

Public Response Timeline to Duke University's Decision to Divest its Herbarium

Date	Communication	"Sound Bite"
13 Feb 2024	Email from Dean Susan Alberts to Duke Herbarium curators	"We have concluded it's in the best interests of both Duke and the herbarium to find a new home or homes for these collections."
14 Feb 2024	Medriva – by Ayanna Amadi	The Uncertain Future of the Duke Herbarium: Impact on Botanical Research and Conservation Efforts
14 Feb 2024	Email from Director of Missouri Botanical Garden	Robbing future generations from the opportunity to learn from this tremendous resource, all apparently in the pursuit of some short-term vision and research fad-chasing.
15 Feb 2024	Change.org	Urge Duke University to Reconsider Closing Their Herbarium
15 Feb 2024	Duke Chronicle – by Claire Cranford	'To kill a program': Duke to close herbarium after over 100 years of operation.
15 Feb 2023	University of Washington Herbarium	Duke's misguided decision to close the Duke University herbarium permanently is akin to the burning of the Library of Alexandria in ancient times.
16 Feb 2024	Inside Higher Ed – by Kathryn Palmer	Scientists Decry Closure of Duke's Herbarium
16 Feb 2024	Society of Herbarium Curators – by Anna Monfils	As a society that represents the profession of herbarium care and practice, we are distressed to hear of Duke University's decision.
16 Feb 2024	Science Magazine – by Elizabeth Pennisi	'A tragic mistake': Decision to close Duke University's herbarium triggers furor
16 Feb 2024	Natural Science Collections Alliance – by Gil Nelson	This decision diminishes Duke's status as an academic institution when collections are being studied in increasingly novel and technologically advanced ways.
16 Feb 2024	Letter from Lynn Bohs (former DUKE vascular plant curator)	The five curators were advised of this decision in an email, showing an utter lack of class on the part of Alberts and other administrators, and they should be ashamed of themselves.

16 Feb 2024	Duke Chronicle - by Van T. Cotter	The Duke Herbarium is a valuable, irreplaceable asset, and its loss would be to the detriment of Duke's reputation as a leading scientific research university.
16 Feb 2024	Email from Biology Chair Bernhardt: Herbarium News	The administration will not continue to support the herbarium following the move. It needs to be donated to another facility (or facilities) that is (are) better able to offer sustained support.
18 Feb 2024	Letter from Stuart Pimm – Duke's NSOE	An exceedingly poor decision that speaks badly of Duke's commitment to studying environmental issues, especially climate disruption and biodiversity loss.
18 Feb 2024	Letter from Robert Wyatt (Duke PhD Alum)	I write with profound sadness and disappointment in my beloved graduate alma mater, having just learned of your plans to terminate the herbarium.
18 Feb 2024	Email from Asociación Botánica Ecuatoriana – by Alina Freire-Fierro	The DUKE herbarium is a very important and excellent resource for colleagues from Latin America
19 Feb 2024	Letter from Duke Biology PhD Alum 2001 – John Stinchcombe	Duke is abdicating a position of global leadership at the forefront of ecology, evolutionary biology, global change biology, and environmental biology.
19 Feb 2024	Field Museum of Natural History – by Thorsten Lumsch	With its 100-year history, the herbarium at Duke has helped establish your institution as a premier institution in the world .
20 Feb 2024	Duke Chronicle – by Matt Johnson (Duke Alum)	Closing Duke's Herbarium: A fear of long-term climate commitment?
20 Feb 2024	American Society of Plant Taxonomists – by Jun Wen	"The decision to dismantle the Duke University herbarium is very disappointing and intimates a decline from the current outstanding stature of Duke University".
21 Feb 2024	New York Times - by Carl Zimmer	Duke Shuts Down Huge Plant Collection, Causing Scientific Uproar
21 Feb 2024	Botanical Society of America – by Brenda Molano-Flores	Duke is ceding its position as a top research center and strongly indicating it no longer values the support and training of the next generation of scientists.

