



FROM THE ARCHIVES

SMITHSONIAN COLLABORATIONS

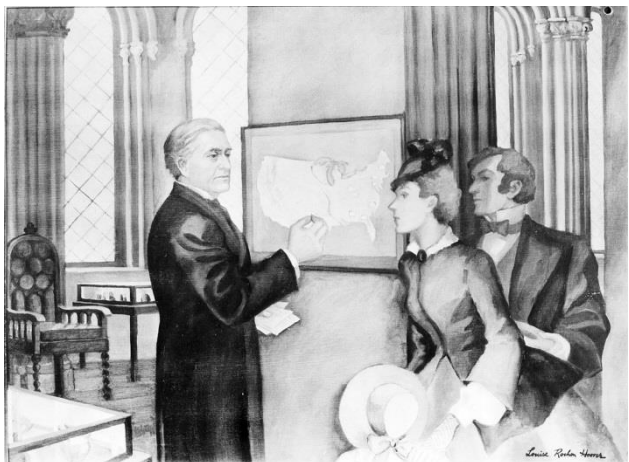
Throughout its history, the Smithsonian Institution has furthered its programs and activities through a wide array of collaborations with a broad range of organizations with shared interests. These working relationships sought to help all partners achieve their goal by sharing resources, expertise, and collections. These collaborations are characterized by various degrees of formality and operate under several different types of agreements, such as memorandum of agreement or understanding, grants, contracts, legislation, and treaties.

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

In his first years as Secretary, Joseph Henry was reluctant to mix the Smithsonian's affairs with that of the Federal government because he believed it would lead to political interference in Smithsonian activities. However, the realities of scarce resources soon led him to accept limited Federal assistance.

METEOROLOGICAL PROJECT

One of the first collaborations was actually more of a tit-for-tat agreement. In 1848, Secretary Joseph Henry established the Meteorological Project to record and analyze weather data for North America. One of Henry's signature programs, the project included a wide network of volunteer weather data recorders who soon amassed more records than Henry alone could analyze. He turned to the U.S. Patent Office, which had funding for such research projects. The Patent Commissioner agreed to provide funding for data analysis, if—and it was a very big “IF”—Henry would agree to take the National Institute collections in the Patent



Joseph Henry and Weather Map in Castle Great Hall, painting by Louise R. Hoover, 1933, Smithsonian Institution Archives

Office Building for the Smithsonian's exhibit halls. Henry's reluctance to have the Smithsonian become a national museum was outweighed by his desire to analyze the data. The deal was struck, a major step towards making the Smithsonian the United States National Museum. By the 1870s, the Meteorological Project had left the Smithsonian and morphed into the National Weather Service.

UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM

In the second half of the 19th century, several Federal agencies began to amass national collections: the Department of the Interior, the U.S. Fish Commission, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), among others. The U.S. Army even had a physical anthropology collection. The Congress was concerned about providing funding for redundant collections. In supporting the Smithsonian as the National Museum from 1858 onward, Congress encouraged the Smithsonian to establish collaborative relationships with other Federal agencies that would allow the agencies easy access to the national collections at the Smithsonian. The 1879 statute creating the USGS reinforced this concern by making the Smithsonian the repository for all Federal collections. Thus, researchers from USDA, USGS, and



In 1925, entomological workers at the U.S. National Museum consisted of more curators paid by the U.S. Department of Agriculture than those paid by the museum, photographer unknown, Smithsonian Institution Archives

the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, among others, were named honorary Smithsonian curators. In a tradition that continues to this day, outside researchers can often spend their entire careers working in a Smithsonian facility. One of the most extensive and long-lasting type of collaborations has been between National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) entomologists and researchers from other government agencies. While NMNH maintains the entire collection of specimens, research conducted on these collections is divided between other agencies' studies of insects with economic or medical significance (such as those that attack food, carry disease, or destroy clothing) and the scientific research undertaken by Smithsonian entomologists.

