

The Naturalist's Scrapbook

Crowdsourcing the local history of natural history

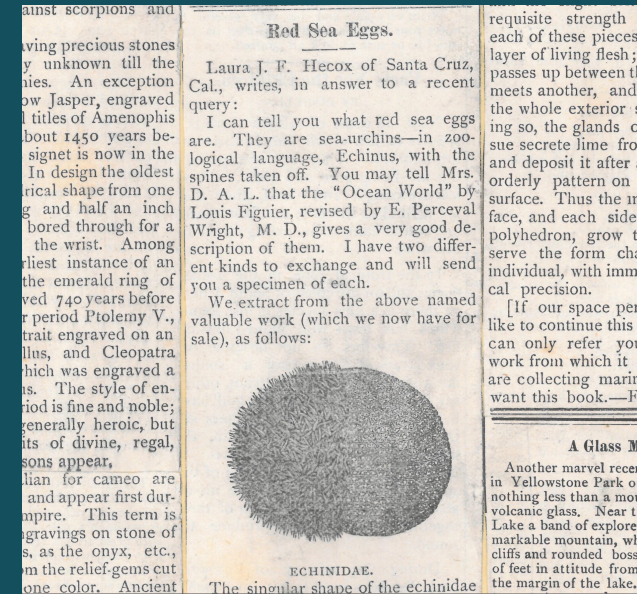


BACKGROUND

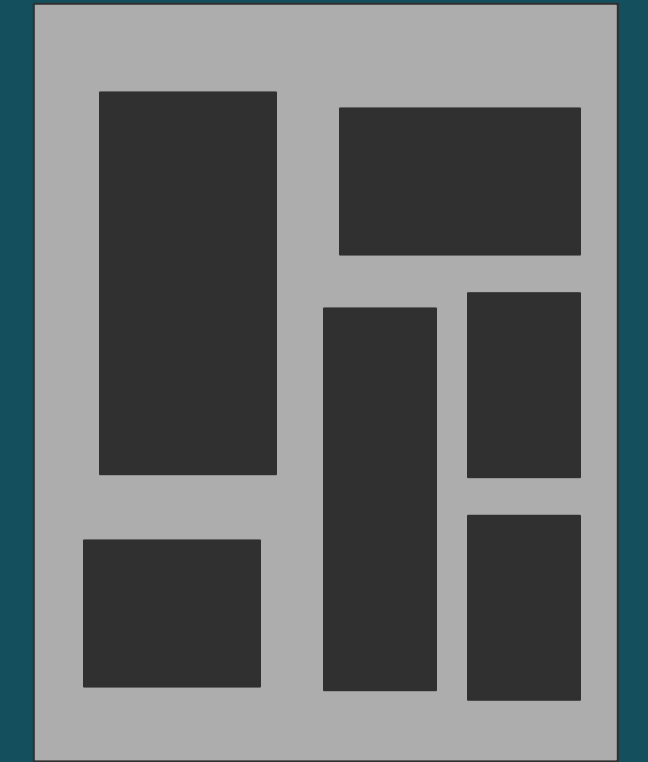
The Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History connects people to the nature of the California central coast through exhibits, educational programs, talks, workshops, and collections outreach events. Their founder, Laura Hecox, was a lighthouse keeper, naturalist and collector at the turn of the 20th century. While little is known of her private life, her personal collections of specimens, artifacts and curios form the foundation of the Museum's collections.

The collections department in particular faces various challenges:

- Minimal digitization and curation of foundational documents. This presents challenges both for research, outreach, exhibit design, and branding
- Limited staffing time to manage these materials
- Limited funding for collections initiatives
- Limited staff time to accommodate growing interest in collections volunteer projects



