

NYBG

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

Director of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library

Leadership Profile

Spring 2023



WittKieffer

Executive Summary

Established in 1891, The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) is distinguished by the beauty of its landscape, collections, and gardens, and the scope and excellence of its programs in horticulture, education, and science.

The 250-acre Garden—the largest in any city in the United States—is a National Historic Landmark. NYBG encompasses 50 specialty gardens and collections comprising more than one million plants, the Nolen Greenhouses for Living Collections, and the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, the nation's preeminent Victorian-style glasshouse. Highlights include the award-winning Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden, considered among the world's most sustainable rose gardens; the Native Plant Garden, celebrating the diversity of northeastern North American plants; and 30,000 distinguished trees, many more than 200 years old. More than one million visitors annually enjoy the grounds, view innovative exhibitions, and participate in educational programs that are larger and more diverse than those of any other garden in the world.

NYBG is driven by a mission to conduct basic and applied research on the plants of the world with the goal of protecting and preserving them. Currently a growing staff of 17 Ph.D. scientists are engaged in hundreds of collaborations at field sites around the world, including in North America, South America, the Caribbean, southeast Asia, and the south Pacific. NYBG is one of the few freestanding botanical gardens in the world where plant and fungal research is conducted, thanks to the resources of the International Plant Science Center, the William and Lynda Steere Herbarium, and the LuEsther T. Mertz Library. The second largest in the world, the Steere Herbarium houses 7.8 million plant specimens, representing all groups of plants and fungi from around the world, with strength in the flora of the Americas. The LuEsther T. Mertz Library is the largest botanical and horticultural library in the Western Hemisphere, with more than 11 million archival items spanning 10 centuries.

The LuEsther T. Mertz Library was founded in 1899 and has evolved to be one of the largest, most comprehensive botanical libraries in the world and contains ten centuries of knowledge about all aspects of plants and related topics. The Library's collections comprise more than one million print and non-print items, including 550,000 volumes of books and journals, more than 32,000 pieces of art and illustration, plus 6,953 linear feet of archival materials representing more than 75 percent of the world's literature on systematic botany and approximately 83 percent of the world's published floras. The Library builds its collections through active purchasing, exchanges with other libraries and gifts.

Reporting directly to the Head of Science, the Director will oversee the activities of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library and provide strategic vision and leadership for the team and collections. The Director will be a champion of libraries and must be able to lead the Library on a global stage as well as within NYBG. The new Director will envision a future for the library as a major site of support for and expression of the NYBG's mission and core values. They will be active participants in garden-wide discussions of creating and enhancing teaching and learning that are relevant to 21st-century challenges and opportunities. They will raise the visibility of and advocate for the library and the institution. The Library is a key player in the execution of the NYBG's strategic goals, including the advancement of the NYBG's commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility.

The successful candidate must have a record of demonstrated leadership in a library setting, with increasing responsibilities, which include effective supervision of professional librarians and commitment to realizing the values of the NYBG in a library context. A MLS or MLIS from an accredited program or equivalent experience in a library setting is preferred but not required. An advanced degree or experience working in a museum or special collection would also be advantageous. An ability to inspire, set goals, and innovate; to engage and unite stakeholders; to listen carefully and communicate persuasively; to build strong relationships and collaborate effectively; to understand and support the needs of all disciplines and inter-disciplines; to demonstrate familiarity and comfort with individual and institutional fundraising; and to operate library administrative and budgetary functions with a high level of skill are all desired qualities.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this document.

About The New York Botanical Garden

Overview



Established in 1891, The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) is distinguished by the beauty of its landscape, collections, and gardens, and the scope and excellence of its programs in horticulture, education, and science. NYBG was inspired by an 1888 visit that eminent botanists Nathaniel Lord Britton and his wife, Elizabeth, took to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, near London. The Brittons believed New York should have a great botanical garden to advance public understanding of plants, be a repository of rare and valuable specimens, and lead original research in

botanical science. Because of its picturesque terrain, freshwater Bronx River, rock-cut gorge, and 50 acres of old-growth forest, the Garden was sited on the northern half of Bronx Park.

