

Natural History Society of Prince Edward Island
PO Box 2346, Charlottetown, PE C1A 8C1 NaturePEI.ca

September 15, 2012

Donald Moses, MLIS
Digital Initiatives and Systems Librarian
Robertson Library
University of Prince Edward Island
550 University Ave, Charlottetown PE C1A 4P3

Dear Donald,

I am writing on behalf of the Natural History Society and its executive regarding the proposal to develop and enhance scientific activity at UPEI through the eFlora and eBiodiversity collection which will expand existing digital herbarium collections and enable user contributed content using mobile/handheld devices, and promote applied science activities within the school curriculum.

Given our current situation in a province where the natural history mandate of the provincial museum has remained dormant and activities related to establishing a provincial herbarium are not even being discussed the activities of other institutions like universities, national museums, voluntary organizations as well as private researchers is of even more significance to build knowledge.

PEI while having unique attributes in many ways – also faces unique challenges. The lack of official support for a provincial museum activity in the natural sciences has been mentioned but the scale of pristine environments with intact natural flora in relation to provincial size is another of equal significance. Due to the history of settlement and extensive land use for agriculture and forestry purposes there is very little of the province which has not seen human disturbance at some point. While human activity may be more visible in big cities which have seen massive urban sprawl – the fact remains that a small province with current population numbers distributed widely throughout the island produces a high density, and the resultant impact on the flora within the local environment.

As documenting flora remains a key aspect for any research on biodiversity the project you are proposing would be of great assistance in advancing this area of science. The fact that it uses easy access from the field with handheld devices and has an emphasis on youth and students is important. As an organization that has worked to increase knowledge of all aspects of the natural world we feel that this would not only be of assistance to young scientists during their student years but also of value to naturalists and those who have potential to be involved even further in citizen science activities.

We would like to offer our assistance with this project in terms of printing notices you might provide in our newsletter, on our website, as well as being open to booking guest speakers that you might be able to provide for our monthly meetings, to spread information about this project further.

Sincerely,

Ian Scott
President