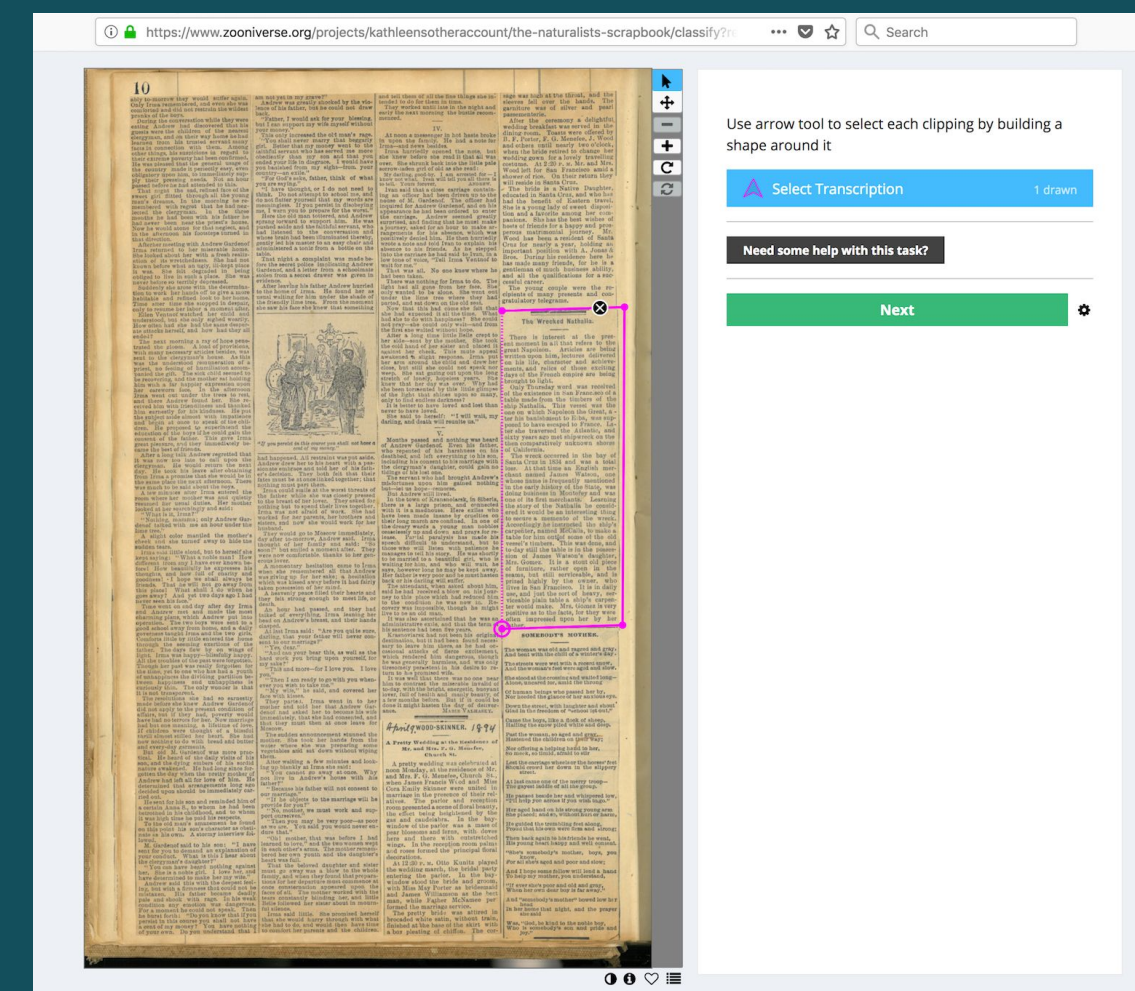
The Naturalist's Scrapbook offers a solution to these problems by leveraging a crowdsourcing online platform to maximize the impact of mission relevant archival texts with minimal staff action, while growing community investment in the collections.



IMPLEMENTATION

The Naturalist's scrapbook begins with the digitization of Laura Hecox's personal scrapbook. Resulting scans were then inputted into the Zooniverse project builder, an out-of-the-box solution for creating citizen science style crowdsourced digital projects for teams with minimal web design experience.

Volunteers are sought via newsletter, social media posts, and word of mouth.



Participants are presented with a scrapbook page that they "classify" by providing the following for each clipping:

- Author
- Date
- Title
- 3 or more Keywords
- Clipping Type

Keywords are emphasized to build subject knowledge of Laura Hecox and her private world.



