



MUSEUM of  
NORTHERN  
ARIZONA

*Celebrating the Colorado Plateau*

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **MNA awarded grant from Institute of Museum and Library Services to support botanical preservation, documentation needs**

(Flagstaff, Ariz.) May 16, 2017 – The McDougall Herbarium at the Museum of Northern Arizona (MNA) is expanding due to a grant awarded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The three-year award, totaling \$149,967, supports the top priority preservation and documentation needs of MNA's botany collection by ensuring that it is accessible and discoverable. With IMLS funding, MNA has hired Kirstin Phillips as its new Botany Collections Manager. Along with a dedicated volunteer crew, Phillips is cataloging botany specimens and reorganizing the McDougall Herbarium specimens to current plant taxonomic classification.

As well as cataloging a backlog of 3,544 specimens, the grant will allow MNA to post new holdings to SEINet (<http://swbiodiversity.org/seinet>), a botany aggregator web site to ensure that these specimens are accessible to a world-wide network of scholars and avocational botanists. The backlogged specimens are from a variety of MNA sponsored projects including specimens collected at Grand Canyon in 1941 by Al Whiting, Curator of Biology, ethnobotanical specimens collected by Ben Wetherill, son of John and Louisa Wetherill, from the Navajo Nation between 1920-1923, and specimens from rare plant surveys conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. The newly cataloged specimens will be integrated into the McDougall Herbarium, increasing its size to over 40,000 specimens.

Last organized in 2009 when the botany collection was moved to the Easton Collections Center as part of an IMLS storage grant, a new re-organization of the Herbarium is necessary at this time. Plant taxonomists continue to refine and reclassify family trees. Merging both plant systematics (relationships between plants and their evolution) and plant taxonomy (identification, classification, and naming of species), plant taxonomists have proposed major re-classifications in the past seven years, hence the need to bring MNA's herbarium up-to-date.

"IMLS has consistently funded numerous library and museum projects throughout Arizona since its inception in the 1980s," said Elaine Hughes, MNA's collections director. "We should be proud that so many Arizona institutions have been successful in winning these awards through a nationwide, highly competitive grant process. Please show your support for this vitally important agency by asking Arizona legislators to support its reauthorization in 2018."

From 548 applications that IMLS received, only 206 grants were awarded in September 2016. In the past 15 years, MNA has received several IMLS and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grants. Along with support from foundations such as the Southwestern Foundation, MNA has received over \$2.4 million dollars in federal and private grants to bring its collections from substandard conditions up to current museum standards. MNA was recently highlighted by NEH for its work in preserving the nation's cultural heritage. The article can be accessed online at <https://www.neh.gov/divisions/preservation/featured-project/50-states-preservation-museum-northern-arizona-in-flagstaff-arizona>.

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