In other cases, the Smithsonian has provided unique expertise for government agencies and received contract money to carry out these functions. A good example was the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) Satellite Tracking Program. In October of 1957, the Soviet Union launched the first satellite, *Sputnik*. The U.S. government was not prepared for the Soviets to lead the race into space and had no mechanism in place to track the small orb. However, SAO Director Fred L. Whipple believed the Soviets would successfully launch the first satellite into orbit and so was prepared. He had created a network of specialized Baker-Nunn cameras that could observe and record the position of any satellite above and, even before



Filipino Boy Scouts volunteering for Operation Moonwatch in 1958, photographer unknown, Smithsonian Institution Archives

these cameras could be deployed, activated Operation Moonwatch, a global volunteer program where teams used small handheld (and often homemade) telescopes to track satellites. SAO located and began to track *Sputnik* within a few hours of its launch. Unprepared to assume this responsibility, NASA awarded contract funding to SAO to monitor all satellite activity until 1983. The Satellite Tracking Program provided support for both basic research data collection and strategic monitoring of these new sky objects, a symbiotic relationship that lasted some 25 years.

CLASSIFIED RESEARCH

Some government collaborations have proved problematic. In 1962, the NMNH Division of Birds initiated the Pacific Ocean Biological Survey Program. With large grants from the Department of Defense (DOD), NMNH ornithologists and contract staff surveyed vast tracts of the Pacific Ocean to track bird migration patterns. It was an unprecedented collecting opportunity for museum ornithologists, despite some questions raised by colleagues about the generous funding from DOD. In 1969, a television expose aired on CBS *60 Minutes*. Reporters noted an unusually close relationship between the project and the biological and chemical warfare unit at Fort Dietrich, Maryland, and demonstrated that the scientists were collecting avian blood samples and sending them to Fort Dietrich. They also noted the unusual and large number of vaccinations some of the field staff were given prior to departure. The curator in

charge defended the program, saying the NMNH staff were simply conducting basic research. He soon, however, left for a university museum and the program was shut down. While it does not appear that NMNH staff were doing biological warfare experiments themselves, the blood sampling was apparently used to track germs carried by avian species that had been inoculated by Fort Dietrich staff. Some reports sent to Fort Dietrich were classified and senior project staff had security clearances. Serious discussions were subsequently held about the role of classified research at the Smithsonian. Although the Smithsonian traditionally had not participated in classified research, there had been some involvement during and after World War II. Following the airing of the *60 Minutes* expose, Smithsonian management and staff renewed their commitment to the principle that, to carry out James Smithson's open mandate for the increase and diffusion of knowledge, Smithsonian staff could not and would not engage in classified research.

ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Other government collaborations have been far happier and more productive. From 1970 to 1978, for example, the Smithsonian contracted with the Peace Corps to assist in establishing the Smithsonian Peace Corps Environmental Program, an international environmental program to develop conservation, biological, and ecological projects in natural resource fields. Recruits were placed through the Smithsonian Office of Environmental Sciences, and often were trained by and worked with a Smithsonian curator. Typical projects included studies such as "Comoé National Park (Ivory Coast): An Investigation of the Ecology of the Northwest Region and Recommendations for its Future Development," a report written by a Peace Corps volunteer. Today Comoé is one of the largest protected areas in West Africa, characterized by its great plant diversity in the Comoé river basin.



A Peace Corps Environmental Program volunteer and a local man discuss a new pipeline designed to provide drainage for an agricultural project in South America, 1973, photographer unknown, Smithsonian Institution Archives

ACADEMIES, ASSOCIATIONS, AND SOCIETIES

From the outset, the Smithsonian has collaborated with non-governmental societies, academies, and associations. For example, the first meetings of the National Academy of Sciences were held at the Smithsonian, with Secretary Joseph Henry serving as president. In January 1889, the American Historical Association (AHA) was incorporated by the U.S. Congress and ordered to report annually to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. AHA collections,

