The **ZooMu Physical Collections Workshop**, held October 7–9, 2025, at the Oklahoma City Zoo, brought together 22 representatives from 20 institutions across zoos, aquariums, museums, agencies, and partner organizations. Over two and a half days, participants worked collaboratively to strengthen connections between the living animal collections in zoos and aquariums and the preserved specimen archives in natural history museums—advancing the goals of the NSF Research Coordination Network (RCN) grant. Through a combination of presentations, demonstrations, and focused group sessions, we examined how to streamline specimen transfers, establish shared standards, and expand collaboration across our institutions. The workshop provided a rare and valuable opportunity for professionals from different disciplines to sit at the same table, compare practices, and begin building a shared language and mission around the collection, preservation, and use of animal specimens.

Working sessions produced tangible progress toward that mission. Participants developed a **draft MOU template for zoo–museum partnerships**, outlined a **quick guide for specimen transfers**, and began drafting a **“10 Simple Rules” framework for collaboration**. We also created outlines for a **ZooMu informational flyer and presentation** to help institutions introduce and champion the network within their organizations and **mapped out regional sharing networks** to facilitate relationship building between collections. Presentations—such as the cosmetic necropsy session and tours of the Oklahoma City Zoo’s facilities—helped ground these conversations in practical experience, illustrating how standardized procedures can enhance both animal welfare and research value. Collectively, these efforts contributed directly to ZooMu’s objectives of developing best practices, fostering human capacity, and creating sustainable channels for data and specimen sharing.

Perhaps most importantly, the workshop allowed participants to find **common ground** and set **shared goals** for a unified mission: improving the accessibility, coordination, and scientific impact of zoo- and museum-based collections. Through candid discussion and hands-on collaboration, we identified the cultural and logistical barriers that often separate our communities and began charting a path to overcome them. By the workshop’s conclusion, participants had not only produced draft deliverables and a multi-year roadmap for action but also reaffirmed a collective commitment to building an enduring, cooperative framework for sharing specimens, data, and expertise in service of biodiversity research and conservation.