AN ONLINE SYSTEM FOR ACCESING THE SMITHSONION HYMENOPTERAN COLLECTION

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The Invertebrate Systematics and Diversity Facility (ISDF) of the Department of Zoology houses the expert identified insect collection made during the Smithsonian - Sri Lanka Insect Survey conducted in the 1970's. This collection comprises 3098 insect specimens belonging to 1863 species coming under 15 Orders. To make available this valuable and limited access collection to outside users a database has been developed initially for the Order Hymenoptera that can be accessed online.

In order to develop an efficient system within a limited period of time it was necessary to choose a suitable, stable and efficient technology for the development of the database. After several investigations and inquires it was decided to use MySQL for implementing the database. PHP was selected as the server side scripting technology. In addition, Macromedia Dreamviewer Software was chosen as the development environment.

Initially the hymenopteran collection consisting of 582 species has been entered in to the database incorporating 23 fields representing classification, distribution, biological and natural history data, and collection details. The database is geared for quick search using the scientific name or the common names or names of taxa. The digital images provided enable identification of unknown specimens through comparisons. In the long term it is intended to enter into the database records of all specimens in the Smithsonion collection. This study is a pioneering attempt in Sri Lanka in data basing an expert -identified insect collection that would enable users to identify their own specimens online using images and biological information provided.

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