Today, the 250-acre Garden—the largest in any city in the United States—is a National Historic Landmark. In addition to the natural attributes that attracted the Brittons, NYBG encompasses 50 specialty gardens and collections comprising more than one million plants, the Nolen Greenhouses for Living Collections, and the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, the nation's preeminent Victorian-style glasshouse. Highlights include the award-winning Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden, considered among the world's most

sustainable rose gardens; the Native Plant Garden, celebrating the diversity of northeastern North American plants; and 30,000 distinguished trees, many more than 200 years old. More than one million visitors annually enjoy the grounds, view innovative exhibitions, and participate in educational programs that are larger and more diverse than those of any other garden in the world.

From its earliest days, NYBG has also been driven by a mission to conduct basic and applied research on the plants of the world with the goal of protecting and preserving them. Currently a growing staff of 17 Ph.D. scientists are engaged in hundreds of collaborations at field sites around the world, including in North America, South America, the Caribbean, southeast Asia, and the south Pacific. NYBG is one of the few freestanding botanical gardens in the world where plant and fungal research is conducted, thanks to the resources of the International Plant Science Center, the William and Lynda Steere Herbarium, and the LuEsther T. Mertz Library. The second largest in the world, the Steere Herbarium houses 7.8 million plant specimens, representing all groups of plants and fungi from around the world, with strength in the flora of the Americas. The LuEsther T. Mertz Library is the largest botanical and horticultural library in the Western Hemisphere, with more than 11 million archival items spanning 10 centuries.

During the 130+ years since its founding, NYBG has carefully stewarded a stunning urban oasis, created one of the world's most comprehensive plant research and conservation programs, amassed unrivaled research collections, and, as a living museum, taught millions of visitors of all ages to love and respect the plants of the world.

The New York Botanical Garden is committed to preserving and protecting the planet's biodiversity and natural resources and enhancing human well-being by educating, training, and empowering the next generation of Earth's caregivers—in partnership with both local and global communities.

Mission

The New York Botanical Garden is an advocate for the plant world. The Garden pursues its mission through its role as a museum of living plant collections arranged in gardens and landscapes across its National Historic Landmark site; through its comprehensive education programs in horticulture and plant science; and through the wide-ranging research programs of the International Plant Science Center.

Financial statements, 990's and annual reports can be found [here](#).

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility

Vision Statement:

The New York Botanical Garden is committed to an inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible work environment, and further recognizes that diversity in our workforce fosters excellence in our mission of advocating for the plants of the world.

Leveraging the strong foundation of existing policies and practices, NYBG will advance inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility through broad institutional initiatives.

NYBG's aspiration is to continue to cultivate a workforce and institution that is as diverse as the communities it serves and the audiences the Garden engages. More information can be found [here](#).

NYBG Science

NYBG is a world leader in the research and conservation of plants, algae, and fungi, using both traditional and cutting-edge tools to discover, understand, and conserve Earth's vast botanical diversity. NYBG's Science Division comprises the Mertz Library, the William and Lynda Steere Herbarium, and the Pfizer Laboratory, along with an active group of botanical scientists. Currently, 17 curators, 3 postdocs, and 22 graduate students conduct research in NYBG's Science Division. Curators mentor Ph.D. and M.S. students from various institutions as well as undergraduate and high school interns. Staff and affiliated scholars

comprise a robust community of scientists who drive a diverse array of research programs. Active research topics include floristics, taxonomy, molecular systematics, genomics, bioinformatics, conservation, ethnobotany, and the effects of climate change. Field research is based in many parts of the globe, e.g., the Neotropics, Southeast Asia, the Pacific, and throughout North America. More information can be found [here](#).



