

Evaluating the Conservation Mission of Zoos, Aquariums, Botanical Gardens, and Natural History Museums

Evaluación de la Misión de Conservación de Zoológicos, Acuarios, Jardines Botánicos o Museos de Historia Natural

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Abstract

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Abstract: *Collection-based institutions—zoos, aquariums, museums, and botanical gardens—exhibit wildlife and thus have a special connection with nature. Many of these institutions emphasize a mission of conservation, and, undeniably, they do contribute directly to conservation education and conservation science. They present an exceptional opportunity for many urban residents to see the wonders of life, and they can contribute to education and habitat preservation. Because many collection-based institutions now hold a stated mission of conservation, we suggest eight potential questions to evaluate actions toward that mission: (1) Does conservation thought define policy decisions? (2) Is there sufficient organizational funding for conservation activities? (3) Is there a functional conservation department? (4) Does the institution advocate for conservation? (5) Do conservation education programs effectively target children and adults? (6) Does the institution contribute directly to habitat protection locally and internationally? (7) Do exhibits explain and promote conservation efforts? and (8) Do internal policies and activities protect the environment? These questions are offered as a place to begin discussion. We hope they will help employees and administrators of a collection-based institution (and citizens of the surrounding community) think about and support their institution's conservation activities. Public support and praise for institutions that are striving toward solutions for conservation problems and pressure on organizations that are moving more slowly toward a conservation orientation can help shift more resources toward saving nature.*

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