



# DIGITISING THE FERN *COLLECTION*

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Two of the Foundation's subtrusts are able to provide support for work on ferns. These are the V Sarafis Research Fund established from a bequest from the late Professor Vassilios Sarafis (for research on various groups of living and fossil land plants), and the Fern Research Fund, established by a gift from the Victorian Fern Society.

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+ Herbarium assistant Will Neale and student volunteer data-basing the fern collection

During 2017, the Foundation Board approved a small grant to Dr Jo Birch. She employed a casual assistant for 75 hours to curate the MELU herbarium's Pteridophyte (fern) collection. The casual staff member gained curatorial skills, a working knowledge of the collection management database ('Specify'), and experience training volunteers in MELU protocols. Four herbarium volunteers contributed 20 volunteer hours to this project and in doing so developed collection-based data management skills (e.g. digitisation and curatorial protocols) and knowledge of Australian biodiversity (e.g. protocols for field-based collections, scientific nomenclature, and taxonomy).

Two hundred and seventy three specimens were fully curated in this project. A Specify Workbench template was generated to enable direct data digitisation by volunteers into the collection management database to replace the excel csv file template previously in use. Curation included remounting of specimens whose treatment didn't meet current standards, nomenclatural updates to names accepted in the Australian Plant Census, and data digitisation including quality control of data captured by botany undergraduate students in 2016. The rate and quality of volunteer's digitisation efforts increased due to the functionality of the Workbench interface.