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Stakeholder Analysis of Missouri Botanical Gardens

What is a stakeholder? In *Sustainable World*, the author describes a stakeholder as people who have an interest or stake in some policy, conflict, or organizational goal. There are stakeholders everywhere for everything, and they are important. So, it is important to identify the stakeholders for Missouri Botanical Gardens so that we can help move the wicked problems in the right direction.

Missouri Botanical Gardens is one of the worlds most renowned gardens, therefore choosing the stakeholders and who gets a say might have a big effect on the future of Missouri Botanical Gardens. When picking stakeholders, you must make several decisions that could be helpful or harmful, and that is who you include or exclude. This is a big deal because being the person who decides this can lead to unidentified groups or having marginalized groups even more weak, vulnerable, or powerless. Ultimately leaving the already marginalized group out of any decisions is only making the wicked problem worse.

But what exactly are the wicked problems at Missouri Botanical Gardens? First, the Herbarium, which is home to over seven million plant specimens. The herbarium at Missouri Botanical Gardens holds pressings of these plant specimens including information about the specimen like where you can find it, uses of the specimen, and what times of the year the specimen may grow. Even though this is helpful and educational, there is also several flaws to this system. Whoever collects these plant specimens only use their knowledge and there is a Westernized (White) bias on the science. We do not ask about or gather information from natives who have been familiar with these plant species long before Missouri Botanical Gardens even existed. Secondly, Missouri Botanical Gardens has a dark history that they are not proud of but need to acknowledge. The founder of Missouri Botanical Gardens, Henry Shaw, was the owner of several slaves, and used them to help create the gardens. The issue with this is that you could walk around Missouri Botanical Gardens and not even know. There is barely any representation in the gardens for Shaw’s enslaved people and the little representation they do have is in a closed off exhibit in the basement of Shaw’s house. These two problems are what we are working on to change for the future.

To choose stakeholders for Missouri Botanical Gardens, there are three methods listed in *Sustainable World*. It is noted that there is no one correct method to select stakeholders. The three methods are: Focus groups, Interviews, and Snow-ball sampling. Starting off with focus groups, these are groups that are used to give feedback and give opinions on a specific product, concept, or service. A focus group could be beneficial to Missouri Botanical Gardens to have a discussion with several different opinions to be able to reach a larger audience. This could be used to discuss the Herbarium’s classification issues or Henry Shaw’s enslaved people. Focus groups can go hand in hand with interviews due to the fact that both involve discussion.

Interviews are the second method of identifying stakeholders. Interviews can be very detrimental to the whole outcome of the process due to biases. However, the interview process is very time consuming and if interviews gain too much complexity, it will be harder to reach a consensus and overall could defeat the whole purpose of the interview in the first place. To use interviews as a method you must interview the correct people, this could be anyone involved with Missouri Botanical Gardens such as volunteers, botanists, doners, and even just a frequent visitor. But the opinions of the stakeholders are very important due to the possible varying responses of the different types of stakeholders. A doner of the gardens would probably have a much bigger opinion than a common visitor of the gardens. They would also just have varying opinions about Missouri Botanical Gardens and its future overall. So being able to identify and use the biases from the interviewees is very important to move forward in the work being done.

The final method for identifying stakeholders is snow-ball sampling. Instead of discussions and interviews about the wicked problem itself, snow-ball sampling uses interviews to identify new stakeholder categories and more interviewees from these new categories. So there may be some stakeholders with more importance than others such as a visitor and an investor. An investor would most likely have more influence than just a visitor of the gardens.

Missouri Botanical Gardens is home to one of the worlds most renowned herbariums and is also a popular tourist attraction. It is also home to some big issues, including the herbariums flawed way of collecting plant specimens and its past being heavily involved with slavery. Missouri Botanical Gardens can conduct interviews with stakeholders about these issues as well as host discussions with focus groups to reach collaborative decisions to move forward. If the Gardens are able to work on these problems and collaborate with stakeholders, they can fix their issues and have a positive future.