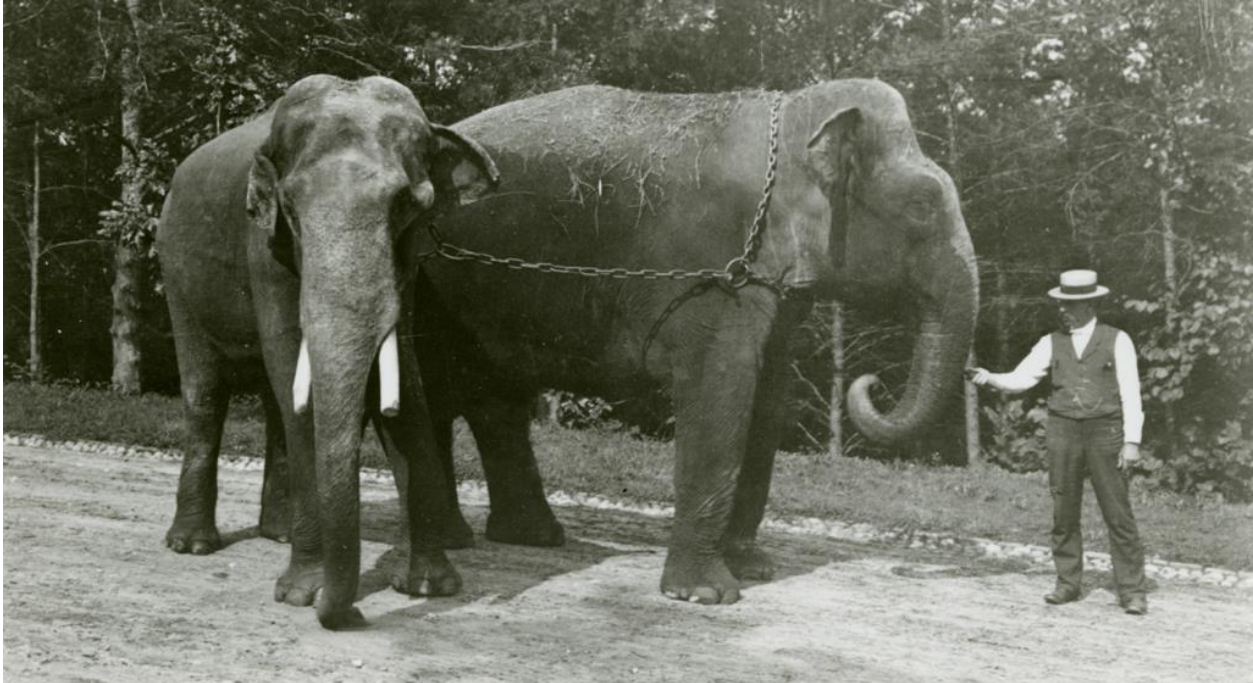
manuscripts, books, pamphlets, and other material for history were to be deposited in the Smithsonian Institution or United States National Museum. The first AHA report was transmitted to Congress in the spring of 1899. The Daughters of the American Revolution had a similar relationship with the Smithsonian for many years. During the early years of many professional societies, such as the AHA and the American Association of Museums (AAM), the Smithsonian provided a home and volunteer staff to support the organizations. AAM, for example, was housed in the Castle for several decades after its founding in 1906, and the AAM archives are still located in the Smithsonian Institution Archives. These collaborations provided support to many emerging professional organizations.

A close collaboration endures between the Smithsonian and the National Geographic Society (NGS) in a relationship that has been characterized as an interlocking directorate. On January 27, 1888, the NGS was founded in Washington, D.C., for “the increase and diffusion of geographical knowledge”—clearly borrowing from James Smithson’s will—by a group of amateurs and wealthy patrons interested in exploration. The first NGS president was Gardiner Greene Hubbard, father-in-law of Smithsonian Regent Alexander Graham Bell. Bell, who eventually succeeded Hubbard in 1897, had close ties with the Smithsonian because Secretary Joseph Henry had served as an important mentor to him. Bell personally brought James Smithson’s remains from Italy to the Smithsonian and provided a seed grant for the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, among many other contributions and donations. The NGS has funded many Smithsonian expeditions and often published its field work. Smithsonian staff have provided expertise and served on NGS boards and review committees. Secretaries Alexander Wetmore and Leonard Carmichael retired to the National Geographic, as did several heads of Smithsonian Press and many scientists. This relationship has been long and close, perhaps less so today than traditionally, but the connections persist.

