MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year was unlike any other for the Florida Museum, just as it was for most of you reading these words. It began with immense promise and potential. Museum visitation was strong, research productivity and funding were climbing, outreach activities diversifying, and fundraising efforts were surpassing goals. And then, as winter turned into spring, the coronavirus pandemic arrived at our doorstep and everything changed.

To protect everyone from the COVID-19, UF quickly pivoted in March to online-only courses, closed its laboratories and classrooms, and sent its students home. And the Florida Museum shuttered its doors on March 18. Those doors would remain closed for three and a half months, until July 1, 2020, when we reopened to the public following strict CDC safety guidelines.

During March and April, faculty, staff and students learned to work remotely. We met regularly via Zoom and carried on with the business of the Museum as best we could. ‘Essential workers’ were gradually allowed back on campus, and in our public spaces we used the closure to clean and repair exhibits, an ordinarily difficult task with visitors in the facility. Meanwhile, our scientific staff wrote up their research results, submitted grant proposals, and made the successful transition to online teaching.

As the shutdown extended into May and June, longer than we ever imagined, our exhibits and education staff embraced virtual programming as a necessary alternative to in-person attendance. We expanded our delivery of exhibit tours, lectures, outreach programs and even our summer camps for kids. To our amazement the virtual summer classes proved very popular, reaching students from all over Florida, across the nation and even around the world. Our eyes were opened to a digital landscape whose scale we hadn’t really appreciated previously.

While our virtual audience grew, we missed our in-person visitors. School tours, facility rentals, as well as visitors to the Butterfly Rainforest and featured exhibitions were non-existent; consequently, our earned revenue stream dried up, leading to difficult staffing adjustments reflecting this new reality. Upon reopening to the public in July, we witnessed a gradual return of visitors; however, our total annual visitation ended up about 70% of the previous fiscal year, which is not bad considering we were closed during our busiest quarter. In contrast, our scholarly publication output set an all-time record for productivity, illustrating that working remotely can have its benefits.

Without question this was the most stressful, unusual year in recent memory. We all longed for a return to ‘normal.’ Nevertheless, we learned a lot about ourselves, our practices and priorities, and how we'll approach the future. One thing is certain, we won't be the same museum that shut down in March. Looking ahead, we'll seek a new balance between digital and in-person programming and respond to the challenge of relevancy in a post-pandemic world, while addressing the needs of our increasingly diverse audiences. Even during the darkness of 2020, the future looks bright for this resilient institution!

Douglas S. Jones
Director
Florida Museum of Natural History

Even during the darkness of 2020, the future looks bright for this resilient institution!
DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

The Florida Museum officially launched the Digital Engagement department just one month before Florida’s COVID-19 shutdown. There was recognition that digital communications merited a specialized team dedicated to its success, but no one could have foreseen the critical resource the new department suddenly became when all public functions had to immediately pivot to an online format.

Why Digital Engagement as a separate entity?

Gone is the simpler world of just websites and web visitors. We must bring the Museum to communities over a multitude of different services and meet people where they are—digitally. Combining oversight for website content strategy, email marketing, and social media under the same leadership ensures that these efforts are coordinated so visitors have a seamless experience regardless of the platform used to encounter the Museum.

Digital engagement is a specific field of communications that requires a user-first focus: delivering the right content at the right time to the right audience. Integrating data analysis at every step ensures measurable goals are set and resources are strategically deployed to best reach our fellow science fans.

Critical COVID-19 response

When the exhibition hall closed its doors, Digital Engagement quickly created a closure-focused campaign strategy, provided data and research on the many new proposed initiatives, and also took on video production. Acknowledging lockdown audiences’ craving for interesting content, DE also worked to surface existing material, convert physical exhibits to online formats, and assist other projects including launching a new video series, blogs, and resource sites.

Looking ahead

Digital Engagement is a critical component for keeping in touch with fans and followers and reaching even more audiences than ever before. Expectations for quality digital content have rapidly accelerated and the Museum must continue to strive for data-driven reflection and analysis to meet this growing need, ensuring that the Museum’s online offerings continue to bring value and inspiration to the world in an ever-changing digital landscape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Website Visitors</td>
<td>3,128,929</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook Likes</td>
<td>37,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter Followers</td>
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<td>3,166</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email Subscribers</td>
<td>10,899</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESEARCH & COLLECTIONS

openVertebrate Project (oVert)

Since 2017, the Florida Museum has led an ambitious project known as the openVertebrate Project (oVert), a National Science Foundation-funded initiative involving 16 major research institutions with a goal of CT scanning 20,000 vertebrate specimens from museums across the U.S. and freely distributing these online for research and education.

