

Databases have revolutionized nearly every aspect of our lives. Information of all sorts is being collected on a massive scale, from Google to Facebook and well beyond. But as the amount of information in databases explodes, we are forced to reassess our ideas about what knowledge is, how it is produced, to whom it belongs, and who can be credited for producing it.

Every scientist working today draws on databases to produce scientific knowledge. Databases have become more common than microscopes, voltmeters, and test tubes, and the increasing amount of data has led to major changes in research practices and profound reflections on the proper professional roles of data producers, collectors, curators, and analysts.

Collecting Experiments traces the development and use of data collections, especially in the experimental life sciences, from the early twentieth century to the present. It shows that the current revolution is best understood as the coming together of two older ways of knowing—collecting and experimenting, the museum and the laboratory. Ultimately, Bruno J. Strasser argues that by serving as knowledge repositories, as well as indispensable tools for producing new knowledge, these databases function as digital museums for the twenty-first century.

"The long-contested line between experimental life sciences and those that collect, compare, and classify is once more unsettled. It is now accepted that comparative sciences are open to experiment and always have been. Strasser argues that the celebrated achievements of experimental biology have similarly depended on practices of collecting and curating, and he supports his bold revision with case studies of a broad range of sciences. In its historical depth and breadth, this is a benchmark book, and for all who want to know how life sciences *really* work, it's a must read."—**Robert E. Kohler, University of Pennsylvania**

"Strasser uncovers the deep continuities of collecting and comparing that link the latest data banks to venerable natural history museums. This bold book rethinks the relationship between field, laboratory, museum, and archive, with important implications for the ethos of open publication in science."—**Lorraine Daston, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science**

"A masterful, groundbreaking work: Strasser contends that big-data biology is not a sharp departure from the past but a hybrid, a joining of the experimentalist-reductionist inquiries into model organisms with the practices of collectors who classified and characterized their specimens and compared them with others. Strasser's research is wide and deep, his prose lucidly informative, and his analysis subtle, discerning, and persuasive."—**Daniel J. Kevles, Yale University**

"From bacteria to blood and protein to DNA, this engaging book restores collecting to the experimentalist tradition and gives 'big data' biology the history it needs."

—**Nick Hopwood, author of *Haeckel's Embryos: Images, Evolution, and Fraud***

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