Humanities Institute

The Humanities Institute, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, promotes innovative thinking at the intersection of science and the humanities, particularly in the vital and growing field of Food Humanities. A division of Education, the Institute strengthens The New York Botanical Garden's academic role among universities and research centers worldwide. It engages a lively community of fellows and visiting scholars who study NYBG's historical collections in the Mertz Library, the Archives, and William and Lynda Steere Herbarium to further their interdisciplinary research projects. Lecture series, workshops, and symposia span issues in the history of science, foodways, Food Studies, and justice, with special programs focused on the Bronx. While the borough is disproportionately impacted by food insecurity, it's also home to vibrant, multi-cultural food traditions, stories and community gardens that all come together in the *Bronx Foodways Oral Histories Project* – a partnership with the Humanities Institute, NYBG's Bronx GreenUp, and leading community gardens and urban farms. More information can be found [here](#).

Strategic Plan

The New York Botanical Garden is currently undergoing a strategic planning effort to guide the Garden through 2030. The guiding principles for the plan are:

- **Environmental Action:** NYBG will be a leader in investigating, elevating, and amplifying the importance of plants to help solve the climate and biodiversity crisis.
- **Digital Impact:** NYBG will become a leading online global resource through our unparalleled collections, horticultural knowledge, and plant science expertise.
- **Bronx-Forward:** NYBG will respond to the interests and opportunities of our borough—a diverse, vibrant, immigrant and multi-ethnic community that is emblematic of today’s America.
- **Power of Place:** NYBG will inspire more diverse audiences to seek beauty, knowledge, and wellbeing in the natural world through education and experiences that can only be found at the Garden.
- **Management Excellence:** NYBG will be a model in the cultural and nonprofit sector, making us a premier place to work and a highly resilient, environmentally sustainable, collaborative, and effective organization.

The Garden is currently in phase 3 of their planning process, evaluating proposals on how they will achieve the goals they have set forth.

The Mertz Library

The Mertz Library promotes the intelligent stewardship of the natural world by collecting and preserving works of merit in botany, horticulture and landscape design.

The Library’s outstanding collections represent over a century of commitment to botanical and environmental research. The skilled staff of the Mertz Library serve as an invaluable resource by providing the highest-quality resources and services to meet the needs of the Garden’s diverse research, instructional and outreach programs including the Garden’s research staff, botanists and horticulturists as well as scientific, scholarly, and artistic communities worldwide and the public at large.

The Library is open to the public and in addition to supporting the intellectual and informational needs of the gardening, horticultural and botanical communities the Library continues to develop strategic partnerships that advance research and promote new methods of providing access to an ever-expanding variety of information resources.

More information about the Mertz Library can be found [here](#).

Library Departments

- [Archives & Special Collections](#)
- [Cataloging](#)

- [Collection Development](#)
- [Conservation](#)
- [Reference, Research, & Circulation Services](#)
- [Web Services & Digitization](#)

More information about the team can be found [here](#).

Library Collections

- **The General Research Collection** consists of over 550,000 volumes. Supporting research and study in the fields of botanical science, horticulture, and landscape/garden design, the Mertz Library is noted for the importance, breadth, and accessibility of its holdings. The collections are housed in a 9,000 square-foot, environmentally controlled facility and include books published after 1753 and all of the Library's 12,000 serial titles.
- **The Rare Book and Folio Collections**, housed in the Rare Book and Folio Room, include the earliest manuscripts and printed books as well as some of the most beautiful botanical and horticultural volumes ever produced. The Rare Book Collection is mostly limited to pre-Linnaean works (published before 1753). The Folio Collection is particularly notable for its holdings of 18th and 19th century sumptuous plate books featuring fine botanical engravings and outstanding hand colored illustrations.
- **The Pre-1850 Collection** is made up of more than 9,600 books published between the years 1753 and 1850. The collection is particularly noteworthy for its early American imprints and fine bindings. These materials are considered rare and are subject to the same rules and restrictions governing the materials held in The Rare Book and Folio Room.
- **The Circulating Collection** is a select collection of some 3,000 titles of popular non-fiction books focused on basic botany, gardening, landscape design, climate and environment, art and more. These books may be borrowed by library card holders which include staff, volunteers, NYBG students and members.
- **The Reference Collection** is a carefully selected non-circulating collection of immediate value to staff and visitors for their quick reference content. These books include dictionaries, encyclopedias, indexes, directories, and bibliographies. Other authoritative works useful for plant identification, information concerning poisonous plants, economic uses of plants, plant care and maintenance, diagnosis of plant pests and diseases or common and scientific names are also found in the collection.
- **The Bindery Collection** is a special collection of books about the care, conservation, and preservation of library materials.
- **The Archives** contain nearly a mile of unpublished archival documents and manuscripts such as correspondence, working papers, field notebooks, photographs, architectural plans, maps, illustrations, portraits, and artifacts.