The Florida Museum’s Digitization Discovery and Dissemination (3D) lab worked with the oVert Thematic Collections Network to expand the applications and accessibility of our natural history collections. Digital 3D data from computed tomography and structured light scanning reveal the internal anatomy of animals via high-resolution 3D models. With virtual access to specimens, researchers can peel away the skin of a Mexican narrow-mouthed toad to glimpse its circulatory system, a class of third-graders can count eggs inside a copperhead, undergraduates can 3D print and compare skulls across a range of species and a veterinarian can prepare for surgery on a giraffe at a zoo.

These scans have been featured prominently in high profile publications and recent exhibits around the country and are increasingly valuable resources as biology, engineering and anthropology courses have migrated online due to the complications of COVID-19. “It’s exciting to glimpse the inside of rare and precious specimens, but that’s just the beginning,” said David Blackburn, oVert’s lead principal investigator and Florida Museum’s associate curator of herpetology. “This opens up a whole world of vertebrate biology research and education.”

Status at the End of the Third Year

8,300 Specimen CT scans created
4,300 Genera represented in over 700 families
740,000 Data views
31,000 Data downloads
800 University students used data in their courses

124 oVert faculty, staff & students
58 Studies published
1 Patent awarded
40 Presentations given
100 Faculty, staff & students trained
Environmental Archaeology

The Environmental Archaeology division received a grant from the National Science Foundation to rehabilitate the Wing legacy archaeological collections and archives, the largest of any Collections in Support of Biological Research (CSBR) awarded to date. This grant will support improvement of the physical curation of archaeological collections and open access to collections data.

Historical Archaeology

The Historical Archaeology division launched the Comparative Mission Archaeology Portal. This website and digital archive dedicated to the archaeology of Franciscan missions was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. At present, this resource contains three mission sites with over 60,000 artifact entries, complemented by narrative descriptions of the histories of the missions and the investigations that were conducted at the sites.

South Florida Archaeology & Ethnography

In collaboration with the Randell Research Center and Florida Public Archaeology Network, the South Florida Archaeology and Ethnography division led excavations at Calusa Island investigating ancient human-environment relationships and climate change in Southwest Florida. Despite a difficult year with the COVID-19 pandemic cutting short the "high season," the RRC welcomed thousands of visitors, maintained productive relationships with local businesses and enjoyed the continued support of more than 75 docents and volunteers.

Molecular Systematics & Evolutionary Genetics

The Laboratory of Molecular Systematics and Evolutionary Genetics had a productive year, conducting fieldwork in Florida, Eastern North America, Brazil and China as well as presenting research results at national and international conferences. Outreach activities included presentations and events as part of the "One Tree, One Planet" art projection, with collaborator Naziha Mestaoui.

Ornithology

The Ordway Lab of Ecosystem Conservation continued to promote the conservation of biodiversity through intensive field studies, especially in the tropics and in Florida. In the last year, students studied how bird behavior and biodiversity change along environmental gradients such as habitat fragmentation (Peru, Colombia), urbanization (Kenya, United States), elevation (Peru, China), precipitation (Peru, Ecuador) and habitat disturbance (Peru, United States).

Vertebrate Paleontology

The Vertebrate Paleontology division continues to focus on a large-scale fossil excavation of late Miocene vertebrates from the Montbrook locality in Levy County, Florida. This collective effort has included hundreds of public volunteers and many university students digging on the site. Renovations of the offsite 5,000-square-foot vertebrate paleontology storage facility were completed with funding from the Felburn Foundation and the National Science Foundation, allowing for major curatorial progress in this new space.
Curators and staff with the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity continued their groundbreaking research focused on the conservation, diversity, ecology and evolution of moths and butterflies.

Lyin’ eyes: Butterfly, moth eyespots may look the same, but likely evolved separately

Akito Kawahara talks insect declines – and what you can do – with Adam Conover

READ MORE

READ MORE
Research Locations
**Collections & Research Data**

- **237** Peer-reviewed publications
- **55** Grants & contracts worth $9 million
- **221** Undergraduates & postdoctoral fellows working in the collections
- **40+** Million specimens & artifacts
- **187,921** New accessions to collections
- **358,465** New specimens & artifacts cataloged
- **38,772** Specimens & artifacts loaned via 467 loans
- **4,400** News articles about museum research with potential readership of 6.7 billion

**New Faculty Hires**

- **Megan Ennes**
  **Assistant Curator, Museum Education**
  As part of her research, Ennes will work with faculty and educators to use museum resources to develop and assess programs that help increase the public's understanding of science. Learn more

- **Michelle LeFebvre**
  **Assistant Curator, South Florida Archaeology & Ethnography**
  LeFebvre's work explores how humans have interacted with their environment over long periods of time, with a focus on the Indigenous people of Florida and the Caribbean. Learn more

**Staff & Faculty Teaching**

- **108** Graduate committees chaired
- **156** Graduate committees served
- **137** Independent studies supervised
- **41** Courses taught by Museum faculty
OUTREACH

Exhibits & Public Programs

The Florida Museum's Exhibits and Public Programs division experienced a tumultuous, but exciting year in 2019-2020.