21 Feb 2024	<u>American Institute of Biological Sciences – by Scott Glisson</u>	Duke’s decision to forgo responsibility of their herbarium specimens - and the important biodiversity research they support - sets a terrible precedent.
21 Feb 2024	<u>American Bryological and Lichenological Association – by Daphne Stone</u>	For Duke to discontinue support for a major resource is indeed a sad way to mark the centennial of an academic institution with such a strong tradition of scientific contributions.
21 Feb 2024	<u>Mycological Society of America</u>	In principle, asking peer institutions to pay for something that Duke University is not willing to support is a form of inequity
21 Feb 2024	<u>Letter to Duke from Scott LaGreca (former lichen collections manager)</u>	Chicita Culberson’s worst nightmare come true
21 Feb 2024	<u>Letter to Duke from Bruce Baldwin (former Duke herbarium curator)</u>	News of the decision to close the Duke Herbarium was quickly heard throughout the world; I am saddened by the damage that news has already done to the perception of Duke
22 Feb 2024	<u>Canadian Botanical Association – by Mihai Costea</u>	“Duke demonstrates a neglect of institutional responsibility and publicly devalues biodiversity and conservation science”.
26 Feb 2024	<u>The Harvard Gazette – by Jill Radskin</u>	Herbaria’s use and importance grows with climate change
26 Feb 2024	<u>ATMOS – by Hannah Seo</u>	The Lady Gaga Ferns Are Losing Their Home. It’s Surprisingly Tragic for Science and Society
26 Feb 2024	<u>National Park Service – by Mary Troy</u>	Will need to return all specimens collected with Duke permits from National Parks. They are property of the National Park Service and the Federal Government.
27 Feb 2024	<u>Ecological Society of America – by Shahid Naeem</u>	Duke’s withdrawal from supporting the herbarium contradicts its commitment to climate research and sustainability
27 Feb 2024	<u>Duke Chronicle – by Zoe Kolenovsky and Claire Cranford</u>	Faculty allege decision to close Duke Herbarium motivated by departmental competition, ‘limited resources’
27 Feb 2024	<u>WRAL News – by Destinee Patterson</u>	Researchers call on Duke University to reconsider its herbarium closure

27 Feb 2024	<u>Duke Lemur Center – by Matt Borths</u>	Our plans to build a Discovery Center at the DLC are a lot like your vision for the Herbarium. We could reduce a lot of infrastructure redundancy by combining efforts.
27 Feb 2024	<u>Email from Maura Flannery (Author of In the Herbarium: The Hidden World of Collecting and Preserving Plants)</u>	As a parent of a Duke alum, I urge the administration to reconsider this decision which will definitely besmirch the university's excellent reputation.
28 Feb 2024	<u>The Society of Systematic Biologists – by Corrie Moreau</u>	The loss of Duke's herbarium, can only impede biodiversity research and represents an abrogation of the responsibility to address one of the greatest challenges facing humanity
1 March 2024	<u>Smithsonian Institution – by Soltis, Kress et al.</u>	This proposed action makes a deeply unfortunate statement about the value placed on the study of natural history at Duke and, sadly, in academia more broadly
1 March 2024	<u>The Closing of the Duke Herbarium Podcast: Crime Pays But Botany Doesn't (Joey Santore)</u>	About the University's Decision to cut costs by closing the herbarium as well as the general trend in modern US Academia of failing to recognize the importance of Botany in society
4 March 2024	<u>Plant pressings, photo albums and portals into our past - Story by Lindsey Berebitsky (Purdue Univ.)</u>	We need to appreciate that our herbaria are our photo albums of natural biodiversity.
6 March 2024	<u>Chinese Academy of Sciences – by Tao Deng</u>	A Letter Advocating Reconsideration of the Decision to Close DUKE Herbarium
6 March 2024	<u>Society for the Study of Evolution</u>	We urge all those currently harboring important collections to consider the costs and benefits of their administrative and logistical decisions, in light of the global extinction crisis and a rapidly changing climate
6 March 2024	<u>Chinese Academy of Sciences – by Hang Sun</u>	Do not give up on this valuable scientific legacy so easily. Take proactive steps to find financial support and partners to preserve and maintain this valuable herbarium.
7 March 2024	<u>Science Editorial – by Charles Davis</u>	Herbarium collections are truly priceless
8 March 2024	<u>Email from Duke's Chair of Biology to Dean Alberts of Natural Sciences</u>	Request for a PAUSE on Herbarium Decision from Biofaculty