Some collaborations consist of several organizations, each bringing a different resource to the table. The Joseph Henry Papers Project was a collaboration between the Smithsonian, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), the American Philosophical Society (APS), the National Historical Records and Publications Commission (NHPRC) of the National Archives, and the Richard H. Lounsbery Foundation. Since many important documents had been lost in the Castle fire of 1865, *The Papers of Joseph Henry* was initiated to compile a definitive set of documents relating to Joseph Henry, the first years of the Smithsonian and the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the role of the APS in American science. The Smithsonian provided a home for the project, with expertise from the APS and financial support from NAS, NHPRC, and the Lounsbery Foundation. A governing board consisted of representatives from the Smithsonian, NSF, and APS to guide the project to completion.

CIRCUSES AND ZOOS

Other collaborations have been a bit more unusual. When the National Zoological Park opened in April of 1891, its collection of animals was small. The Zoo director worked out agreements with several circuses, especially the Adams Forepaugh Circus, whereby the circuses would winter their animals at the Zoo, when the circus was not on the road. Elderly animals were retired to the Zoo, including Dunk and Gold Dust, the Zoo’s first elephants. This symbiotic



Dunk and Gold Dust out for a walk at the National Zoo, 1891, photographer unknown, Smithsonian Institution Archives

relationship increased the number and variety of exotic animals at the Zoo, and obviated the need for cash-strapped circuses to house and feed animals in the winter.

The modern zoo world, with its focus on preserving endangered species, requires collaborations between all zoos. Species Survival Plans (SSP) have been established for many species, such as the cheetah, black-footed ferret, and clouded leopard. Zoos with excellent facilities for a species are given primary responsibility for maintaining those SSPs. The National Zoo, for example, is responsible for the clouded leopard. Formal plans are drafted for breeding animals to ensure maximum genetic diversity for critically endangered species, such as the cheetah. Zoos acquire animals on long-term loans, such as the giant pandas from China, rather than purchased ownership, and collaborate to ensure the long-term health and survival of endangered animals under their care.

MEDIA BROADCASTS

In media collaborations, each partner brings a different skill set to the project. In June of 1936, the Smithsonian, the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), the Federal Arts Project (FAP), and the U.S. Office of Education launched the Smithsonian's first radio program, *The World Is Yours*. This very popular radio program used scripts developed by Smithsonian staff on topics of Smithsonian expertise, such as astronomy, anthropology, and the history of invention, with advice from the Office of Education. The programs were produced and distributed by NBC and used unemployed FAP actors as characters, including "Old Timer," the show's emcee. The program continued through 1942, when the demands of World War II and a recovering economy reordered priorities. However, for its six years of existence, the program established a Smithsonian presence every Sunday evening in homes across the nation, creating a visibility the Institution had not had before.

MUSEUMS

Not surprisingly, the Smithsonian has had formal and informal collaborations with other museums throughout its history. From the outset, the U.S. National Museum established loan and exchange agreements with museums across the globe. The National Museum also supported numerous joint collecting expeditions with other museums, such as the 1910–1912 Biological Survey of the Panama Canal Zone, which occurred prior to construction of the Panama Canal and included the American Museum of Natural History and The Field Museum, among others. In such collaborations, agreements are usually reached to share specimens and distribute duplicate specimens. Each museum can contribute unique expertise to the collecting venture, with all museum collections profiting by sharing expenses, knowledge, and specimens.

A long-standing relationship between the Smithsonian and other museums was formalized in 1996 with the creation of the Smithsonian Affiliations program, which today has 180 Smithsonian Affiliates in more than 40 states, Puerto Rico, and Panama. Affiliates represent the diversity of America's museums in size, location, and subject areas, and serve all audiences. More than 8,000 Smithsonian artifacts have been displayed at Affiliate locations.



Smithsonian Affiliations Conference in the Smithsonian Castle, 2011, photographer unknown, Smithsonian Affiliations

Some relationships between the Smithsonian and outside museums are very specific. In 1980, an agreement was reached whereby the Smithsonian Institution and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, jointly purchased the portraits of George and Martha Washington painted by Gilbert Stuart. The agreement stated that the portraits would be displayed in each museum alternately for three-year periods. The portraits were first hung in the National Portrait Gallery from 1980 through 1983. The Smithsonian had sought sole ownership of the paintings but faced opposition from many in Boston who did not want the works to leave the city permanently.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Throughout its history, the Smithsonian has collaborated with traditional academic institutions. Advanced students come to the Smithsonian to complete their major research projects, specimens and artifacts are exchanged, facilities are shared, and student “citizen science” programs flourish. Today, the Smithsonian has several formal and informal collaborations with schools. In Panama, the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) has agreements with the University of Panama to allow the school’s students to use STRI library facilities and work with STRI researchers.

