

## SAMPLE ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

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### Teaching Conservation with Invertebrate Collections in Dublin

Collections-based Biology in Dublin (CoBiD) is making specimen resources more available to conservation workers. This new partnership between the National University of Ireland (University College Dublin) and the National Museum of Ireland (Natural History) aims to develop teaching and research resources locally, as well as improve collections access to all researchers internationally. The NMINH collections contain some 3 - 4 million specimen objects in total from worldwide collections, but chronic understaffing has severely limited their availability for research use. Important holdings include strong entomological collections, Atlantic marine invertebrates and terrestrial mollusc collections, increasing material from ongoing regional studies, as well as important historical collections. For example, voucher specimens from the European Union “BioMar” (1996) survey of Irish nearshore invertebrate faunas comprises detailed biogeographical data for marine species and “biotopes” defined by the project. Together with colleagues from the Ulster Museum (Belfast), we are developing this material for continuous biodiversity assessment. Use and accessibility of voucher material is essential to biological conservation research—particularly in invertebrate collections, where depositing voucher specimens is often required by research permits but consultation of existing collections may or may not be obligatory. With this in mind, a pilot undergraduate course is currently underway (Spring 2004) to teach senior undergraduates about the applications of archival collections in conservation-oriented research, with work based in the collections of the National Museum of Ireland. This new teaching programme serves to bridge a gap between “ecology-style” conservation research (well represented in the UCD Zoology department) and systematic collections of the Museum. In the long term, training the next generation of biologists to use and conserve archival specimen collections will benefit invertebrate conservation through forming “baseline” pilot data and preventing unnecessary specimen collection.

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