The fiscal year started with robust attendance to Powell Hall for the featured exhibit, CROCS: Ancient Predators in a Modern World, and the Butterfly Rainforest exhibit, which both attracted large audiences. The second special exhibit, Amazing Pollinators, was a hands-on and immersive exploration of pollinators featuring a colorful maze filled with different habitats from around the world. The Florida Museum's staff contributed to the development of this exhibit, which will continue its tour across the country.

Pre-pandemic programming and outreach included a new series offered in collaboration with TESI, Science On Tap: Is Florida Trying to Kill Me? These popular community-based events were held in partnership with local breweries to explore topics such as sinkholes, mosquitoes, hurricanes and sharks. The Pop-Up Museum program took interactive science activities outside our walls, from the Tallahassee Science Festival to the Williston Peanut Festival.

In March 2020, the Museum experienced an unprecedented closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which continued through the end of the fiscal year in June. Museum staff pivoted to a digital distribution method and created new ways of engaging audiences. Many successful programs included virtual tours of the Museum's exhibits for schools and public audiences, the premiere of the Discovery Time video series for early learners and live engagement with scientists in programs such as The Best Nightlife In Town and Science OFF Tap, a virtual hybrid of the previously in-person program. These programs reached audiences throughout Florida and often included participants from other states and countries.

Attendance & Outreach Data

- **150,267** Annual visitation
- **11,853** Public programs attendees
- **142,017** Visitors to Museum traveling exhibits at other venues
- **3,027** Visitors to Pop-up Museum events
- **1,630** K-6 camps participants
- **10,219** School programs participants
- **9,372** School outreach participants
- **83** Teacher workshop attendees
- **8,782** Other community outreach participants

Amazing Pollinators Exhibit

[READ MORE]

Discovery Time Videos

[READ MORE]
Thompson Earth Systems Institute

The University of Florida Thompson Earth Systems Institute (TESI) is advancing communication and education about Earth systems science in a way that inspires Floridians to be effective stewards of our planet.

This year has been a year of resilience. As the coronavirus pandemic shut down physical spaces and banned public events, TESI quickly adapted by going completely virtual. Our faculty taught their classes completely online, taking care to engage students in a meaningful way during this difficult time. Our Science on Tap series was redesigned using videoconferencing technology and live polling tools to encourage audience participation. Meanwhile, our Scientist in Every Florida School team assisted teachers across the state with their online classrooms by providing free virtual field trips and digital learning resources.

To learn more about TESI, please see the 2019-2020 TESI Annual Report (PDF).

TESI Outreach Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-12 Students</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEFS Scientist Visits</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 Students &amp; Teachers</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floridians Learn About Earth Systems</td>
<td>1,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Workshop Attendees</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scientist in Every Florida School

The Scientist in Every Florida School mission is to build long-term collaborative relationships between teachers and scientists, better integrate current scientific research and big data into classroom lessons that adhere to Florida’s Sunshine State Standards and connect a scientist with every school in the state. Because of the team’s experience setting up secure and interactive, web-based visits, they were able to jump into action when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional school learning and prompted teachers around the state to quickly mobilize, rethink their curriculum and launch virtual classrooms. In response, SEFS quickly developed a suite of digital, on-demand K-12 resources organized by topic that teachers around the state could easily deploy using their virtual teaching platform of choice.

Public Programming: Science on Tap

As a state famous for many perceived dangers, it’s no surprise that 850 curious Floridians flocked to Gainesville breweries for TESI’s Science on Tap: Is Florida Trying to Kill Me? event series. Curious participants listened eagerly as enthusiastic scientists debunked myths, tested attendee knowledge and explained the science behind common Florida dangers like hurricanes, wildfires and sinkholes. TESI educators coached scientists on how to make their presentations more user-friendly, engaging and interactive. One ingredient for a successful Science on Tap event is Mentimeter, a presentation software that includes a live polling tool to ensure audience participation throughout the talk.
SUPPORT

Longtime Museum supporters' new gift is an investment in Florida's future.

Linda and Ken McGurn's life work has centered on leaving places better than they found them.