- **The Lord & Burnham Collection** holds architectural drawings, correspondence and account books for greenhouses, conservatories, and related structures, erected in the United States in the late 19th and 20th centuries by the Lord & Burnham Company and by other manufacturers associated with the firm. The collection contains over 140,000 architectural plans and includes data on structural and site elements for more than 7,000 glass structures. An index to over 100,000 of these plans is accessible via the L&B database.
- **The Art and Illustration Collection** is an important tool for taxonomic research and is a valuable resource for the scholarly comparison of original to published work and for locating illustrations of plants. The collection contains over 25,000 pieces and covers a broad range of techniques and media including line drawings, watercolors, oil paintings, sculpture, and photographs.
- **The Seed and Nursery Catalog Collection** contains approximately 58,000 catalogs, the earliest dating back to the first half of the 19th century. The collection is particularly strong in catalogs of American purveyors of seeds and plants in the 20th century. The holdings are currently being cataloged and can be searched using the online catalog.
- **Index Seminum (Seed Exchange Lists) Collection** contains printed lists of documented seed collections made from wild plants and made available for distribution through exchange by botanical gardens and arboreta. These publications are of interest to scholars studying the introduction of new species. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, the first descriptions of new plants sometimes appeared in such publications.
- **The Photograph Collection** The Garden has been collecting photographic material since its inception in the 19th century. Collections include a photographic history of the development of the Garden, organized by WPA workers and mounted into albums in the 1930's. They now serve as an important source of visual documentation covering the Garden's landscape, collections, staff and programs during its founding years. Other collections include photographs and films from botanical expeditions, plant portraits, and gardens and landscapes. The format of the collection ranges from lantern slides; glass plate negatives and autochromes to compact disc, 35mm slides, transparencies, video, 16mm film. The albums documenting the [Garden's early development](#) can be viewed on Mertz Digital Library.

Role of the Director of the Mertz Library

In this era of global change, collections resources such as the Mertz Library play essential and exciting roles of growing importance in addressing societal needs. The Library Director will have the opportunity to vigorously advance both the programs and the profile of NYBG by serving the Science, Horticulture, and Education divisions of the Garden. The strategic importance of the Library in the research and conservation communities will enable the Director to play a key role locally and globally in demonstrating new uses for collections, innovating collections-based methodologies, promoting best practices in the field, driving applications of collections in data science, and promoting collections-based research agendas. In addition, through global science communications, the Director will be a key advocate for the continuing and critical importance of natural history collections now and in the future.

The Director provides executive and administrative leadership, management and advocacy for the LuEsther T. Mertz Library; oversees collection development, maintenance and preservation (online and print), and organizes on-site library services and library research education in support of NYBG's academic and research programs; ensures that the Library stays at the forefront of changes in technology, communication, instruction, outreach and the storage and delivery of information; continues the legacy of innovative programs and collaborations; seeks collaborative and outreach opportunities to enhance the work of the Library and the Garden; works to strengthen the Library through developing increased financial support, and implementing and advancing the institution's strategic plan.



Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The new director will be expected to address the following critical leadership opportunities, among others, in no particular order:

- **Create and execute a vision for the 21st century library to support the Garden's mission and aspirations**

The next director will help position the library for the future – one that reflects and is adaptive to the changing landscape of the Garden and fosters the organization's sustainability. Across the country, libraries are facing enormous challenges and changes, including reduced funding and increasing costs, the way physical spaces of libraries are used, the need to keep up with advances in digital technologies, evolving demands in supporting research, scholarship and open access to the public, and the evolving nature of information. These challenges call for a forward-looking vision and a new way of defining the path forward that engages the NYBG leadership team, staff, and partners to develop innovative and creative models and approaches for the future of the library. Likewise, new ways of looking at organizational structures and processes to function at a high level of service and meet the evolving needs of the library and its patrons are imperative.

As a result of the pandemic, the Mertz library and the Garden have shifted their services to create more online engagement opportunities, significantly enhancing the impact and reach of their work. The next Director must continue to build on this recent momentum, optimizing online educational opportunities and to meet the continued demand for the digitization of collections. The new Director will also join at an opportune time as the Garden enters the final stages of their strategic planning process. The director will work closely with the Garden's senior leadership team to align the library with the future vision of the garden.

- **Raise the visibility, advocate for, and enhance financial support for the Mertz Library**

To meet the needs of the library, the next Director must be an exceptional spokesperson, advocate, and relationship builder for the Library. They will be able to talk compellingly about the value of the Library and its role in the Garden, and champion the mission and impact of the organization. They will raise the visibility of the Library across the organization and enhance communication with users and within the broader community about the status of collections, the impact of budgetary decisions, and the ways the library can support their work and the vision of the Garden. The successful candidate will advocate persuasively for the vision and mission of the library, and for the resources required to achieve that vision and mission with the organization's leadership and broader community.

To help the Library achieve its goals and objectives, the next Director must partner with the President, Board of Trustees, and Institutional Advancement officers to build a strong philanthropic pipeline of support. They must understand the landscape of philanthropy for libraries, work enthusiastically to engage the donor community, and strengthen support to fund priorities within the Library. To be successful in these endeavors, exceptional communication, planning, collaboration, and interpersonal skills will be paramount.

- **Strengthen relationships across the garden and beyond to optimize the impact of the Mertz Library**



The Library serves and lifts up the entire academic enterprise of the Garden and the scientists who access their services within New York and across the globe. Their institutional reach necessitates that the director build strong relationships and partnerships across the organization to optimize their impact. The next Director will also have the opportunity to broaden the scope

and reach of partnerships outside of the NYBG with other libraries, collections, educational institutions and organizations.

- **Support and develop the team within the library**

The Mertz Library benefits from an exceptional team of dedicated, talented and committed library personnel who have a palpable desire to expand and enhance the impact of the library. Over the past two years the team in the library has experienced turnover in their staffing. The next director will have the opportunity to restore the staffing needs for the library while also working to create a stronger culture of collaboration and belonging. The new director will support and develop this team in ways that allow each member to flourish and fully realize their contributions to the Garden and broader community. They will help the team to elevate their professional lives, encourage them to engage actively in professional organizations, benefit from professional development opportunities, and network with colleagues inside and outside of the garden to strengthen their skills and contributions to the organization.

- **Advance an institutional culture of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging**

NYBG is an advocate for the plant world and is deeply committed to supporting diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in the work place and through the mission of the institution. The next Director will ensure that multiple voices and perspectives are uplifted and respected, creating a culture of shared inquiry. The Director will ensure that all practices and policies reflect the NYBG's mission of preserving and protecting the planet's biodiversity and natural resources to enhance human well-being. The director will continue the library's efforts to be an inclusive community and foster further integration and collaboration in support of diversity, inclusion and access. They must also be proactive and responsive to

concerns from staff and patrons, and embrace growth in the areas of diversity and inclusion as essential to fulfilling the mission of the NYBG.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

Duties and Responsibilities

Reporting directly to the Head of Science, the Library Director will oversee the activities of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library. The Director will be a champion of libraries and must be able to lead the Library on a global stage as well as within NYBG.