8 March 2024	<u>University of Connecticut Herbarium</u>	We write to voice our alarm and disappointment at the planned closure of the Duke Herbarium, an internationally renowned resource for plant biodiversity
8 March 2024	<u>Organization of Biological Field Stations</u>	Herbaria are our living libraries, and are key for advancing our understanding and conservation of our natural world
15 March 2024	<u>The North Carolina Biodiversity Project</u>	Along with the worldwide scientific community, we urge the Duke administration to reconsider this regrettable decision to disperse their collections
17 March 2024	<u>NPR Interview – On Point Radio – by Hilary McQuilkin & Meghna Chakrabarti</u>	The hidden value of herbariums and why these kinds of collections are so vital for biodiversity research
20 March 2024	<u>Washington Post Opinion – by Cassandra Quave</u>	The diminishing value placed on university herbaria and taxonomic science threatens the very infrastructure necessary for effective environmental stewardship
24 March 2024	<u>University of Vermont Herbarium</u>	Consider the value of Duke’s collection to your students, the state of North Carolina, and the global network of scientists pursuing research relevant to sustaining biodiversity
26 March 2024	<u>Chinese Academy of Sciences – by Qiuxia Yang</u>	All expenses incurred during the transportation of your fungal and lichen specimens can be borne by us, we appreciate your consideration of our proposal.
3 April 2024	<u>The Boston Globe – Opinion – by Veronique Greenwood</u>	The fate of the Duke Herbarium is upsetting, unsettling. “It’s obscene”
8 April 2024	<u>WUNC News – by Sophie Mallinson</u>	One herbarium’s thorny future: Duke to close century-old 'gem' of biodiversity research
9 April 2024	<u>Heatmap Newsletter - A Hundred Years of Climate Data Is on the Verge of Withering Away – by Jeva Lange</u>	The imminent closure of Duke University’s herbarium sparked an outcry in the natural sciences community. But the loss to climate science could be even worse
12 April 2024	<u>Nicholas School of the Environment Supporters of the Duke Herbarium at Duke</u>	52 signatures from NSOE faculty supported the Herbarium at Duke, all whom understand the special values of long-term collections of plant species at Duke
24 April 2024	<u>BioScience Viewpoint – by Barbara Theirs et al.</u>	Duke’s herbarium merits continued enhancement, not dissolution

11 May 2024	An Herbarium's Value Stretches Well Beyond Botany	In the world of herbaria, Duke University's decision to close its herbarium has had a major negative impact. Herbaria are treasures with endless uses.
4 June 2024	Duke University Medical Center - by Turner	One may wonder why medical faculty would care about the Herbarium, but I was quite saddened to hear about its closure
8 June 2024	The Washington Post - by Dino Grandoni	Duke doubles down on herbarium divestment citing lack of money/more pressing priorities What dead flowers tell us about the future of life on Earth
26 June 2024	Trends in Plant Science - by Edwards et al.	Duke University, a long-standing pillar of Natural History Collections (NHC)-based biological research, has recently announced plans to close its 100-year-old herbarium, citing a reorientation of its funding priorities. This decision has caused an uproar around the world, and for good reason.
6 July 2024	Letter from Duke Alum T'96 - Joselyn Fenstermacher	I take this as both a personal and professional insult, that Duke is actively choosing to abdicate its scientific and institutional duty as protector and advocate of both scientific research and biodiversity conservation.
30 July 2024	The importance of the herbarium network - by Alison Colwell in Lasthenia	The prospect of a major herbarium suddenly and incomprehensibly being swept out of the public sphere is a shock and deserves to be called out as the breach of public trust that it is.
14 August 2024	Message from the Organization for Tropical Studies regarding the Duke Herbarium	The Board of Directors of the Organization for Tropical Studies urges the Duke Administration to reconsider the decision to remove support for this important and world-recognized biodiversity collection.
29 August 2024	https://k.sina.cn/article_5953466483_162dab07301901aw1i.html - Written by Zhou Shuyi for sina.com	A century-old institution that was shut down in disgrace, and the silent demise of a group of scholars
1 Nov 2024	Harvard vs Duke	A study in contrasting views on biodiversity research

21 Feb 2025	Paper promises, priceless losses: The closure of the Duke Herbarium by Jakob Hagedorn	Duke's shifting rhetoric on climate action isn't just a matter of minor semantics — it reflects a deeper pattern of institutional decisions that seem at odds with its stated environmental commitments.
24 Feb 2025	Plant libraries hold essential clues about climate change, but they're vulnerable to funding cuts by Kate Grumke	The Duke news was a warning shot heard throughout the herbaria community, said Barbara Thiers, director emerita of the New York Botanical Garden Herbarium and a research associate at the Denver Botanic Garden. She was shocked to learn that an herbarium as big as Duke's is on the chopping block.
2 October 2025	We've grown the future of botany here. Why are we cutting its roots? by Kaylee McKinzie Duke Chronicle op-ed	Duke isn't just part of the story of botany. Duke is the story of botany.
Miscellaneous, but related documents		
Feb 2023	Duke Herbarium Strategic Plan (Feb 2023)	Advocating for the Herbarium to be recognized as a critical resource, with links to existing university-wide initiatives such as the <i>Duke Science & Technology Challenge</i> and the <i>Duke Climate Commitment</i>
April 2023	Review of the Duke Herbarium Strategic Plan by Dr. Pam Soltis (April 2023)	This Strategic Plan is an excellent step forward into DUKE's second century.
12 Dec 2023	Duke Magazine – Nowhere to Grow	A "unique and irreplaceable resource," according to a 2023 strategic plan, the herbarium faces an uncertain future.
3 Feb 2024	Email from Brent Mishler (UC-Berkeley) to Duke administration	If you do this, Duke will be exposed to the shameful charge that it will not continue tackling a grand challenge of our time, understanding, and preserving biodiversity.