In New York City, the Parsons School of Design and Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum have collaborated on a degree program in the decorative arts. George Mason



Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation, c. 2013, photographer unknown

University currently has two major collaborative programs with the Smithsonian: the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation located at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal, Virginia, and, in partnership with The Smithsonian Associates, a Master of Arts degree program in the history of decorative arts.

One of the closest collaborations is the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, a partnership between Harvard University's Harvard College Observatory and the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) that was established in the mid-1950s. Many SAO staff are in residence at Harvard, some have joint appointments, and the SAO director supervises both staffs. This collaboration has allowed the two groups of astronomers and astrophysicists to share equipment such as telescopes and large data-processing facilities. There have been several signed formal agreements between the two institutions.

FOREIGN NATIONS

The Smithsonian has a long history of collaborative relations with foreign nations. Under extensive agreements with the nation of Panama, STRI has managed wildlife preserves, provided environmental education in exchange for access to the San Blas Islands and other facilities, and conducted environmental education in sensitive areas of the country. The Smithsonian also has worked with organizations from nations in limited contact with the U.S. State Department, such as the Cuban Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Sciences. On December 11, 1980, the Academy of



Chinese Vice President Qian Sanqiang signing an agreement on scientific cooperation between the Smithsonian and the Chinese government, opening the way for the exchange of scientific personnel and information, 1980, photograph by Dane A. Penland, Smithsonian Institution Archives

Sciences of the People’s Republic of China (Academia Sinica) and the Smithsonian signed an agreement to foster joint research and other exchanges. Secretary S. Dillon Ripley and Academy Vice President Qian Sanqiang signed the agreement, which was written in both Chinese and English, after negotiations during a Smithsonian staff trip to China in 1979. And, of course, the National Zoo has collaborated with Chinese specialists on the care of giant pandas since the arrival of Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing in 1972.

COMMERCIAL AGREEMENTS

Although somewhat different in scope, commercial agreements have been forged between Smithsonian Enterprises (SE) and a variety of corporations. These are probably the most formal contractual relationships in which the Smithsonian participates. Smithsonian Networks, a joint venture between Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution, resulted in the launch of Smithsonian Channel, the expanded the reach of the Institution, and the generation of income. For 35 years, the Smithsonian has had a partnership with IMAX to show their large-format films in three museums. Programming includes Smithsonian-related productions like *To Fly* or the 3D IMAX film *Air Racers*, as well as popular movies in IMAX format. The theaters bring in new visitors and generate income. The Office of Product Development and Licensing oversees agreements to reproduce objects from the museums’ collections for retail sale. Royalties support Smithsonian programs and the business partner is able to produce interesting new products. SE launched a licensing agreement in 2012 with Segway to provide Smithsonian-approved tours of the Smithsonian and the National Mall, and numerous digital apps are being developed with the private sector that improve access to the Smithsonian and generate new income.

The Smithsonian has been a collaborative organization since its founding. Under the guidance of the Board of Regents, the Smithsonian’s collaborations embody the mandate to support the “increase and diffusion of knowledge” by extending the reach of the Institution. Some collaborations are fairly informal but most are sealed with a written agreement, such as a contract, memorandum of understanding, grant, or commission. In the best of these, the goals of the collaboration and the role of each party are clearly articulated. Some collaborations are long-standing, such as the Institution’s role as the National Museum repository for all government collections. Others are for the life of a project, such as the Joseph Henry Papers Project. Before proceeding forward or making Institutional commitments that can’t be met, each proposed collaboration must be examined carefully for possible resource, staffing, financial, liability, and legal repercussions. Some small collaborations blossom into larger, more complex ones, such as the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation, which began modestly and has expanded dramatically in size and scope. Collaborations have allowed the Smithsonian to share its expertise, collections, research sites, specialized equipment, and other resources,

to the benefit of each of the parties and to the American public at large, to accomplish work none of the parties could complete on their own, and to touch far broader audiences than any one organization could reach.

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