaders in each branch of biology who use the Society's premises and publications to communicate new advances in their fields. For these reasons, the Linnean Society has been aptly described as 'A Living Forum for Biology'. For more information visit www.linnean.org

University of London Computer Centre (ULCC) is an IT solutions provider (offering IT infrastructure, web development, desktop support, e-learning, digital preservation and hosting) to academic and public sector organisations throughout the UK. ULCC is a central activity of the University of London and provides information technology services to the other central activities. For more information about ULCC, visit www.ulcc.ac.uk