OUTCOME

Data Collection

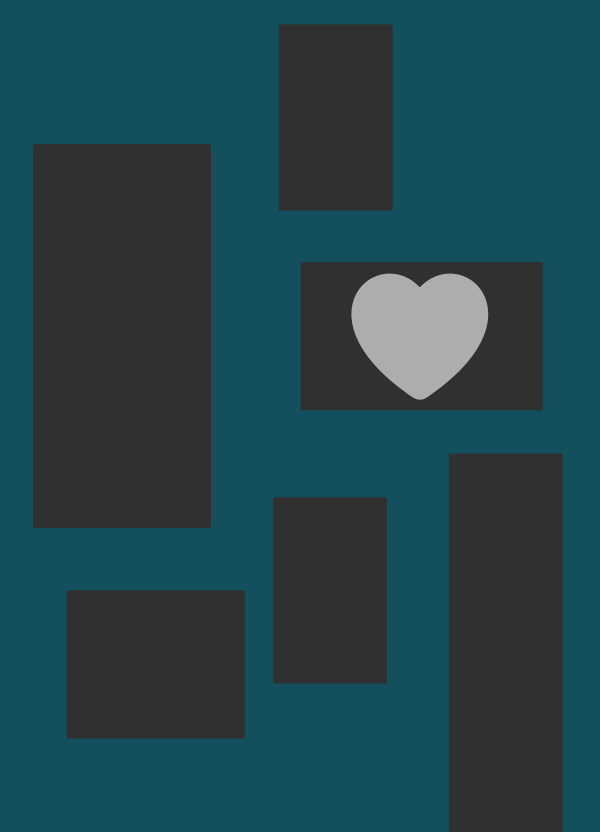
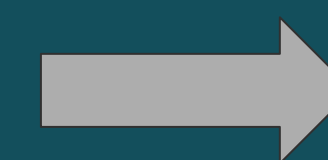
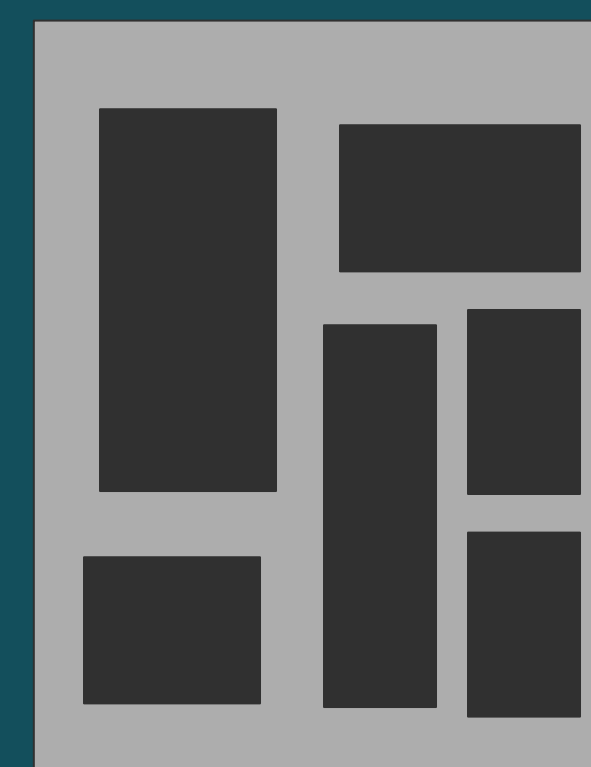
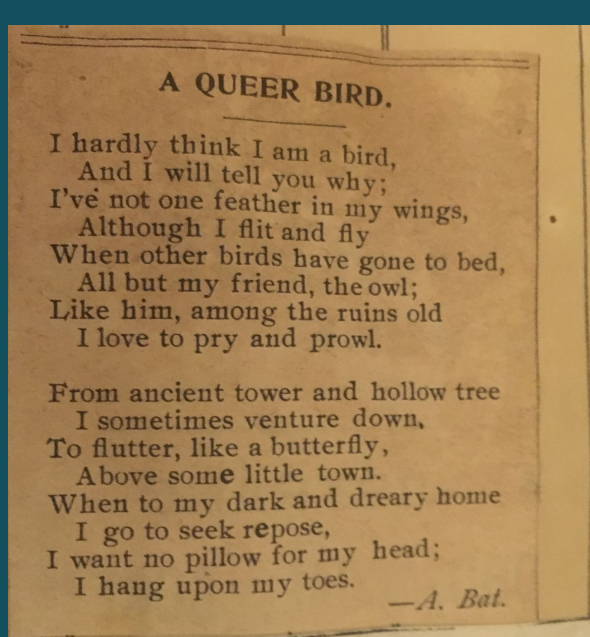
- 24 pages classified
- 170 keywords
- 12.4% place names
- 23.5% people names

User Feedback

- Excitement from new community members and established local researchers
- Several users asked to select clippings to transcribe rather than random order
- Several users expressed confusion over the process, specifically
 - The selection of clippings
 - The identification of keywords

Content in Action

Keen to showcase science holidays as well as the Naturalist's Scrapbook, the Museum celebrated International Bat Appreciation Day by posting "A Queer Bird" by "A. Bat"



NEXT STEPS

The Museum is excited to support the Naturalist's Scrapbook for an extended period, during which we hope is to grow participation and data collection. To this end, the following are project goals:

Short Term

- Modify platform to enable participant selection of target clippings
- Break workflow down to one clipping per round vs. one page of clippings per round
- Establish digital exhibit for general access and participation avenue

Long Term

- Manage ongoing social media campaign
- Connect with local in-person crowdsourcing groups to raise awareness and gauge interest in future hackathon-style collaboration
- Increased data collection will facilitate meaningful keyword analysis and relevant research directions.