

# Heeding the Call: User Feedback Management & the Digital Library

Grace Costantino, Bianca Crowley, Erin Thomas  
Smithsonian Institution Libraries

Rebecca Morin  
California Academy of Sciences Library

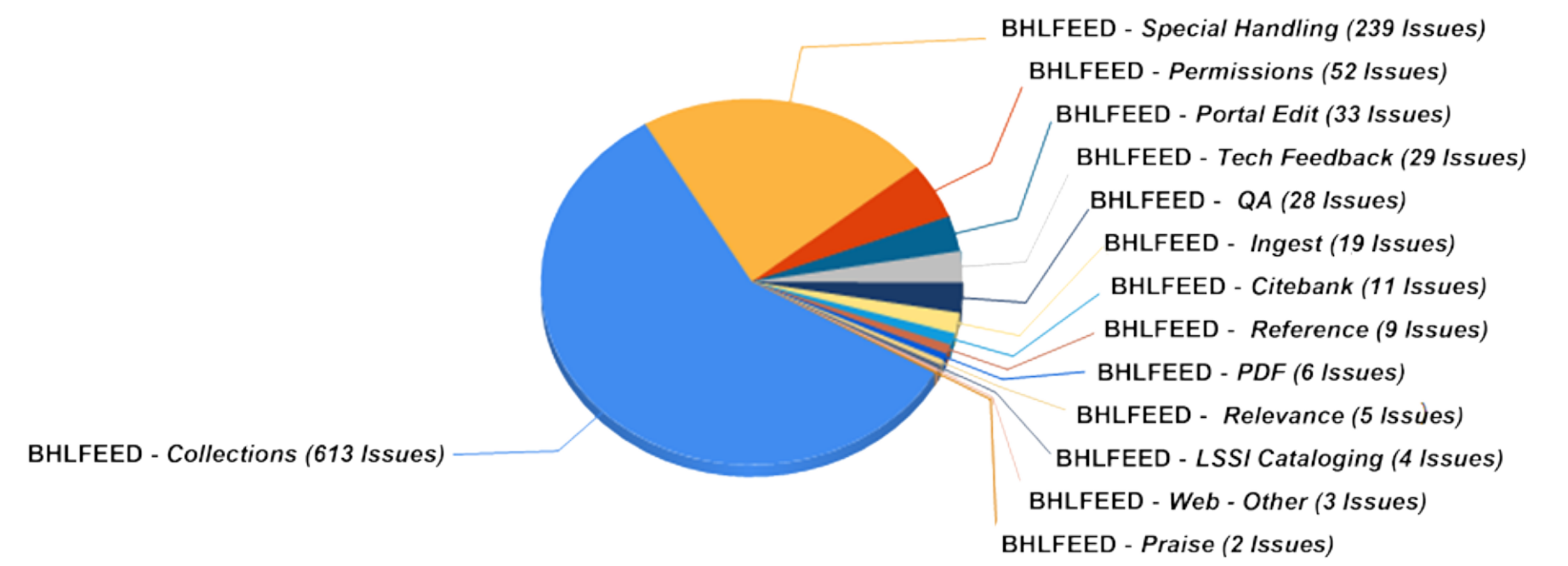
*"Heeding the Call: User Feedback Management & the Digital Library" was awarded the 2011 De Gruyter Saur / IFLA Research Paper Award 2011*

## Introduction

The Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) is a consortium of natural history and botanical libraries that cooperate to digitize and make accessible the legacy literature of biodiversity held in their collections and to make that literature available for open access and responsible use as a part of a global biodiversity commons. BHL supports a large and active user base with content and services, and continues to grow its collection of over 35 million pages. The BHL is supported by a small full-time staff as well as librarians distributed throughout the consortium who work on the project in addition to their daily responsibilities at their home brick-and-mortar institutions.

BHL adopted a commercial, off-the-shelf issue tracking system to improve collaboration, resolve problems, and manage feedback from users. Issue tracking systems are typically used to manage tasks associated with institutional information technology needs, including computer programming, telecommunications, and other services where a small, centralized staff serve a large, decentralized user group. BHL staff customized the software to serve digital library task management requirements. BHL stakeholders understand that free, 24-7 online access does not negate the need for more traditional, in-person library services. The implementation and effective use of issue tracking software offers the opportunity to bring the service model of a traditional library into a digital library space. In fostering greater, more efficient staff collaboration, issue tracking software allows BHL to capitalize on the diverse collections and skills of member libraries and librarians.

### Components



Each piece of feedback received from users is categorized by being assigned a "component". These components allow a handful of librarians to effectively manage a wide range of user feedback regarding scanning requests, missing volumes of a journal title, missing pages, poor image quality, de-duplication of titles, metadata correction, and traditional reference questions, etc. Feedback from users not only helps BHL staff discover new issues, but informs known issues and inspires new development regarding technical functionality. More importantly, the user feedback received and monitored through the issue tracking system allows staff to engage with individual users about specific issues while also facilitating collaboration among staff to resolve these issues.

## The Life of an Issue in a Digital Library

Feedback form on the Biodiversity Heritage Library

Individual issue created in BHL's issue tracking system after a user submits feedback on the website

Initial comment added to issue confirming user's error report, identifying additional volumes that need to be scanned, & instructing staff members regarding required tasks

Updating assignee, type, priority, & status of issue

Email sent to user regarding submitted feedback

Assigned staff members updating issue with progress updates

Issue assigned to new staff members as necessary, with new staff members adding necessary comments & updates

Closing an issue after resolution of all identified tasks

