



# Welcome to OpenHerbarium

## A Symbiota Network

[Symbiota](#) is a database management system for mobilizing, sharing, and visualizing organism-based biodiversity data. [OpenHerbarium](#) is a website driven by Symbiota designed for herbaria. It was created to enable herbaria outside North America to share their data in a way that encourages engagement in the kinds of organisms archived and studied in herbaria: algae, fungi, and plants.

A distinctive features of Symbiota is its ability to integrate a wide range of resources with the information derived from herbarium specimens. It also includes several tools designed for teachers and lay people as well as tools to meet the needs of research scientists and can accept data from other data management systems. This range of abilities, which is constantly growing, has made Symbiota the most widely used biodiversity data management system in North America, possibly in the world. Some institutions use it as their primary data management tool; others use Symbiota networks as a mechanism for sharing their data while using another system for managing their data because of the rich experiences Symbiota offers users.

These documents include some that describe ways in which the information in OpenHerbarium can be used and others describing how to contribute to it. At present, there are few resources in OpenHerbarium so the value of some of the tools is limited but, as more institutions and individuals contribute, it will become increasingly useful. In addition, it will introduce contributors to the rapidly expanding discipline of biodiversity informatics and enable them to increase the value of their taxonomic and ecological knowledge.

For convenience, the documents have been placed in three different categories: basic, individual, and institutional. Those in the basic category cover concepts critical to providing and sharing high quality biodiversity resources via a Symbiota network such as OpenHerbarium. Documents in the Individual category discuss how individuals can use information in and provide resources to a Symbiota network such as OpenHerbarium. They do not require association with a linked collection, merely an account with appropriate permissions. The Institutional documents are, as the name suggested, for people working with institutional records. They focus on maximizing the rate at which institutions can make specimen records available and the value of doing so.