Beginning in the late 1970s, the couple bought and renovated a series of downtrodden properties in the heart of Gainesville, often undertaking the grittiest repair jobs themselves. Where others saw decay and disuse, the McGurns glimpsed potential. Block by block, they revitalized a dying downtown with new office, retail, and residential spaces; preserving local history and installing solar power before green energy was a buzzword.

Now the McGurns are turning their attention to the ultimate restoration project – Florida.

With 1,350 miles of coastline, Florida is ground zero for climate change, vulnerable to rising sea levels, saltwater intrusion and stronger hurricanes.

"We are one of the most at-risk states in the country," Linda McGurn said. "That's why it's important for Florida to be at the forefront of getting the word out about what we're facing and what we can do about it."

The McGurns have been stalwart supporters of the University of Florida and the Florida Museum of Natural History for decades. But their conviction that the environment is in dire straits – and that science-driven solutions are crucial – led them to make their largest gift to date. Their donation will help fund an expansion to the Museum's Powell Hall to headquarter the UF Thompson Earth Systems Institute, also known as TESI.

TESI, founded in 2018 with a cornerstone gift from Jon and Beverly Thompson, advances communication and education about Earth systems science – air, water, land and life – in a way that inspires Floridians to be effective stewards of the planet. The Institute teaches scientists how to talk about their research and connects them to the public through innovative programs. In the past fiscal year, scientists reached 16,000 K-12 students and more than 1,800 Floridians with creative outreach on the interactions between Earth systems and how they're influenced by human activities.

This mission resonates deeply with the McGurns, who have witnessed the clouding of Florida's springs with chemical runoff, residents of the Maldives standing on their kitchen tables in floodwater and people raking mounds of plastic trash on India's beaches.

"We're all connected," Ken McGurn said. "When we affect one part of nature, other parts are affected, too. We need to get that message out."

The TESI expansion, in its conceptual phase, will include a high-tech classroom, conference room, gallery, media space and learning labs. The added space and technology will help the institute better reach its primary audiences: students, teachers, advocates and policymakers who are in a position to effect environmental change locally, nationally and around the world.

"The McGurns' generous gift for this modern facility will greatly enhance our opportunity to disseminate knowledge about the Earth and its environment for the benefit of Florida's future," said TESI Director Bruce MacFadden.
The funds also enable Museum leadership to seek additional support from the Florida Legislature to make the project a reality.

The McGurks made the donation as a capstone to their leadership of the 2019 phase of the UF Go Greater campaign, which raised a record-setting $519.1 million, with a focus on addressing climate change and other environmental issues. As co-chairs, the couple were able to share their passion for preserving natural resources with fellow Gators and showcase UF’s research and conservation efforts.

The gift, they said, is “a natural fit for us” as an extension of their lifelong work to revitalize and restore places for the benefit of future generations.

“Linda and Ken McGurks’ deep commitment to environmental stewardship and the role of science in understanding and protecting our natural world have influenced their generous gifts to the Florida Museum,” said Museum Director Douglas S. Jones. “Whether conserving sensitive lands, providing funds for excellence, supporting biodiversity studies, or contributing to a capital project for disseminating critical information about Earth’s natural systems. Ken and Linda set the standard for inspiring people to care about life on Earth.”

Join the McGurks in supporting the Thompson Earth Systems Institute.

---

**Volunteer Hours**

![Volunteer Hours](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours donated</th>
<th>Total volunteers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22943</td>
<td>499</td>
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**Fundraising Data**

![Fundraising Data](image)

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash Gifts</td>
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<td>Gifts in Kind</td>
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<td>Bequests</td>
<td>$1,558,333.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Pledges</td>
<td>$2,865,333.22</td>
<td>32%</td>
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**Total Endowment Value**

$27,685,774.65

**Total Gifts FY 19-20**

$8,777,990.50
FINANCIALS

Revenue
$27.03M

- UF and State Allocation
- Contracts and Grants
- Gifts
- Other UF Income
- Earned Income
- Investment Income

Expenses
$23.18M

- Salaries and Benefits
- Other Operating Expenses
- Overhead and Other Fees
- Transfers for Future Programming

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<th>Category</th>
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<td>Gifts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other UF Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earned Income</td>
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<td>Investment Income</td>
<td>$0.71M</td>
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<td>Salaries &amp; Benefits</td>
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<td>Other Operating Expenses</td>
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<td>Overhead/Other Fees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfers for Future Programming</td>
<td>$0.11M</td>
<td>0.46%</td>
</tr>
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AWARDS & HONORS

Steve Manchester  Larry Page  Pam Soltis  Doug Soltis  Liz Wing

Warren Brown  Shan Jiang  Andrei Sourakov  Museum Graphics Team

Nicolas Delsol  Victor Perez  Ryan St Laurent  Informatics Data Team


