



Natural History Museum,
Research,
Cromwell Road,
London,
SW7 5BD,
UK

Phycological Society of America

24 February 2024

Dean Susan Alberts
Dean of Natural Sciences
Duke University
alberts@duke.edu

Dear Dean Alberts,

Re: Planned closure of the Duke University Herbarium

I am writing to you on behalf of the Phycological Society of America (PSA) in my capacity as President of the Phycological Society of America. The news of the planned closure of the Duke University Herbarium is shocking.

As a Society with algae at its heart, the dismembering of this invaluable and irreplaceable collection is appalling. The algal collection with over 20,500 specimens of marine macroalgae from the southeastern US, Caribbean and Mexico constitutes a major collection and is currently the best repository of Carolina and southeastern USA specimens in the world. As a collection, the specimens serve as an incredibly valuable temporal and spatial record, crucial information in relation to the planetary biodiversity crisis. Furthermore, the 100 type specimens must not be lost. These are fundamental to understanding species concepts, the basis of our understanding of diversity and species composition and indeed essential to science. These specimens from those regions of the world are vital and of global importance.

Furthermore, the Duke University Herbarium algal collection contains specimens going back many years. It was most recently curated by Richard Searles with many contributions from Craig Schneider, both prominent phycologists with PSA, and recipients of the PSA Prescott Award for their book: 'Craig W. Schneider and Richard B. Searles. 1991. *Seaweeds of the Southeastern United States: Cape Hatteras to Cape Canaveral*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC. 553 pp.' Craig was also the recipient of the PSA Award of Excellence in 2020.

In conclusion, we strongly urge you to reconsider this decision. Collections such as yours are precious. I reiterate that they are invaluable and irreplaceable. The store of information that they hold should be regarded as part of the national infrastructure and looked after as such.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Juliet Brodie
President, Phycological Society of America
Merit Researcher and Biodiversity Change Theme Leader,
Natural History Museum,
London.
j.brodie@nhm.ac.uk