Oh wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here: Skeletons for loan in the library
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**Introduction**

When you’re dealing with complicated, interconnected, extremely detailed and visually difficult material, having a physical object that you can hold and turn in your hand dramatically reduces the barriers to comprehension and learning. Plastic models of organs as well as of entire skeletal, muscular, circulatory, and nervous systems, have long been key tools in promoting student success. They are also composed of many small pieces, they are relatively expensive, and they are super cool. So they are justifiably kept under close guard, and typically remain locked in the lab that paid for them, accessible only to a lucky credentialed few. But libraries are all about democratization of access, and we also know that sometimes students just want to study at night when the lab where they would normally work is closed and locked up tight. So in 2011 the NCSU Libraries started small and added a few skeletons to the collection. Now we’ve got a whole conga line and multiple different models.

**Managing the Collection**

New models were added to the collection based on recommendations from teaching faculty. Models were selected to be economical, durable, and useful in a number of units across courses. Due to the limited number of models available and the sudden peaks in need around unit tests or quizzes, students were given additional encouragement from instructors to use the models in open areas of the library and to be open to sharing with classmates. Observationally, most models are used by multiple students at a time, and students come in study groups to use them.

Anatomical models in the library are stored behind the circulation desk and have a Reserve classification. They can circulate for up to two hours and cannot be renewed. Students can return the model and then check it back out if there are no holds.

**Usage**

Number of models in the collection by type and year. Since the start of the program in 2011 three new types of models and nine new items have been added to the collection. We have had to withdraw to skeleton models due to damage.

**Challenges**

- **Damage:** After six years, some of our skeletons are a little banged up. Two have been so damaged that they had to be withdrawn, and others, like the two in the bottom right images, have some cosmetic problems. Some of this damage was the result of students removing the heads in order to study the skulls in closer detail for a course unit, and so we recently ordered four new skulls to relieve pressure on our remaining full skeletons and hopefully increase their lifespan.

- **Storage:** Every model is composed of multiple pieces. Smaller items like the skulls and muscle models are stored in lunchboxes and duffel bags. This keeps all of the parts together, protects them from additional jostling, and also makes them easier to store.

- **Theft:** Some of the smaller pieces of the muscle models are incredibly tempting. We made 3D scans of the brain, heart, and genitals so we could print replacements, and all the pieces of each model are counted every time they are checked back in.

- **Demand:** The best problem for a library to have! Our anatomical models have some of the highest usage statistics for our course reserves materials. Course instructors have asked that students share models while working in the library, and as a result many of our circulations are to study groups rather than single students.