The Director will be expected to:

- Build on the strong foundation of NYBG's global profile by leading the Library in strategic new directions, including novel applications for collections resources and innovative uses of the collections.
- Lead the continued growth and development of the Library and its programs; oversee innovation and implementation of technological initiatives including Digitization.
- Develop robust funding, drawing on the Director's international perspective and collaborations.
- Create a culture of inclusive excellence that advocates for Library staff.
- Employ best practices for the curation and management of the collections, including sustaining and advancing Library staff skills to ensure that NYBG remains a leader in the botanical collections community.
- Manage budgets and coordinate production of annual reports.
- Envision and implement activities for a wide range of audiences internally and externally, collaborating within NYBG as well as engaging the general public.
- Lead NYBG in collaborative projects with other institutions to advance biodiversity knowledge and leverage natural history collections to address issues of global importance, such as climate resilience.
- Participate in the development of policy standards in the natural history and library community relating to access and use of collections and their associated resources.

Requirements/Qualifications

The ideal candidate will possess the following strengths and experience:

- A MLS or MLIS from an accredited program or equivalent experience in a library setting is preferred but not required. An advanced or terminal degree at the interface of science and the humanities or experience with museums or special collections is also desirable.
- A passion and genuine interest in the Mertz Library's collection will be advantageous.

- Progressively increasing responsibility and substantial administrative leadership experience in an academic or special library or collection focused setting.
- A clear understanding of the changes that are reshaping scholarship, the publishing landscape, digital content, the ways in which information is shared and the dissemination and preservation of knowledge.
- Strong background, training and experience in Computer/Information Technology and the ability to leverage technology effectively for in person and online library users to access information resources they need to be successful.
- A strong interest and experience in building comprehensive collections commensurate with programmatic research requirements of the staff and students and with the interests of the general public.
- Ability to innovate and drive programs, both within NYBG and externally.
- Demonstrated experience in administration, including personnel management, budgeting, and program development.
- Evidence of ability to secure financial support from public and private sources; track record of fundraising, including grant writing.
- Commitment to a collegial and supportive work environment, and demonstrated team-building abilities with strong interpersonal skills and an adaptable temperament.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills for engaging with scientific and lay audiences.
- Demonstrated advocacy for inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA).
- Familiarity with collections management systems and metadata standards.
- Familiarity with conservation and preservation practices in library collections.
- History of participation in library collections organizations desired.

Leadership

Jennifer Bernstein, CEO & The William C. Steere Sr. President



Jennifer Bernstein is a proven leader with exceptional management experience in fundraising and board development for cultural, educational, and environmental organizations. She joins the Botanical Garden from NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) where she served as Chief Development Officer and Interim Chief Operations Officer.

Bernstein's leadership will drive fiscal, reputational, and programmatic growth and help to usher in a new era at the institution. She brings two decades of non-profit management and fundraising experience, most recently at NRDC, a leading international not-for-profit that works to safeguard the Earth—its people, its plants and animals, and the natural systems on which all life depends. At NRDC, Bernstein designed and executed an ongoing \$1 billion fundraising campaign while overseeing a team of nearly 100 professionals. Previously, she led record fundraising efforts at Pace University and managed individual and corporate giving at the Playwrights Horizons theater in Manhattan. She also served in various capacities at Roundabout Theatre Company, New York University, and CCS Fundraising.

A full list of the senior leadership team can be found [here](#).

Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting The New York Botanical Garden in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by **February 13, 2023**.

Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#).

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Jessica Herrington, Cathryn Davis and Melissa Fincher

NYBGDirectorMertzLibrary@wittkieffer.com

Compensation Range: \$155,000 to \$200,000

The New York Botanical Garden is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. The Garden does not discriminate in its employment practices due to an applicant's race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, national origin and veteran or disability status. Underrepresented communities, Black, Indigenous, persons of color, women, veterans, and individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply.