APPENDIX A.

SMITHSONIAN COLLECTIONS: A BRIEF HISTORY

Introduction

Throughout its long history, the Smithsonian Institution has been concerned with the acquisition, study, care, and storage of collections. At times, individuals with a passionate commitment to build collections have been at odds with those who did not see collecting as a priority. Debates were

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1 This brief history is based on primary source materials held by the Smithsonian Institution Archives (SIA), secondary sources developed by SIA (such as online exhibits and bibliographies, available on SIA’s website, http://www.si.edu/archives/start.htm), and primary and secondary sources in the Smithsonian Institution Libraries (SIL), including legal documents, committee reports, memoirs, internal records, and histories. The inherent limitations of such sources must be noted. For example, laws passed do not reflect the dissension and compromise that preceded passage, policies are subject to exceptions or may not be adequately implemented, etc.

The Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) acknowledges the help, encouragement, and support of Pamela M. Henson, director of the Institutional History Division, SIA. Without her assistance, OP&A could not have completed the work. Any opinions expressed here are, however, those of the OP&A study team.
influenced by the reality of collections arriving despite space, personnel, and other resource constraints, and by the diverging interests of congressional and Smithsonian leadership. The Smithsonian has, at times, struggled to balance its roles as an incubator of scholarly research and leader in scientific discovery, a keeper of national and international treasures, and a key player in preserving and relating the American story.\(^2\)

At the current time, as has happened several times before in the Institution’s history, questions about the role and priority of collections are being raised. These questions have plagued many Secretaries, Regents, and advisors. Space to store and preserve collections is nearing maximum capacity, and both the rationale for keeping some present collections and strategies for developing future collections are being debated. Resources — especially personnel — are scarce, with little promise of relief on the horizon. Decisions made in the near term will have an impact on the expectations of scholars, visitors, and the American public.

This appendix provides a brief historic overview of collections and collecting activities at the Smithsonian and identifies some of the key events, decisions, ideas, and documents that have shaped Smithsonian collections. It is written with the assumption that an understanding of the past can inform decisions about the future.

**origins of the Smithsonian Institution**

Collecting for the public interest antedated the establishment of the Smithsonian Institution in 1846.\(^3\) In 1840, Joel Poinsett, then Secretary of War and an

\(^2\) To some extent, the Smithsonian’s role as a federal repository contributes to this uncertainty. See the discussion of scientific collections below.

\(^3\) Much of this section is based on an online exhibition, “From Smithson to Smithsonian: The Birth of an Institution,” at [http://www.sil.si.edu/Exhibitions/Smithson-to-Smithsonian/](http://www.sil.si.edu/Exhibitions/Smithson-to-Smithsonian/). It is adapted from an exhibition of the same name that was on view from July 1996 to January 1997 in the SIL Exhibition Gallery in the National Museum of American History (NMAH).
accomplished amateur botanist, established the National Institution for the Promotion of Science and the Useful Arts,\(^4\) based in the (Old) Patent Office Building. Poinsett and his supporters planned to create a natural history museum as a vehicle for advancing science. Similarly, as America’s founders passed away, concerned citizens made efforts to preserve their memory by collecting objects associated with them. The resulting collection of portraits, military gear, and artifacts of everyday life, called the Historical Relics Collection, was eventually displayed in the gallery of Poinsett’s National Institute, where it gained iconic status and became a popular Washington attraction.

Poinsett also helped organize the first US government-sponsored global maritime exploration, the United States Exploring Expedition (1838-42), led by Lt. Charles Wilkes, and was authorized to act as curator for the specimens and artifacts it brought back. These collections eventually entered the Smithsonian collections.

Poinsett and his supporters were well aware of the ongoing debate surrounding the bequest of James Smithson to the United States, and saw control of the bequest as a way of promoting their goals. In 1826, Smithson, a British scientist, had drawn up his last will and testament, naming his nephew as beneficiary. However, Smithson stipulated that, should the nephew die without heirs — as he later would, in 1835 — the estate should go “to the United States of America, to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men (Oehser 1983, 201-04)\(^5\).”

Before making any decisions about the disbursal of Smithson’s gift, and even before transferring the estate’s proceeds to the United States, a congressional debate took

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\(^4\) The Columbian Institute for the Promotion of Arts and Sciences, an outgrowth of the earlier Metropolitan Society, was an even earlier organization promoting a national museum. The Columbian Institute was organized October 16, 1816 and received a congressional charter dated April 20, 1818.

\(^5\) Citations are in the reference section at the end of this appendix.
President Andrew Jackson believed that the people of the United States would put opportunities such as Smithson’s bequest to good use, but was unsure whether the Constitution gave him the authority to accept it. He therefore asked the Congress to pass legislation allowing him to do so. The ensuing debate between advocates of states’ rights and Federalists was resolved in favor of the latter, affirming the constitutional basis for establishing a national institution. The Congress authorized acceptance of the Smithson bequest on July 1, 1836 (Smithsonian Institution 1854, 111-17), and President Jackson took immediate steps to secure the bequest by sending diplomat Richard Rush to England.

A decade of discussion over the appropriate use of Smithson’s bequest, efforts to divert it to other causes, and mismanagement of the funds ended with the passage of the Act of August 10, 1846 (Statutes at Large of the United States of America [Stats. at Large of USA] 9:102-06). The act incorporated nearly all of the suggestions for the use of Smithson’s funds — an observatory, scientific research institute, national library, publishing house, art gallery, and museum — that had come from academicians, scientists, educators, congressmen, senators, and others. Only the recommendation to establish a university was omitted, possibly as a result of pressure from existing academic institutions. The Congress also restored the original half million dollars brought from England and the interest that would have accrued since the funds arrived in 1838.

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6 For example, Senator John C. Calhoun opposed accepting the Smithson bequest, arguing that to do so on behalf of the entire nation would abridge states’ rights. He maintained that the Congress had no authority to accept the gift. He also asserted that it would be “beneath [US] dignity to accept presents from anyone.”

7 Act of August 10, 1846, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., 9 Stat. 106. This legislation began on December 19, 1845, with a bill, H.R. 5, introduced by Mr. Owen and referred to a committee consisting of Mr. Owen and Reps. Quincy Adams, Davis, Jenkins, Marsh, Sims, and Wilmot. The House passed the bill on April 29, 1846 and the Senate on August 10, 1846. President Polk signed it into law the same day.

8 For example, Congressman John Quincy Adams (formerly US President), the chairman of the congressional select committee to determine what to do about the bequest, advocated applying the money toward scientific research. Believing that societies often misused science and technology for military and other destructive purposes, Francis Wayland, the president of Brown University, suggested an institution that would teach only the classics.
The legislation, a compromise among competing interests, specified that the Institution should respect Smithson’s mandate for the “increase and diffusion of knowledge.” A Smithsonian Board of Regents was entrusted with the responsibility of interpreting and carrying out the legislation and Smithson’s mandate. The legislation (Section 5) directed the Board of Regents, after selecting an appropriate site,

\[\ldots\text{to cause to be erected a suitable building, of plain and durable materials and structure, without unnecessary ornament, and with suitable rooms or halls for the reception and arrangement, upon a liberal scale, of objects of natural history, including a geological and mineralogical cabinet; also a chemical laboratory, a library and a gallery of art.}\]

The Regents’ first act was to build a “Norman Castle” on the National Mall in Washington, DC, planned and supervised by architect James Renwick, Jr.\(^9\) The group then appointed Joseph Henry (1846-78),\(^10\) a renowned physicist from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), as the first chief operating officer, or Secretary.

the original collections

Section 6 of the enabling legislation clearly transfers collections belonging to the United States to the Smithsonian:

\[\ldots\text{[A]ll objects of art and of foreign and curious research, and all objects of natural history, plants, and geological and mineralogical specimens belonging to the United States, which may be in the city of Washington, in whosoever custody they may be, shall be delivered.}\]

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\(^9\) The first Smithsonian Board of Regents’ meeting was held on September 7, 1846 in a room of the Post Office Building on F Street, NW between 7th and 8th Streets. Thirteen of the 15 appointed members were present (Clark 1996). A history of the Castle, including photographs and biographical sketches of all the Secretaries, is in Field, Stamm, and Ewing (1993).

\(^10\) The dates following the names of Secretaries denote their period of service.
to the board of regents to receive them, and shall be so arranged and classified.

The dilemmas of the diverse, and often conflicting, roles of the Smithsonian began with this language. The last clause summarizes what have been, with varying levels of emphasis, the Smithsonian’s key functions: to receive (collect), arrange (exhibit), and classify (study). The Regents were also authorized to accept new collections either by exchange of duplicates or by donation, and also to care for the collections. The Secretary was to “discharge the duties of librarian and keeper of the museum,” and was permitted to hire assistants.

With the exception of stipulating an annual sum to be used for the library, “not exceeding an average of $25,000 a year” of the approximately $30,000 interest from the bequest, the legislation was remarkably free from constraints or controls on spending. Nor did it impose any particular congressional oversight on the Institution. The leaders of the Institution could spend funds “as they deem best suited for the promotion of the purposes of James Smithson.”

a leader’s vision

The mission to promote “the increase and diffusion of knowledge,” and the responsibility for a national museum, have been interpreted in many ways since the Smithsonian’s inception, and such interpretation would relate heavily to the interests of its leaders. Key to the subsequent development of the Smithsonian was Secretary Henry’s “Programme of Organization,” presented in the first Annual Report of the Secretary and adopted by the Board of Regents. Support for publications and lectures on original research was one essential feature of this document; the other was the accumulation of collections of natural history and art, as well as the formation of a library. In accepting Henry’s plan, the Regents also resolved that the

11 A transcript of the programme is at http://www.sil.si.edu/Exhibitions/Smithson-to-Smithsonian/henry.htm.
two principal modes of executing the plan would be equally funded out of the accruing interest that remained from the bequest once construction of the Castle was completed. Sections II.1 and II.2 of Henry’s Programme read:

1. The act of Congress establishing the Institution contemplated the formation of a library and a museum; and the Board of Regents, including these objects in the plan of organization, resolved to divide the income into two equal parts.

2. One part to be appropriated to increase and diffuse knowledge by means of publications and researches, agreeably to the scheme before given. The other part to be appropriated to the formation of a library and a collection of objects of nature and of art.  

Henry, however, did not personally approve of this equal emphasis on the two areas. In his interpretation, the Institution was to “increase” knowledge through scientific research, and “diffuse” knowledge through the publication of *Smithsonian Contribution to Knowledge* and the administration of an active International Exchange Service of publications. Collections were of interest to Henry only to the extent that they furthered research, which he advocated in areas such as physics, meteorological observations, descriptive natural history, “statistical inquiries with reference to physical, moral, and political subjects,” historical research, and ethnology (especially with reference to Native Americans). Cognizant of resources, he suggested “appropriations in different years to different objects; so that in course of time each branch of knowledge may receive a share.” To this day, it is still largely these areas of scientific research that dominate Smithsonian programs.

Henry’s emphasis on scientific research stood in contrast to his lack of interest in the national library, museum, and art gallery prescribed in the enabling legislation. However, the Regents’ interest in a national library was made clear in their

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12 In January 1855, the Smithsonian Board of Regents repealed the resolution originally adopted on January 26, 1847, that required an equal division of income between active operations and the library and museum. The Regents passed a resolution stating that hereafter annual appropriations would be related to intrinsic importance in the judgment of the Regents.

13 The exchange distributed research publications to and from institutions and governments from all over the world. It continued to grow into the 20th century. For example, in 1900 it handled 117,492 packages weighing 418,935 pounds.
appointment, even before a Secretary, of an Assistant Secretary to be in charge of a
library. For Henry, the library was a drain on resources and space. He also predicted
that the accumulations of a museum or library would consume *for their care alone* more
than the small income of the Smithsonian endowment, without contributing
effectively to the increase and diffusion of knowledge.

The original 1846 Act also required “that the author or proprietor of any book, map,
chart, musical composition, print, cut, or engraving” who wanted a copyright should
deposit a copy both with the Librarian of the Smithsonian and the Library of
Congress. After considerable maneuvering, Henry persuaded the Regents and the
Congress to repeal the copyright-depository provision. Both resource and space
constraints were alleviated in 1866 when the Smithsonian sent 40,000 volumes to the
Library of Congress. As part of the arrangement, Smithsonian staff were granted the
same borrowing privileges as congressional staff. The “Smithsonian Deposit”
continued as a separate entity in the Library of Congress until the early 1950s, and
the Smithsonian continued to add to the deposit throughout that period.\(^\text{14}\) The
initial transfer marked the first time the Smithsonian made a long-term loan to
another institution. The controversy over the library also led the Congress, for the
first time, to establish a standing committee to examine the management of the
Smithsonian.

**early collections and the emergence of the US National Museum**

While successful in divesting the Smithsonian of the legislated national library
obligation, Henry was far less successful in developing a Smithsonian without a
museum. During his tenure, he saw the natural history collections grow to over
250,000 objects and come to include material unrelated to research. He also

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\(^{14}\) At the time that it was integrated into the Library of Congress’s rapidly developing science
collections, the Smithsonian Deposit had grown to over 600,000 volumes. The present-day library at
the Smithsonian is discussed below.
witnessed the problems associated with funding collections’ care and storage, and argued against accepting the voluminous collections gathered on expeditions funded by the US government. After the Wilkes collections were transferred to the Smithsonian, Henry wrote to a friend, “Now comes the danger. The appropriations of the Congress for the Museum are fitful.” Further, 

The answer made to some of these objections has usually been that the government would grant an annual appropriation for the support of the museum of the exploring expedition. But this would be equally objectionable, since it would annually bring the institution before Congress as a supplicant for government patronage, and ultimately subject it to political influence and control (Smithsonian Institution 1849, 20-21).

the origins of the National Museum

By 1849, despite Henry’s objections, the Smithsonian had a small museum unit. Its collections were divided into mammals, birds, reptiles and fishes, invertebrates, plants, fossil remains, minerals and geological specimens, and ethnology. Henry saw no reason to collect things found in other encyclopedic museums at the time, like the British Museum. Instead, he wanted to focus on objects of “special character.”

15 The volume of these materials was extensive. In January 2004, the Smithsonian Institution Libraries made the catalogue of the US Exploring Expedition’s collection of ethnographic and archaeological artifacts available to the public online. According to Viola (1985), the introduction states,

Estimates are that the collections amassed between April 1838 and June 1842 by the United States Exploring Expedition, under the command of Charles Wilkes, weighed nearly 40 tons. The naval officers, crew, and nine civilian scientists, who sailed on six small ships for four years, gathered specimens of natural history at nearly every stop, including several thousand zoological specimens, 50,000 plant specimens, thousands of shells, corals, fossils, and geological specimens, even jars of sea water from different localities. They also collected 2,500 ethnological and archaeological specimens, which they generally referred to as “curiosities,” to illustrate the varied cultures with whom they came in contact.

See also From the Ends of the Earth: The United States Exploring Expedition Collections, at http://www.sil.si.edu/DigitalCollections/usexex/learn/Walsh-01.htm.

16 That is, the collections from the 1838-42 US Exploring Expedition organized by Poinsett, discussed above and in footnote 15.
In principle, Henry was not against the creation of a national museum — he simply did not want a national museum connected with the Smithsonian Institution. Familiar with general collections abroad, Henry wrote, “Though the formation of a general collection is neither within the means nor the province of the Institution, it is an object which ought to engage the attention of Congress. A general museum appears to be a necessary establishment at the seat of government of every civilized nation (Smithsonian Institution 1851, 25).”

Henry continued to hope that his view of a national museum separate from the Smithsonian would prevail, even after the museum unit was established within the Institution. In his 1856 Report of the Secretary, he wrote:

> The adverse effects of the early and consequently imperfect legislation ought, therefore, as far as possible, to be obviated; and this could readily be done, if Congress would relieve the Institution from the care of a large collection of specimens principally belonging to the government, and purchase the [Smithsonian] building to be used as a depository of all the objects of natural history and the fine arts belonging to the nation (Smithsonian Institution 1857, 21-22).

The ambiguity in the original legislation allowed the Board of Regents and the Secretary to shift priorities (Endersby 1998, 7). For at the same time, Henry observed:

> …[E]xperience has shown that the [Smithsonian] building will ultimately be filled with objects of natural history belonging to the general government . . . It may be a question whether, in consideration of this fact, it would not be well to offer the use of the large room immediately for a national museum [emphasis added] of which the Smithsonian Institution would be the mere curator, and the expense of maintaining which should be paid by the general government.

However, Henry’s point of view was clearly not the only one at the Smithsonian. Ultimately, Henry lost the debate because the Regents, notably George Perkins Marsh, insisted upon a museum within the Institution.
In 1858, when the government’s collections of scientific specimens, art works, and historical memorabilia at the National Institute gallery in the Patent Office Building were transferred to the Smithsonian’s custody, a national multidisciplinary museum began to emerge. With these collections came a $4,000 yearly appropriation for their care. The main hall of the Castle became the locus for the biological collections, while the west wing was devoted to geology and fossils, and the large upper center hall to American Indian artifacts and costumes. (The latter evolved into the anthropological collections held by the Smithsonian today.)

To the end of his life, Henry sought a clear separation between a National Museum and the Institution:

The object of the [Museum] is the establishment of a collection of specimens of nature and of art which shall exhibit the natural resources and industry of the country . . . The Smithsonian Institution, on the other hand, does not offer the results of its operation to the physical eye, but presents them to the mind in the form of new discoveries . . . It is the design of the Museum to continually increase its collection of material objects; of the Institution, to extend the bounds of human knowledge (Endersby 1998, 13).

Yet the tide of events continued to flow in the opposite direction from Henry’s vision. Beginning in the 1860s, the Institution’s Annual Reports made a clear distinction between the “collections of specimens of Natural History,” intended for the advancement of knowledge, and the museum collections intended for public exhibitions. By 1866, the Annual Report referred to the “National Museum.” For the next decade, Henry continuously appealed to the Congress for increases in appropriations to care for the museum, while at the same time hoping that the

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17 On June 10, 1867, Attorney General Jeremiah S. Black ruled on the legality of the collections’ transfer, since in 1842 they had been placed in the Patent Office, and an 1854 Act (Stats. at Large of the U.S. 10: 572) puts them in the Patent Office, under the care and management of the Commissioner. The Attorney General reconciled the language of the Smithsonian’s enabling legislation (1846) with the other legislative acts saying that one (the 1846 law) called for a permanent arrangement, which was not to take effect until there were “suitable arrangements,” and the others called for a temporary disposal.
Congress would remove it from the Institution. Henry’s fears about the financial implications of establishing a national museum within the Smithsonian were largely borne out during his years as Secretary. It was not until 1870 that the government was persuaded to provide substantial support for the museum collections; by that time, the Institution was spending more than half of its income ($45,000 in 1870) on them (Smithsonian Institution 1927, 14-15).

Two main themes emerge from consideration of the early debate over whether the national museum should be part of the Smithsonian: the struggle to define the priorities of the Institution, and the need to cope with financial pressures and constraints. These issues have continued to generate debate.

**new leadership, new emphasis**

Henry brought Spencer Fullerton Baird to the Smithsonian in 1850 as Assistant Secretary “to take charge of the cabinet and to act as naturalist of the Institution.”

In 1878, Baird became the Institution’s second Secretary, serving until 1887. Baird was far more intent on building collections. His vision for the National Museum was that it should include a comprehensive collection of all the natural resources of the United States. He supported a system of exchange using duplicate specimens and proposed to furnish travelers with the means of “determining the character of objects collected in various parts of North America.” The collection had a good start with two boxcars — including nearly 3,000 bird and 280 mammal specimens — that Baird brought with him from Reading, Pennsylvania to Washington.

Baird spent his early years at the Smithsonian implementing Henry’s programs, publishing scientific books, and coordinating the international exchange of thousands of publications. At the same time, he quietly but persistently focused on

18 The “cabinet” refers to the assortment of natural specimens received by the federal government, many of which were worthless from Henry’s perspective. In Europe, such collections were referred to as “cabinets of curiosities.”
building a museum collection. In July 1853, Baird wrote to his mentor, Smithsonian Regent George Perkins Marsh, “I expect the accumulation of a mass of matter thus collected (which the Institution cannot or will not ‘curate’ efficiently) to have the effect of forcing our government into establishing a National Museum, of which (let me whisper it) I hope to be director. Still even if this argument don’t weigh now; it will one of these days and I am content to wait.”

Coincident with the establishment of the Smithsonian, as noted, the US government sponsored a number of exploring expeditions into the territories to provide information about their natural resources and inhabitants. In many instances, the Congress specified the type of documentation to be published and the disposition of the collected materials. As Assistant Secretary, Baird saw to it that each journey would have some scientific value, beyond its practical aspects. He trained field workers, prepared field guidebooks, and ensured that the fieldworkers brought back specimens. Beyond working with government expeditions, he established a natural history collecting network across the country, relying on volunteers from all walks of life, including soldiers, trappers, farmers, teachers, and doctors.

the Centennial Exposition

Baird also prepared all of the government exhibits for the International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures, and Products of the Soil and Mine at the Centennial exposition in Philadelphia in 1876. The Smithsonian exhibits gave the Institution national visibility by showcasing both its intellectual accomplishments (publications, international exchanges, meteorological observations, and expeditions) and the collections of the National Museum (including mammals, fishes, and manikins of

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19 Letter from Spencer Fullerton Baird to George Perkins Marsh, Smithsonian Regent, July 2, 1853.
20 For example, as early as 1842 (Stats. at Large of the USA 5:534) Congress legislated that materials from the Exploring Expedition led by Lt. Charles Wilkes were to be stored in the upper story of the Patent Office Building.
21 Baird had been involved in earlier exhibition activities (notably at fisheries exhibits).
American Indians. At the close of the exposition, Baird convinced most exhibitors
to donate their displays to the Smithsonian, “a quantity far beyond the storage
capacity of the Smithsonian building,” he conceded. Subsequently, over 50 freight
cars of exhibition materials from 30 countries arrived in Washington. A short-term
storage solution was found when the Congress authorized the transfer of the
Armory building (now the location of the National Air and Space Museum) to the
Institution.

As evidenced by the Centennial exposition shipment, the current dilemma of
overcrowding is not new. The 50 freight cars of objects that arrived en masse were
boxed and stored without appropriate staff, facilities, or other resources to process
them. Fortunately, the Congress’s response was swift: it passed an act to provide a
building (what is now the Arts & Industries Building [A&I]) for the growing
collection.22

the US National Museum

The early Smithsonian leadership modeled the National Museum in the image of
similar institutions in Great Britain, Germany, and France. Increasingly, the museum
became a visible and important element in the structure of the Smithsonian. In
1874, the names of individuals in charge of various divisions of the National
Museum were listed at the beginning of the Annual Report. The Office of Curator
was established in 1875, and the same year saw the publication of the Bulletin of the
National Museum “to illustrate the collections of natural history and ethnology
belonging to the United States, and constituting the National Museum (Endersby
1998, 11).” The Institution, according to the 1875 Annual Report, had two distinct
operations:

22 This building, with 80,000 square feet of exhibit space, was completed by 1881 — on schedule and
within budget. Per square foot, it was the cheapest permanent government building ever built.
[F]irst, those relating to the immediate objects of the [Smithson] bequest, vis., the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men, through researches, publication, and exchanges; and second, those which pertain to the management of the Government collections in natural history and ethnology, constituting the *National Museum*, of which the Institution is the custodian (Smithsonian Institution 1875, 78; emphasis in original).

The Smithsonian Institution was the caretaker for the developing government’s national museum. But as this quotation suggests, in the eyes of the Smithsonian Institution it was clear that the National Museum and its collections were creations of the Congress with the backing of many of the Regents, and *not* of Smithson and his bequest.

Congressional sanction for use of the name “National Museum” came in an act of the Congress in 1875, when there was an appropriation of $1,000 for the “official postage stamps for the National Museum of the Smithsonian Institution.” A formal reaffirmation of the Smithsonian as the “National Museum” came in 1879 with the establishment of the US Geological Survey (USGS) (*Stats. at Large of the USA* 1879 20: 377), which designated the National Museum as the repository for natural history materials collected by all branches of the US government:

> [A]ll the collections of rocks, minerals, soils, fossils, and objects of natural history, archaeology, and ethnology, made by the Coast and Interior Survey, the Geological Survey, or by any other parties for the Government of the United States, when no longer needed for investigations in progress shall be deposited in the National Museum.

The division of resources among the many programs of the Institution was a fiscal challenge in the late 19th century as it is today. In the same act, the Congress allocated the Smithsonian Institution $23,000 for the preservation and care of the collections of the National Museum; $5,000 for the distribution of duplicate scientific specimens; $2,500 for storage of articles belonging to the United States, including those from the International Exhibition of 1876; $3,000 for providing security against fire; $20,000 for completing the Smithsonian contributions to North
American Ethnology and preparing the materials for publication;\textsuperscript{23} and $250,000 for a fire-proof building for use of the National Museum (A&I).

When Baird was appointed Secretary in 1878, he relied heavily on George Brown Goode, then a curator, to develop the National Museum.\textsuperscript{24} Goode devised a system of classification for arranging the collections, and he displayed objects in didactic exhibits. Over time, Goode became the leading figure in American museum theory and display. When the National Museum Building opened to the public in 1881 with displays of anthropology, art, geology, history, and natural history, it reflected Goode’s philosophy and classification.\textsuperscript{25} In Goode’s view, the early Smithsonian collections had served research. When the Smithsonian accepted government collections, it became the museum of record, the “official” repository for objects of art, culture, and science. Goode’s new museum was also a museum of education, with exhibits to show the place of each object in a world order. The geology and natural history halls were arranged according to their scientific classifications. The anthropology and history of technology halls reflected the prevailing Progressive Era point of view — that is, it started with “primitive” cultures and concluded with the United States. Exhibits traced the history of each industry, such as agriculture,

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\item The Congress appropriated the $20,000 for the publication of contributions relating to North American ethnology, provided that “all the archives, records, and materials relating to the Indians of North America, collected by the Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, shall be turned over to the Smithsonian Institution, that the work may be completed and prepared for publication under its direction.” The Secretary of the Interior, on February 28, requested that this appropriation be placed under the direction of the Smithsonian Institution, instead of the Department of the Interior. The Bureau of Ethnology, with Major John Wesley Powell as its head, was established to perform this work.
\item Baird met Goode in 1872, when Goode worked as a volunteer for the US Fish Commission in Maine. For the next five years, Goode spent his summers doing field work with the US Fish Commission and divided his winters between Wesleyan, where he was in charge of its new natural history museum, and the Smithsonian. In 1877, he left Wesleyan and joined the Smithsonian full time, first as an assistant curator and later as curator. After the National Museum was formally established in 1879, Goode became its assistant director. In 1887 he was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian, and he assumed full responsibility for the National Museum following Baird’s death in 1887. Goode died of pneumonia in 1896 at the age of 45.
\item A few exhibits, notably birds, invertebrates, and art, remained in the Smithsonian Castle.
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ceramics, music, and nautical navigation. The Historical Relics Collection displayed the possessions of the founding fathers and colonial society.26

The name “National Museum” came into general use with the exhibitions that Baird curated at the 1876 International Exhibition in Philadelphia. The subsequent name, the United States National Museum (USNM) came into use in the next decade. In 1884, for the first time, the USNM published its own annual report, separate from that of the Smithsonian Institution itself (Endersby 1998, 13). By the time of Baird’s death in 1887, USNM was firmly established as the nation’s museum, signaling that Washington was equal to the capitals of Europe.

**new programs, new space**

The third Secretary, Samuel Pierpont Langley (1887-1906), like Henry, emphasized research. In addition to expanding existing programs, he created the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) in 1890, in part to support his own research.27 When the Congress balked at funding SAO, he raised the money himself.

During Langley’s tenure as Secretary, the idea of a national zoo was advanced as a way of dealing with the growth of collections under the care of the Smithsonian’s Department of Living Animals. An act of the Congress established the National Zoological Park (NZP) in 1889. In 1891, the 200 animals living and breeding in back of the Castle moved to the current location of NZP in Rock Creek Park. The basic argument for securing funding for this contentious expansion relied on the

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26 In January 1883, the Board of Regents presented a resolution to the Congress requesting an appropriation of $300,000, to be expended under the direction of the Board of Regents, to enlarge the National Museum by erecting a fire-proof building on the southwest corner of the Smithsonian reservation. This resolution related to a bill introduced in the House that would appropriate $200,000 for a building to accommodate USGS and for other purposes. At the time, USGS was occupying some 20 rooms in A&I. However, the Congress made no appropriation for the expansion of the National Museum.

27 SAO is administratively joined with the Harvard College Observatory to create the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, where nearly 300 astronomers, astrophysicists, and other earth and space scientists undertake major programs of research.
importance of preserving and studying endangered species. The plans for the zoo were drawn up by Secretary Langley, William Temple Hornaday (a noted conservationist and head of the Smithsonian’s Vertebrate Division), and Frederick Law Olmstead (a noted landscape architect). Major collecting expeditions during the era of the Great Depression and World War II, exchange programs, purchases, and natural breeding increased the size of the zoo’s collection to about 5,000 animals in the 1960s.

As early as the 1880s, not long after the National Museum Building opened, the Regents discussed the overcrowded Smithsonian facilities and need for a third building. To cope with the growing collections, Langley eventually secured funding when the Congress appropriated funds in 1903. The building that now houses the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) officially opened in 1911 and provided a new home for the natural history and art collections. Yet the spaciousness of the new building was short-lived, as new collections soon arrived. For example, in 1909 an expedition to East Africa organized by President Theodore Roosevelt after he left office contributed 5,000 mammals, 4,500 birds, 2,300 reptiles and amphibians, and large numbers of fishes, invertebrates, shells, and plants. In 1910, the Smithsonian received another 100,000 zoological and botanical specimens.

Secretary Langley clearly recognized that, at the start of the 20th century, the USNM that would be led by his successor, Charles D. Walcott (1907-27), was a different organization from the one Langley first encountered. In comments to the Regents, he said,

\[\ldots\] Here I want to revert to the fact that the Museum as it exists has grown from the parent stem of the Smithsonian Institution, and grown so fast that the child is tending to become larger than the parent \ldots With a million dollars or more of annual expenditures, the Museum will be more like other great bureaus of the Government (Smithsonian Institution 1901, xxii-xxiii).

The collections of USNM, as noted, had come from various sources and were of various types: objects of natural history and anthropology from various donors;
objects from government expeditions; objects collected by the officers of surveys such as the Pacific Railroad survey, Mexican boundary survey, Army Corps of Engineers surveys, and USGS surveys; specimens and records from the 1803 Lewis and Clark expedition; objects from the 1876 International Exhibition in Philadelphia; and objects given by various foreign governments. The objects were arranged in a variant of Goode’s classification system and organized into divisions and, within these, among departments.\textsuperscript{28} The Division of Anthropology included the Department of Arts and Industries (graphic arts; textiles; transportation and engineering; historical collections, coins, and medals; \textit{materia medica}; fisheries and animal products; foods; naval architecture; forestry; Section of Physical Apparatus; and Section of Oriental Antiquities); Department of Ethnology; Department of American Prehistoric Pottery; and Department of Prehistoric Anthropology. There were also Divisions of Zoology, Botany, and Geology. Only the Department of Arts and Industries included materials now associated with history museums; the rest had science or natural history collections.

The 20\textsuperscript{th} century saw the Smithsonian add collections in disciplines not previously emphasized and expand the nonscience collections into major holdings in their own right. At the same time, USNM became somewhat unwieldy and began to move away from the model of grouping all collections under a single administrative structure. The next few sections outline these developments.

\textsuperscript{28} This classification, from the 1900 Annual Report, was a reorganization that occurred after Goode died in 1896 (Endersby, 18). Note that history was subsumed under anthropology.
ART COLLECTIONS

the early art collections

The original legislation creating the Smithsonian included, albeit in vague language, provision for a “gallery of art.” As was the case for specific scientific fields of study as well as other disciplines, the art collections required either an internal champion or strong external pressure before development took place.

Lacking funds for acquiring art, a patron to donate a major collection, or a strong internal advocate, interest in art languished through the Smithsonian's first few decades. However, to some, including a number of artists, the fact that the enabling legislation had provided for the centralization of art belonging to the government in Washington at the Smithsonian signaled that a national gallery might yet be developed. The most frequently quoted example of an effort to get this idea off the ground is the 1849 offer by George Catlin of his “Indian Gallery” of 600 paintings for $65,000. The Smithsonian rejected his offer. (Ironically, in 1879, after Catlin’s death, his widow donated the paintings to the Smithsonian.)

In the early period of the Institution, the few paintings and plaster casts that were part of the art collection did not fare well. In 1865, during the installation of an exhibition of Indian paintings by John Mix Stanley on the second floor of the Castle, a fire broke out and destroyed over 200 paintings. The Smithsonian loaned the surviving prints and drawings temporarily to the Library of the Congress, while it sent the paintings and sculptures to the Corcoran Gallery of Art. In 1895 it recalled the artwork. In 1904, President Roosevelt wrote to the Congress and argued, based on the enabling legislation, that “The collection of objects of art contemplated in section 5586 of the Revised Statutes should be designated and established as a National Gallery of Art; and the Smithsonian Institution should be authorized to
accept any additions to said collection that may be received by gift, bequest, or devise." The Congress failed to take action on this recommendation.

The Smithsonian’s National Gallery of Art

The revival of art at the Smithsonian came at the turn of the 20th century with a bequest to the Corcoran Gallery of Art by Harriet Lane Johnston. The bequest stipulated that the gift, primarily 18th century portraits by artists such as Sir Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough, should go to the national gallery of art, should one be established. A few years later, in July 1906, the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia decided that the Smithsonian did include “a National Gallery of Art” and directed that the collection be placed under its stewardship. Other gifts of art and the first acquisition fund of $400,000 followed.

The National Gallery of Art was finally designated as a separate Smithsonian entity in 1920. This designation led to suggestions and designs for a building. For example, Charles A. Platt, whose Freer Gallery of Art had opened that year, submitted plans in 1925. In 1929, the National Gallery received an extensive collection from John Gellatly (1852–1931), which was moved from New York to Washington and installed in the gallery’s space in the expanded USNM building (now the Natural History Building).

29 The sentence is in the President’s Fourth State of the Union message, presented in written form to the Congress on December 6, 1904 (Roosevelt 1904). See the text on http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/sotu4.html.
30 Harriet Lane Johnston was President James Buchanan’s niece and served as First Lady during his tenure (1857-61).
31 The Corcoran Gallery of Art sought the ruling. The Smithsonian formally established the National Gallery of Art to receive the collection. As a result of this decree, the collection, consisting of 31 pieces, was delivered to the Smithsonian Institution in August 1906 (see Supreme Court-District of Columbia, 1906).
32 The Gellatly collection was formally opened to the public for viewing on the evening of June 22, 1933.
The lack of a strong Smithsonian identity for art troubled some leaders. During a discussion about the future of the Institution in 1927, Senator Reed Smoot, a Regent of the Institution, noted,

> We are still a very young country, speaking in terms of years. I think I have noticed in the last 10 years a growing sentiment throughout the country that we are behind in our development of art; that our resources are greater than those of any other country but that nearly every other country is ahead of us in the development of art. . . . I have been ashamed of my country (Smithsonian 1927, 83-84).

Smoot explained that in the first days after his appointment as a Regent, he searched every nook of the collections to find “the only National Gallery of Art pinched within a few feet of space in the National Museum Building.” Smoot asserted, “I assure you we are going to have a separate National Gallery, and I am also quite sure an art building will be erected before long without asking an appropriation of the Government (ibid., 84).”

At about the same time, former Secretary of the Treasury Andrew W. Mellon was pursuing his interest in establishing a national art museum in the nation’s capital. In 1935, Mellon commissioned architect John Russell Pope to make the first sketches for his proposed National Gallery of Art at a site on the Mall. About a year later, Mellon wrote President Franklin D. Roosevelt, offering to donate his collection of primarily European art to the nation and to build a building at his expense. Emulating the National Gallery of Art in London, Mellon stipulated that his new museum be named the “National Gallery of Art.” The Congress complied with the Mellon request, passing legislation in 1937 to establish the National Gallery of Art (NGA) as an independent bureau within the Smithsonian Institution. The relationship between the Smithsonian and NGA is, however, different from that of other Smithsonian units, because NGA operates under a separate charter and board of trustees.\(^33\)

\(^{33}\) The members of the Board of Trustees of NGA are the Chief Justice of the United States, Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and private citizens.
National Collection of Fine Arts

When the Congress officially designated the institution created by Mellon as the National Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian renamed its own National Gallery of Art collection the National Collection of Fine Arts (NCFA). It gave NCFA a slightly altered mission, reflecting the New Deal philosophy, to include promotion of the work of living artists and development of a national audience. A competition was organized to select a design for a home for NCFA, and legislation in 1938 authorized a site on the Mall for a building (Stats. at Large of U.S.A 1938 52:399). However, the building was not built.

In 1958, Secretary Leonard Carmichael (1952-64) negotiated the transfer to the Smithsonian of the Old Patent Office Building on F Street between 7th and 9th Streets, thus saving that building from demolition and providing a home for NCFA. In 1972, NCFA gained additional gallery space when the Renwick Gallery near the White House was turned over to the Smithsonian. The Renwick Gallery was used primarily to house a collection of 20th century American crafts.34 In 1980, by an act of the Congress, NCFA was renamed the National Museum of American Art (NMAA). In 2000, NMAA requested yet another name — the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM), and on October 27, 2000, President Bill Clinton signed into law the bill renaming the museum.

In FY2002 SAAM’s collections included over 39,000 works from all periods of American art, from colonial to contemporary, in a range of media, including

34 The Renwick Gallery was originally the Corcoran Gallery of Art, erected between 1859 and 1861 for William Wilson Corcoran’s collection of paintings and sculpture. Located at 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, it was designed by architect James Renwick, Jr. In 1861, the US Army seized the building and turned it into a warehouse for records and uniforms. In 1864 it became office space for Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs. In May 1869, the building was returned to Corcoran, and portions were opened to visitors in 1874. A new Corcoran Gallery building was erected, and in December 1899 the government rented the original building to the US Court of Claims. The court moved out of the building in 1964. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson approved the use of the building as a Smithsonian gallery of arts, crafts, and design.
painting, sculpture, works on paper, and photography. To assist researchers in locating American paintings and sculptures for comparative study, SAAM maintains the Inventories of American Painting (begun in the early 1970s) and Sculpture (begun in 1985). Together, the inventories reference over 360,000 art works in public and private collections worldwide and are complemented by a photographic study file of over 60,000 photographs. SAAM’s Slide and Photo Archives had over 250,000 images documenting American art and architecture.

National Portrait Gallery

A Smithsonian exhibition of 20 portraits of American and allied nations’ World War I leaders, created by American artists, stimulated interest in expanding what became the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) collections and in creating a separate institution for them. The National Art Commission sponsored the works, which were exhibited in the Natural History Building in May 1921 (and again in 1923) under the auspices of the Smithsonian’s then-National Gallery of Art. In response to calls for a national portrait gallery, starting in 1921 the Smithsonian’s National Gallery of Art Commission regularly discussed such an entity and accepted donations of portraits for its future opening.

For the next 40 years, the collections of the future NPG were stored with its parent entity, the bureau that evolved into SAAM. The Congress officially established NPG in 1962 as a unit of the Smithsonian Institution, as

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35 Unless otherwise stated, the figures used here represent National Collections Program data for FY2002, as presented in the Introduction to this study. In the course of researching this appendix, different estimates of some units’ collections sizes were discovered; in most cases, the differences with NCP data were relatively small.

36 Information on Smithsonian archives is based on descriptions in the Smithsonian Institution Research Information System (SIRIS) and links to individual archives.

37 The National Art Commission was created to commission American artists to create a pictorial record of World War I. The Smithsonian, the American Federation of the Arts, and the American Mission to Negotiate Peace endorsed it.
. . . a free and public museum for the exhibition and study of portraiture and statuary depicting men and women who have made significant contributions to the history, development, and culture of the people of the United States, and of the artists who created such portraiture and statuary.  

In 1963, the first NPG Commission (as its board of directors is called) elaborated on this mandate, defining two main objectives for the gallery: acquisition and exhibition of portraits and statuary of those who have made significant contributions to the history, development, and culture of the United States; and establishment of the gallery as a research center for American biography, iconography, and history. In the 1960s and 1970s, NPG initiated several programs to carry out the second objective. It also established the Catalog of American Portraits and the Charles Willson Peale Papers project. In 1976, legislation authorized NPG to collect portraits in all media, most notably photography. In FY2002, the collection of about 19,000 artworks included prints, paintings, sculptures, and photographs, as well as more than 54,000 glass-plate negatives from the Mathew Brady studio, official portraits of all US presidents, and artwork from more than 1,600 *Time* magazine covers.

In 1968, NPG and NCFA opened in the refurbished Patent Office Building. The building was closed in 2000 for a multiyear renovation and was scheduled to re-open in July 2006.

**Freer Gallery of Art**

In 1905, before the court ruling on the Harriet Lane Johnston bequest discussed above that led to the recognition of a “National Gallery of Art” at the Smithsonian, Charles Lang Freer, a railroad car manufacturer from Detroit, offered the Regents his private collection. After considerable hesitation, a committee of the Board of Regents (including Alexander Graham Bell) traveled to Freer’s Detroit home. There,

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over a period of five days, the objects were displayed one at a time. It took a prod from President Theodore Roosevelt for the Smithsonian to accept the gift. In addition to approximately 7,500 works of Asian and Middle Eastern art, there were about 1,500 American works of art, including one of the most complete collections of etchings and lithographs (and some paintings) by James McNeill Whistler. These objects, funds to construct a building, and an endowment fund to provide for the study and acquisition of “very fine examples of Oriental, Egyptian, and Near Eastern fine arts” led to the establishment of the Smithsonian’s first museum dedicated solely to art, the Freer Gallery of Art (FGA). Freer’s will, however, came with constraints: only objects from the permanent collection could be exhibited in the gallery, and none of the art could be exhibited elsewhere, loaned, or sold. Freer also believed strongly that all of the museum’s holdings should be readily accessible to scholars at all times. Over time, the collection tripled in size to over 28,000 artworks, including paintings, sculptures, metalware, ceramics, manuscripts, and lacquerware from Asia.

the more recent art collections

Between 1966 and 1989, the addition of four collections greatly increased the Smithsonian’s holdings in fine and decorative arts. The Smithsonian actively sought two of these — the collections of Joseph H. Hirshhorn and Arthur M. Sackler, which formed the core of two new Smithsonian museums. The other two collections came to the Institution as the result of financial crises and the inability of their owners to care for them. Using the organizations’ former names, these were the collections of the Cooper Union Museum for the Arts and Decoration and the Museum of African Art. For a host of reasons, both practical and philosophical, the Smithsonian had been reluctant to accept these collections, but eventually acceded to external requests and pressures. All four of the collections became separate Smithsonian units; that is, they were not added to USNM or an existing art bureau.
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

In 1964, newly appointed Secretary S. Dillon Ripley (1964-84) contacted Joseph H. Hirshhorn to convey the Smithsonian’s interest in acquiring his collection of modern and contemporary art. The idea for a national museum of modern art had first been proposed in 1938, when legislation was passed, ensuring that the Smithsonian’s NCFA would be such a museum. In 1966, Hirshhorn gave his entire collection to the Smithsonian as a gift to the nation, with the proviso that it be housed in a museum named for him and constructed on the Mall by the federal government. In May 1966, the Congress passed legislation enabling the Smithsonian to accept the Hirshhorn collection and to establish and construct a museum to hold it. The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (HMSG) opened to the public in October 1974. In FY2002 the Hirshhorn’s collections of 11,500 artworks — paintings, sculptures, and works on paper — included a nucleus of some 9,200 works given or bequeathed by Hirshhorn. The Hirshhorn’s Department of Painting and Sculpture maintained a Collection Archive, a research file on the entire permanent art collection. Several special collections of papers and miscellaneous manuscript collections supplemented the more than 12,000 curatorial records.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Some years later, in 1982, Secretary Ripley similarly persuaded Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (1913-87) to donate to the Smithsonian approximately 1,000 works of Asian art and...
$14 million to construct a building for a museum to bear his name. A unique location for the gallery was presented to Sackler as part of the discussions. Secretary Ripley, in the search for more space for art, had begun work on the idea of several underground museums in the area between the Freer Gallery and the Castle that has come to be known as the Quadrangle. The Quadrangle became the home of both the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (AMSG) and the National Museum of African Art (NMAfA), acquired by the Smithsonian at about the same time. The Congress agreed to appropriate half the funds required for the Quadrangle project, and Secretary Ripley undertook to raise the other half.42

Since AMSG opened in 1987, the Sackler collection expanded to include the Vever Collection (Islamic arts of the book from the 11th to the 19th century); 19th and 20th century Japanese prints and contemporary porcelain; Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean paintings; the arts of village India; contemporary Chinese ceramics; and photography. In FY 2002, the collections contained close to 4,000 artworks.

The Sackler Gallery is connected by an underground exhibition space to the neighboring Freer Gallery of Art. Although their collections are stored and exhibited separately, the two museums share a director, administration, and staff. The joint Freer and Sackler Galleries Archives include primary source materials that support the galleries’ activities in the study of the cultures and artistic traditions of the peoples of Asia. The archives also acquires original documentation to further the study of the late 19th and early 20th century American art collected by Freer. In FY2002, materials in the Archives amounted to nearly 1,000 cubic feet and were organized into over 140 collections. These materials included the personal and professional papers of preeminent art historians, archaeologists, artists, dealers, and collectors; letters; writings and journals; scrapbooks; clippings; drawings and sketchbooks; financial materials; rubbings and squeezes of inscriptions; photographs; oral history interviews; and films. The archives collections included over 125,000 images.

42 Planning of the Quadrangle project had been underway since 1978 using unrestricted trust funds. In 1981, the first federal appropriation of $960,000 was set aside for further planning.
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum

At the time of its transfer to the Smithsonian in 1968, the Cooper Union Museum for the Arts of Decoration had existed for over 70 years. Its parent organization, the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, was founded in 1859 as a free school for the working classes of New York City. The purpose of the museum was to provide the art students of Cooper Union, students of design, and working designers with study collections of the decorative arts.

In 1963, the Cooper Union considered closing its museum for financial reasons and because of the absence of a close relationship between the programs of the museum and the art school. Public outcry and the findings from several studies instead led to the museum’s transfer to the Smithsonian. Secretary Ripley had undertaken the acquisition without any formal consultation with the Regents or the Congress. In 1976, the Smithsonian reopened the collection in its present location, the renovated Carnegie Mansion, which also was transferred to the Institution. The Smithsonian renamed the museum the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Decorative Arts and Design in 1969 and the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum (C-HNDM) in 1994. In FY2002, C-HNDM’s collections contained well over 200,000 objects, including three-dimensional ones from the decorative arts and product design (furniture, ceramics, glass, metalwork, and jewelry, with areas of interest in graphic design, industrial design, and architecture); drawings and prints; textiles, both woven and nonwoven, from ancient to contemporary times; 10,000 examples of wallpaper (the largest collection in the United States); and a 60,000-volume library including books, periodicals, catalogues, and trade literature dating from as far back as the 15th century.
National Museum of African Art

The National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) evolved from the privately funded Museum of African Art, located between 1964 and 1987 at the Frederick Douglass house in Washington, DC. The Smithsonian was approached about acquiring it when the museum outgrew its space, expanded its collections, and started incurring mounting expenses. Secretary Ripley favored the acquisition if federal funds would support its maintenance and future acquisitions. In 1979, when the Museum of African Art became part of the Smithsonian, its collections included some 8,000 artworks. In 1981, the Smithsonian renamed the museum the National Museum of African Art. In FY2002, the collections, which had not grown appreciably larger than when they came to the Smithsonian, included examples of African sculpture, costumes, textiles, musical instruments, and jewelry; numerous books on African culture and history; early maps of Africa; and educational materials.

In the 1970s, Eliot Elisofon, an internationally known photographer and founding trustee of the museum, bequeathed to NMAfA his African materials, consisting of more than 50,000 black and white photographs, 30,000 color transparencies, and 120,000 feet of unedited film footage. The bequest became the foundation for the Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives. Since 1973, the archives’ holdings had grown to include more than 180,000 color transparencies and 80,000 black and white photographs.

**HISTORY AND CULTURE COLLECTIONS**

With the exception of the collections held by the Anacostia Museum/Center for African American History and Culture (AM/CAAHC) and the National Museum of

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43 At 1411 W Street, SE.
the American Indian (NMAI), the core collections of the history- and culture-related collecting units of the Smithsonian were spun off from USNM. The first spinoff was the National Air Museum, created by the Congress as a separate unit in 1946. In 1957, as part of the reorganization of the Smithsonian undertaken by its eighth Secretary, Leonard Carmichael, USNM created two administrative subdivisions: the Museum of History and Technology — renamed the National Museum of American History (NMAH) in 1980 — and the Museum of Natural History, later named the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH). The USNM was eliminated as an administrative entity in 1967, and each of the subdivisions became a separate administrative unit. NMAI came to the Smithsonian in 1989 as a result of the serious financial problems of its predecessor Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in New York City.

major history and culture collections

National Museum of American History

NMAH’s collections date from the beginning of the Institution, when Secretary Henry assembled scientific apparatus for historical and demonstration purposes. In 1849, the Institution made a major purchase of fine arts prints, which became the nucleus of the graphic arts collections. In 1858 and 1862, when the National Institute transferred its national collections to the Smithsonian, they included not only specimens from the US Exploring Expedition, but also various gifts to the

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44 The National Air Museum, now NASM, acquired the Wright Flyer in December 1948 and put it on display on the 45th anniversary of its flight.

45 This collection differs from Smithsonian art museum collections in that its objects were chosen to illustrate technical and cultural developments in the history of printmaking, rather than for aesthetic considerations.
government from citizens and foreign heads of state (including the Historical Relics Collection of memorabilia associated with the founders of the republic). In the material that came from the Centennial Exposition of 1876, the Smithsonian received large and small objects celebrating industry and the machine. The history collections included philately, numismatics, political and military memorabilia, costumes, furnishings, technology, medical technology, textiles, graphic arts, photography, objects of everyday life, ceramics, glass, and musical instruments.

The first sharp differentiation among USNM’s collections occurred in 1911. When the museum moved from A&I to the building that is now the National Museum of Natural History, it took the art and natural history collections and left the history collections behind. New donations quickly filled the vacated space in A&I. For example, in 1912 Mrs. William Howard Taft donated the gown she wore at the inaugural ball of President Taft, and in two years the exhibition of First Ladies’ gowns contained 15 gowns.

American history at the Smithsonian found its champion in Frank A. Taylor, chief of the Department of Engineering and Industry and eventually director of USNM. He persuaded Secretary Carmichael to take up plans, originally proposed by Secretary Charles G. Abbot (1928-44), for two new buildings to house a history museum and a museum of engineering and industry.\(^{46}\) Carmichael personally appealed to the Congress to fund these new ventures. He based his case in part on the fact that federal appropriations, aside from salaries, had decreased since 1933.\(^ {47}\)

In 1955, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill authorizing $36 million for a National Museum of History and Technology, to be the sixth museum on the Mall. Secretary Carmichael viewed the start of construction of the first major building project on the Mall in 32 years as a major step toward meeting Smithson’s “diffusion of knowledge” goal. He wrote in the Annual Report, “The strands that have been

\(^{46}\) The plan was the dream of the chief curator of the Smithsonian’s technological collections, Carl Mitman, Taylor’s mentor.

\(^{47}\) He also sought funds from the Congress for an expansion of NZP and NASM.
woven together in the making of our modern American civilization will be shown in a way that . . . will be unique and particularly appropriate to the special genius of our country.”

The building was completed in 1964. When USNM ceased to be an administrative entity in 1967, the National Museum of History and Technology became an independent museum within the Institution. On October 13, 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed a bill authorizing the museum to change its name to the National Museum of American History.

Among the collections at NMAH, which totaled over 3 million objects in FY2002, the Numismatics Division held the greatest number of items (primarily money and some medals). The History of Science and Technology Division, with 400,000 artifacts, used the most space, as many of its holdings were large. Its collections covered agriculture and natural resources, armed forces history, computers and information technology, electricity and physics, engineering and industry, medical sciences, physical sciences and mathematics, and transportation. Social and cultural history collections included 250,000 items of ceramics and glass, community life, costumes, domestic life, graphic arts, musical history, political history, and textiles. The museum’s Archives Center included personal papers, business records, graphic materials, trade literature, photographs, information and reference files, oral histories and other sound recordings, published and unpublished music, films, and videotapes. The Center’s 850 distinct collections occupied about 12,000 linear feet of shelving in the NMAH building and offsite storage.

National Air and Space Museum

The collections of what became the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) date back to the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, when the Smithsonian

48 Cited in Chapter 9, Stirrings, of the online exhibition, The Smithsonian: 150 Years of Adventure, Discovery, and Wonder, based on Conaway (1995).

49 By this time, the National Museum of History and Technology and the Museum of Natural History were already operating as separate entities and setting their own policies, even if reporting officially through the head of USNM.
received a group of kites from the Chinese Imperial Commission. Before the creation of the National Air Museum in 1946, the aeronautical collections were assigned to the custodial care of various divisions in USNM. Major growth of the collections came with advances in space exploration in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1966, when the Congress authorized a separate building for the National Air Museum’s collections, it renamed the facility the National Air and Space Museum. Prior to this, many of the collections had been housed in sheds adjacent to A&I known as the Air and Space Building; its outdoor missile display was known as “Rocket Row.”

In FY2002, NASM held about 45,000 artifacts that document the history of flight, including planes, engines, rockets, uniforms, spacesuits, balloons, and artwork. NASM’s Paul E. Garber Preservation, Restoration, and Storage Facility, which opened in Suitland, Maryland in 1952, housed the bulk of the collections until the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center near Dulles International Airport opened on December 15, 2003.

NASM also held a wide range of visual and textual documentary materials that complement the object collections. Many of these materials emphasize the technical aspects of air- and spacecraft. NASM’s Archives Division contains approximately 10,000 cubic feet of material, including an estimated 1.7 million photographs, 700,000 feet of film, and 2 million technical drawings.

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50 The Department of Anthropology, Division of Mechanical Technology, 1887-1919; Department of Arts and Industries, Division of Mechanical Technology, 1919-31; and Division of Engineering, 1931-46.

51 The Garber Facility, primarily paid for by the government, consisted of 19 metal buildings for airplanes, spacecraft, and their respective parts. One building was a large restoration shop, and three were used for exhibition production.

52 Subsequent to the writing of this report, NASM was placed under the Under Secretary for Science.
National Museum
of the American Indian

The newest Smithsonian museum, the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), was established primarily to collect, preserve, and present the cultures of the indigenous populations of the Western Hemisphere. It is based on the collections of George Gustav Heye (1874-1952). Heye spent most of his life indulging an all-consuming passion for collecting objects from New World cultures. After considering various options for his growing collection, including association with an existing museum in New York, Heye established his own museum in New York City. A Foundation Deed established the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in May 1916. Article 1 describes the new institution as dedicated to

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\ldots \text{the study of anthropology, particularly in connection with that of [the] aboriginal people of the Americas and the study of their languages, literature, history, art and life . . . [and the promotion of] the public welfare by actively advancing learning and providing means for encouraging and carrying on the before-mentioned work within the State of New York (Force 1999, 9).}
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The new museum was to contain objects “of artistic, historic, literary and scientific interest.” At the time, the collection contained about 400,000 items and was growing rapidly. By the time the museum’s building in New York City was completed in 1922, the collection had already outgrown it. In 1926, the museum opened a storage facility in the Bronx, funded by the trustees.

Within a few years of Heye’s death in 1957, the museum was in financial difficulty. Inaccurate accounting, conflicts of interest, and a series of scandals compounded the problems. The scandals, involving the board of trustees, related to objects deaccessioned “in a surreptitious and wasteful way.” A series of court cases, negotiations with various museums and individuals within and outside New York, and the involvement of US senators (and ultimately the whole Congress) eventually
led to enactment of the National Museum of the American Indian Museum Act in 1989 (Stats. at Large of the USA 1989 103:1336), which transferred the collections to the Smithsonian Institution.

At the time of the transfer, the collection had grown to about 800,000 items, the largest collection of its kind in the world. As of FY2002, NMAI’s artworks and other objects included carvings in wood, horn, and stone from the Northwest coast of North America; dance masks from the American Southwest; textiles from Peru, Mexico, and the United States; basketry from the American Southeast and Southwest and Peru; pre-Columbian goldwork from Mexico and Peru; jade objects made by the Olmec and the Maya; carved Inuit masks; Aztec mosaics; feather work from the Amazon; and painted hides and garments from the North American Plains. In addition, the NMAI Archives, located in NMAI’s Cultural Resource Center in Suitland, Maryland, had a photographic collection of 125,000 images; 7,000 films and videos; and texts that document the museum’s history and collections.

A set of conditions accompanied the transfer to the Smithsonian, many of which have already been fulfilled. The act sent the assets of the Heye Foundation to the Smithsonian, which assumed responsibility for their housing and care. In addition to the Cultural Resource Center and the museum on the Mall, NMAI maintains, as legally required by the 1989 transfer agreement, a presence in New York City: the George Gustav Heye Center in the US Custom House, where it displays some of the collections. Funding for construction of the Mall museum and the Cultural Resource Center was a joint responsibility of the Congress and the Smithsonian.

National Postal Museum

In 1990, the new National Postal Museum (NPM) took over NMAH’s National Philatelic Collection. Several years later, NPM moved into the lower level of the newly renovated Washington City Post Office. NPM has what is for the
Smithsonian a novel financial arrangement: the United States Postal Service paid for the building renovation and contributes more than half of NPM’s operating costs. In FY2002, NPM’s collections of over 13 million objects consisted primarily of stamps, but also included objects related to postal history, stamp production, and mail delivery, such as postal stationery that predates stamps, vehicles used to transport the mail, mailboxes, meters, covers, greeting cards, and letters.

additional history- and culture-related collections

All of the museums and galleries discussed thus far had their origins in collections — either new acquisitions or spinoffs from existing Smithsonian collections that became the core of separate units. However, two Smithsonian organizations with a focus on history and culture arose from ideas about public service, rather than from collections: the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH) and the Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture (AM/CAAHC).

Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

The first annual Festival of American Folklife took place on the National Mall in 1967. The festival was an effort on the part of Secretary Ripley to attract public attention to the Smithsonian and to provide visitors with interesting experiences while teaching them about a variety of cultures. When first discussing the Festival, Ripley told the Regents, “Although it has the world’s largest collections of American folk artifacts, the Smithsonian, like all museums in our nation, fails to present folk culture fully and accurately.” The Festival’s originating organization, the Division of Performing Arts, became the separate Office of Folklife Programs in 1980, and was renamed the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in 1992. CFCH’s annual
festivals on the Mall present some of the fruits of the Center’s research to the public, and celebrate national and international folklife.

In FY2002, the center held some object collections, consisting primarily of crafts and artworks donated by festival participants. The Center also maintains the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, which includes two major components: the Moses and Frances Asch collection of original recordings, business records, correspondence, and photographic materials (which came to the Smithsonian with the purchase of Folkways Records in 1987); and the written, audio, and visual records of projects and exhibits sponsored by the center (in particular the annual Folklife Festival). In addition to millions of documents, these collections included approximately 17,300 commercial discs, 4,000 acetate discs, 45,000 audiotapes, 2,000 CDs, 1,000,000 still images, 2,000 videotapes, and 500,000 feet of film.

Anacostia Museum/Center for African American History and Culture

In the fall of 1967, the Smithsonian opened the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum as an “an experimental store-front museum” with an emphasis on public programs and community service, rather than collections and research. When the Smithsonian established the museum, the Anacostia Historical Society undertook to collect oral histories and archival materials, which it subsequently gave to the museum. In 1977, the museum’s mission was expanded to encompass national and international African American history and culture; with that change in mandate, it began collecting. The museum first used original artifacts in the 1979 exhibition, Out of Africa: From West African Kingdoms to Colonization.

In April 1987 the Museum changed its name to the Anacostia Museum to reflect its broadened mandate to examine, preserve, and interpret African American history and culture not only locally and regionally, but nationally and internationally as well.
In FY1995, the Smithsonian’s National African American Museum Project became part of the museum’s administrative structure and was renamed the Center for African American History and Culture. The Center mounted about two years of exhibitions at the A&I building. In FY1996, the unit began using the joint name, and is now known as the Anacostia Museum/Center for African American History and Culture. In FY2002 its collection included over 7,700 objects, including decorative arts, textiles, glassware, and anthropological material related to African American history and culture, as well as extensive archival and oral history materials.

**SCIENCE COLLECTIONS**

**science museum collections**

Natural history collections dominated the Smithsonian — in size, scope, and importance — for most of its first century. As of FY2002, natural history collections accounted for about 88 percent of the Institution’s object holdings. As discussed, some of the science collections had their origin in the scholarly interests of the early Secretaries or in legislation authorizing their transfer to USNM. The legislation establishing USGS in 1879 reinforced USNM’s role as the federal repository for natural history items. Depositing federally-owned collections of rocks, minerals, soils, fossils, biological specimens, and other natural history objects, as well as objects of archaeology, ethnology, and anthropology, at NMNH after the originating federal agency no longer needs them for investigation or research makes them available to the wider research community and the public. The 1879 legislation and subsequent interpretation emphasize that federal agencies were to bring their natural history materials to USNM’s (and later, NMNH’s) attention — that is, to make it aware of the availability of materials — but the Smithsonian can decide whether to accept them into its collections.
The Smithsonian Institution Archives (SIA) has copies of hundreds of memoranda of understanding and memoranda of agreement between various government agencies and the Secretary of the Smithsonian concerning this repository role. The parties to these agreements review, reissue, and modify them periodically. For example, a memorandum of understanding between the National Park Service (US Department of the Interior) and the Smithsonian relates to archaeological and paleontological surveys within reservoir areas carried out under the Historic Sites Act of August 21, 1935 (16 USC Sec. 461-67).\footnote{The Historic Sites Act can be viewed at http://www.cr.nps.gov/local-law/hsact35.htm.} The document, reviewed on a three-year cycle, spells out cooperative arrangements between the two organizations in carrying out the work, and specifies materials to be deposited in USNM. Another example is a 1989 memorandum of understanding between the Systematic Entomology Laboratory of the Agricultural Research Service (US Department of Agriculture) and the Department of Entomology at NMNH. The introduction to this document notes that these organizations and their predecessors have worked together since 1881. During that time, they developed one of the largest insect collections in the world, comprising more than 30 million specimens. The memorandum of understanding spells out mutual responsibilities related to space, facilities, collections, budget, supplies and equipment, cooperation and communication, and review and oversight.

\textit{National Museum of Natural History}

As noted, in 1957 the Smithsonian divided USNM into two administrative subdivisions, one of them being the Museum of Natural History and the other, the Museum of History and Technology. After the completion of a separate building for the latter, the Museum of Natural History took over all of the former USNM facility — the current Natural History Building directly across the Mall from the Castle. In
the first half of the 1960s, the museum added wings to the east and west sides of the
building to house laboratories, research collections, and offices for the scientific
staff. The new space opened in 1965. In 1967 the Museum of Natural History
became an independent unit within the Smithsonian, and in 1969 it was renamed the
National Museum of Natural History.

Within NMNH, as of FY2002 more than 125 million specimens and artifacts were
under the supervision of four major departments: Anthropology, Mineral Science,
Paleobiology, and Systematic Biology. The paleobiology collections included 41.5
million flora and fauna fossil specimens ranging in size and variety from foraminifera
(microscopic organisms on slides) to skeletal remains of dinosaurs. The Department
of Systematic Biology consisted of Botany, Entomology, Invertebrate Zoology, and
Vertebrate Zoology. Of these, the Invertebrate Zoology collections were the largest,
consisting of 33 million marine, freshwater, and terrestrial specimens from all major
invertebrate groups, including sponges, crayfish, mollusks, and worms. The
Entomology collections were next in size, with about 31 million specimens that
include all known orders of insects. The Vertebrate Zoology collections contained 9
million mammals, birds, fish, and reptiles, as well as birds’ eggs and nests, fur pelts,
and elephant skulls. The Botany collections included approximately 5 million algae,
flowering plants, pressed specimens, and microscopic plants. The Mineral Science
Department collections held, among the 325,000 gems, minerals, rocks, and
meteorites, some of the museum’s best-known objects, such as the Hope Diamond.

Finally, and somewhat different from the others, in FY2002 the collections of the
Department of Anthropology (including Archaeology, Ethnology, and Physical
Anthropology) had 2 million specimens, artifacts, documents, photographs, and film
records representing cultures from around the world. An ultimately unsuccessful
attempt to separate these collections from NMNH was made in August 1968, when
Secretary Ripley directed that the Museum of Natural History be known as the
Museum of Natural History/Museum of Man to obviate concerns about exhibiting
non-Western cultures in a natural history museum. In the April 1974 issue of
Smithsonian magazine, Ripley advocated an education that teaches “a familial oneness
with the world.” Ripley’s dream was a Museum of Man separate from NMNH. This dream remains unrealized.

In 1975, as part of Ripley’s plan, the Smithsonian set up what is today the Human Studies Film Archives under the name of the National Anthropological Film Center of the Smithsonian’s Museum of Man. In 1981, this became part of NMNH’s Department of Anthropology and was renamed the Human Studies Film Archives. NMNH’s separate National Anthropological Archives collects and preserves historical and contemporary anthropological materials, which included, as of FY2002, manuscripts, field notes, correspondence, photographs, maps, sound recordings, film, and video created by Smithsonian and non-Smithsonian anthropologists and scholars; records of anthropological organizations; about 400,000 photographs, including some of the earliest images of indigenous peoples worldwide; and 20,000 works of native art, mainly from North America, Asia, and Oceania.

While the majority of the museum’s collections were in the Natural History Building on the Mall, NMNH had moved items that required more physical space or better environmental conditions into storage in the Museum Support Center (MSC) in Suitland, Maryland, which was opened in 1983. Both the National Anthropological Archives and the Human Studies Film Archives were also moved to the MSC. The Smithsonian opened this government-funded facility for the storage and maintenance of the vast natural history and technology collections.

National Zoological Park

In 1889 the Congress created the National Zoological Park for “the advancement of science and the instruction and recreation of the people.” In its first half century, NZP, like most of the world’s zoos, focused principally on exhibiting one or two representatives of as many exotic species as possible. But as the fate of the earth’s
animals and plants became a more pressing concern, zoos began to concentrate on the long-term management and conservation of entire species.

In the early 1960s, NZP turned its attention to breeding and studying threatened and endangered species. In 1965 it created a Zoological Research Division to study the reproduction, behavior, and ecology of zoo species. While primarily based in the zoo’s 163-acre Rock Creek Park facilities, the zoo also maintained rare and endangered species at its 3,200-acre Front Royal, Virginia breeding preserve, the Conservation and Research Center. The Center came to the Smithsonian as an interagency transfer in 1975, during the tenure of Secretary Ripley.

Decisions about animal exhibitions made by senior managers have led to a major decrease in the collections in the 20 years prior to the beginning of this century. The focus has been on developing a BioPark, a concept for zoo exhibits that is intended to dramatically reveal “whole ecosystems — communities of plants and animals living in harmony with their environments.” At the end of 2002, NZP’s animal collections as a whole included 2,650 specimens, representing 419 species from around the world.

Horticulture Services Division

Horticulture appeared quite early in the Smithsonian’s history. For example, one of the proposals for the use of Smithson’s funds was an institution that would emphasize the “useful sciences” of natural history, chemistry, geology, and astronomy, but above all agricultural science. A bill, introduced in 1845 by Senator Benjamin Tappan of Ohio, called for the creation of professorships and lecturers with expertise in the productive and liberal arts, especially improvements in agriculture, horticulture, and rural economy.
A few years later, in 1848, the Congress passed an Act for the Improvement and Care of the Smithsonian Institution Grounds by the Government (Goode 1897, 834). For the next 125 years, the Smithsonian viewed horticulture as part of its maintenance programs. In 1972 the Smithsonian set up the Office of Horticulture to manage the grounds of Smithsonian buildings near the Mall. The Smithsonian did not, however, recognize horticulture as an official museum program until 1976. In 1991, responsibility for horticulture was moved to a Horticulture Services Division (HSD) within the Office of Plant Services.

As of FY2002, HSD held an orchid collection that numbered about 10,000 specimens, including rare and endangered species, as well as a collection of garden furniture and artifacts. In addition, in 1983, the Office of Horticulture Library was established within the Smithsonian Institution Libraries. In March 1987, the Garden Club of America donated its Slide Library of Notable American Parks and Gardens to the Smithsonian. This collection of over 80,000 images, including more than 3,000 rare, hand-painted glass lantern slides, was the first visual archive of American garden design to be assembled nationwide.

**scientific research centers**

Several Smithsonian research centers not officially designated as collecting units also have collections, both virtual and physical, that are integral to their work: SAO, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI), Smithsonian Environment Research

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54 The Garden Club of America, established in 1913, states that its purpose is “…to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening, to share the advantages of association by means of educational meetings, conferences, correspondence and publications, and to restore, improve, and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement (http://www.gcamerica.org/index.php3).”
Center (SERC), and Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education (SCMRE).

**Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory**

When Secretary Langley established SAO in 1890, he specified that its research should focus on solar radiation and the solar constant. Langley served as SAO’s director until his death in 1906. Secretary Abbot succeeded him, and under his direction SAO established several solar observation stations in the United States, South America, and Africa to continue solar radiation research.

In 1955, SAO moved from Washington, DC, to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to affiliate with the Harvard College Observatory and to expand its staff, facilities, and scientific scope. Fred Whipple, the first director of SAO under this new arrangement, helped create a worldwide satellite-tracking network, a move that established SAO as a pioneer in space science research. In 1973, the Smithsonian and Harvard strengthened and formalized their collaboration by the creation of the joint Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

SAO collects incoming data streams from ongoing experiments. Its scientists analyze these data and make them available for further research. For example, the HITRAN (high-resolution transmission molecular absorption) database, begun in the 1960s, is a compendium of the spectroscopic absorption frequencies of the known components of the earth’s atmosphere. SAO adds new data to HITRAN as they become available from its experiments and those of others. A SAO researcher maintains the database, which can be downloaded from an Internet site.

On behalf of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), SAO maintains the Astrophysics Data System, which has an archive of astronomy
literature, available through a searchable interface, that includes more than 3 million abstracts of journal articles, conference proceedings, reports, and theses divided into databases by content (Astronomy, Space Instrumentation, Physics, Geophysics, and Preprints). The system also includes 3 million scanned pages covering all of the major astronomy journals and many smaller ones.

In addition to the Astrophysics Data System, SAO maintains the Einstein Observatory Data Archive and the Chandra Data Archive. The Einstein archive consists of x-ray images obtained by the Einstein Observatory Satellite from November 1978 to April 1981. In FY2002, images and spectra of more than 4,000 astronomical objects were in the database. The Chandra Data Archive contains almost all information and data generated by NASA’s Chandra X-ray Observatory (launched on July 23, 1999), as well as observation catalogues, telemetry, processed data, final data products, and calibration data. The Astrophysics Data System links observations to publications in the professional literature. (In general, observations proposed by members of the astronomical community remain proprietary for a year and then are released to the public domain.)

**Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute**

STRI originated with a research laboratory established in 1923 on Barro Colorado Island in what was then the Panama Canal Zone. Under the auspices of the National Research Council, a group of private foundations and universities, including the Smithsonian, set up the laboratory to investigate the flora and fauna of tropical America. In 1940, an act of the Congress placed the facility under the control of a board composed of prominent scientists and the heads of certain (federal) executive departments. In 1946, the operation was transferred to the Smithsonian and dedicated to conducting long-term studies in tropical biology. In 1966 the Smithsonian renamed the facility the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute and
expanded its scope by extending its research to other areas in the tropics and by establishing a marine sciences program, with laboratories on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Panama. STRI has continued to expand its work in the tropics and conducts research throughout Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

Research conducted at STRI has led to the establishment of biological collections. For example, STRI has a reference herbaria for the flora of Panama, a dry collection that, as of FY2002, held 13,000 specimens representing approximately 4,000 species of higher plants. STRI’s Herpetological Collection Room included approximately 4,700 species preserved in ethanol. Approximately 4,300 of them were from the Círculo Herpetológico de Panama’s reference collection, which was the biggest and most complete in the country and included the majority of reptile and amphibian families in the Republic of Panama. Individual collections include weevils, bees, beetles, and wasps and their nests.

**Smithsonian Environmental Research Center**

SERC was established on July 1, 1983, when the Smithsonian merged its Radiation Biology Laboratory with its Chesapeake Bay Center for Environmental Studies. The former was an outgrowth of an older Smithsonian research entity, the Division of Radiation and Organisms, established by Secretary Abbot in 1929. In 1970, the Radiation Biology Laboratory relocated from the old Astrophysical Observatory buildings in the south yard of the Castle to facilities in Rockville, Maryland. The Chesapeake Bay Center for Environmental Studies evolved from the Chesapeake Bay Center for Field Biology, which was established by the Smithsonian in 1965 to conduct research and promote education in ecosystem biology. It was located at the Java Farm, a 368-acre tract of land in Edgewater, Maryland on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay; Robert Lee Forest had bequeathed the tract to the Smithsonian in 1962. With funds contributed by private foundations, the center grew to 2,900 acres, including 14 miles of shoreline on the Rhode River. In 1969, the center changed its name to the Chesapeake Bay Center for Environmental Studies.
SERC is dedicated to understanding the ecological processes that sustain life at the land/sea margin. Its research focuses on the major environmental challenges in the coastal zone, where human populations — and their environmental impact — will be the most concentrated in the 21st century. SERC maintains important biological collections onsite in relation to its work on invasive biology and animal disease, fisheries, and related science.

Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education

The Smithsonian established a Conservation Laboratory in 1963 to provide technical support to museums in the analysis and conservation of collections. Renamed the Conservation Analytical Laboratory in 1966, its focus broadened to include the study and treatment of collections, as well as research and education in conservation and scientific studies of collection materials. In 1998, the Board of Regents renamed the laboratory the Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education to better reflect its expanded mission.

SCMRE serves national and international professional audiences and has both object and archival collections. In FY2000, SCMRE’s object collections consisted of 21,100 items, almost all classified as for professional study; less than 1 percent were for public programs/education. At that time, SCMRE’s archival collections consisted of 380,000 items, 89,000 titles, and 427 linear feet of items.

ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES

Archives — depositories containing historical records and documents — have been part of the Smithsonian since its establishment. The documents, historical records,
and related materials pertaining to the history and operations of the Smithsonian itself are the responsibility of SIA. At present, almost all of the subject-oriented archives are administered by their associated Smithsonian units and have been discussed in that context. The following sections discuss two independent archives, SIA and the Archives of American Art (AAA). The last section looks at the Smithsonian Institution Libraries (SIL).

archives

Smithsonian Institution Archives

Smithsonian archival activities began with the Institution’s creation, following the language in the Act of August 10, 1846 (Section 7) that the Secretary of the Board of Regents shall “make a fair and accurate record of all their proceedings, to be preserved in said institution.” The Office of the Secretary fulfilled this function, which it delegated to a Chief Clerk. SIA originated in 1891, when the Institution’s Chief Clerk was given the title Keeper of the Archives, a position held by William Jones Rhees until his death in 1907. For the next 50 years, administrative staff of the Office of the Secretary cared for both current and historical Institutional records and files. Natural growth of archival records, the employment of archivists, and an increasing separation of functions within the Institution led to the Smithsonian to make SIA a separate entity in 1965. The Archives moved to new space in the Castle in 1970 and then to A&I in 1976. By the late 1980s, when its shelf space in A&I stacks was filled, SIA leased about 6,000 square feet of warehouse space at Fullerton Industrial Park in South Springfield, Virginia.

The last printed Guide to the Smithsonian Archives, issued in 1996, describes more than 1,100 record units consisting of 15,500 cubic feet of archival material. In FY2002,
SIA reported over 24,000 cubic feet of materials to the National Collections Program. Almost three fourths of SIA’s records were stored at the National Underground Storage facility in western Pennsylvania. The rest remained on the Mall or elsewhere in the Washington, DC area.

SIA consists of four divisions: Archives, Institutional History, National Collections Program (NCP), and Technical Services. The Archives Division collects and maintains official records of the Smithsonian, and papers of associated individuals and organizations.

The Institutional History Division is responsible for research, public programs, publications, and exhibits on the history of the Smithsonian. The Division’s Oral History Program documents the careers of Smithsonian staff; its collections include audio, video, and transcripts from interviews with more than 600 people, such as staff, individuals affiliated with the Institution, and volunteers. The Division’s Smithsonian Videohistory Collection provides visual information about the history of science and technology. Its Joseph Henry Papers Project has produced nine volumes of the unpublished papers of the first Smithsonian Secretary, and two more volumes are planned.

NCP, which assumed some of the functions of the Office of the Registrar when the latter was abolished, develops policy guidance and standards for care and management of Smithsonian collections. It also gathers and publishes information from the units on the collections and their management.

The Technical Services Division provides support to SIA and other Smithsonian units in the preservation of records in all formats. This includes areas such as the environment and security of archival collections, proper housing and shelving of records, reformatting of selected materials, and training. In recent years, SIA has moved to an electronic records program and launched a website.
Archives of American Art

AAA was founded in 1954 at the Detroit Institute of Arts and transferred to the Smithsonian in 1970, primarily for financial reasons. In its 50-year history, the unit has had regional offices in Detroit, New York, Boston, San Francisco, and San Marino, California. At the time of this writing, it had a central office in Washington and research centers in New York and San Marino.

AAA’s collections are the world’s largest source of primary materials documenting the history of the visual arts in America from the 18th century to the present. Its collections contain letters, diaries, sketches and sketchbooks, photographs, exhibition catalogues, scrapbooks, business records, art periodicals, and other types of documents, totaling over 15,000 cubic feet of materials.

libraries

Smithsonian Institution Libraries

In 1881, Secretary Baird, frustrated over access issues to the Smithsonian Deposit at the Library of Congress, donated his extensive personal library to establish a USNM Library in A&I. This was the beginning of today’s SIL. In addition, Baird created 13 satellite “working” libraries in curatorial areas; these eventually grew to 35. By 1964, when a major reorganization took place, the internal libraries contained over 430,000 volumes in nearly 80 locations spread among seven cities. SIL also houses two rare books libraries. The first of these, the Dibner Library of the History of Science, now located at NMAH, started with a 1975 gift of 10,000 scientific rare books and
manuscripts. The second, the Joseph F. Cullman III Library of Natural History, opened in 2002 in NMNH.

A reorganization of the Smithsonian libraries took place shortly after Secretary Ripley assumed office in 1964. The first incumbent of the newly created position of Director of SIL, Russell Shank (1968-77), reported directly to the Secretary. When he assumed that position, Shank found that more than half of the holdings were not catalogued and large portions were deteriorating and in disarray.

SIL implemented its first online catalog with public access in 1985. Like libraries elsewhere, SIL has incorporated electronic media into its collections and has used the Internet as a vehicle for sharing collections and providing services. Records for 97 percent of SIL holdings are now available on the Internet through the Smithsonian Institution Research Information System (SIRIS).

In FY2002, SIL consisted of 20 libraries in one system supported by a combined online catalog. The library collections included more than 1 million books, 15,000 current journals, and 1,800 manuscripts, totaling almost 1.5 million volumes. Fundamentally different from the original Smithsonian library, the main purpose of SIL is to support the work of Smithsonian researchers and other staff.

**COLLECTIONS GUIDANCE**

All Smithsonian units have mechanisms for acquiring materials, maintaining records, and refining collections. This section provides a brief historic overview of collections selection, documentation, and disposal guidance, followed by a summary of past reviews of collections and their management at the Smithsonian.

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55 These are elements of “collections management,” defined as “the deliberate development, maintenance, preservation, documentation, use, and disposition of collections (Smithsonian Institution 2003a).”
Registratorial records have existed since the Smithsonian’s establishment. In fact, the collections transferred by the National Institute came with accession records. However, the information in these records was not uniform, although it was generally based on what were widely considered best practices in the museum and research communities at the time. The provenance information entered in the accession records varied widely in the early years. It is uncertain who was responsible for maintaining those records between 1846 and 1880.

In 1880, just before the opening of the National Museum Building, Stephen C. Brown was appointed registrar of USNM, a position he held until his death in 1919. As registrar, his responsibilities included shipping, accession, storage, and distribution of items. He was also responsible for checking that the Smithsonian had legal title to materials in its collections, reviewing their provenance and condition, and providing information (including the names of donors, accession numbers, and descriptions of specimens accessioned) to be included in the Smithsonian’s Annual Report. Upon Brown’s death, most functions were assigned to the chief of the Division of Correspondence and Documents, but shipping fell to the Property Clerk. Registrarial functions remained with the Division until 1956, when it was renamed the Office of the Registrar.

In the early 1970s, the Smithsonian reconsidered the role of the Office of the Registrar, and in 1973 created a Registrarial Council (later renamed the Council of Registrars) to study museum registration problems and recommend changes to improve registration and control within the Institution. In 1976, it reconstituted the
Office of the Registrar to give it responsibility for oversight of Institution-wide collections management issues. By this time, each unit had established its own registrar to ensure proper documentation of all accessions and to work with curators to ensure security of and access to collection items. Before this time, as independent units were established within the Smithsonian, documentation accompanied the move of collections.

In 1993 the Smithsonian abolished the Office of the Registrar and transferred some of its functions to NCP, which now coordinates policy reviews and revisions.

collections management policies

In developing its collection management policies, the Smithsonian was guided by the American Association of Museums (AAM) and other professional associations. AAM began work on professional guidelines in the 1960s. Before that time, individual museums used internal memoranda based on professional practice to guide collections management. The Freer Gallery’s procedures dated back to 1919, while the charters of NPG and HMSG included accession controls. SAAM developed its policy in 1964, and revised it in 1965 and 1970. C-HNDM prepared its policy after it joined the Smithsonian in 1969; NASM did so in the late 1960s.

The two museums that emerged from USMN — NMAH and NMNH — did not have written collections management policies until the 1970s. This was not an oversight, but was based on a philosophical position originating with Secretary Henry that the fundamental mission of the Smithsonian was research, collections existed to support research, and therefore it was the responsibility of individual curators and researchers to make collections-related decisions. Nonetheless, by the 1970s the leadership of both museums recognized that an increase in staff, and the growing costs of maintaining and storing collections, necessitated peer and
administration review of proposed acquisitions. The policies that were developed included management of existing collections.

In 1976, Secretary Ripley appointed a committee to review the Institution’s existing policies and procedures with respect to collections growth, as part of preparing a response to an inquiry by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB’s questions arose from its review of the Institution’s request for funding of a new collections facility, which was expected to cost $21.5 million. In its report, the committee stated that existing policies lacked “collecting objectives, a periodic review of the status of collections and impact that collections have on space allocation and staffing, and lastly, Institutional coordination (Smithsonian Institution 1977).” It recommended that the Smithsonian develop Institution-wide procedures. The reconstituted Office of the Registrar assumed responsibility for the review of policies developed by the museums and for compliance. The incumbent registrar served as permanent chair for the Council of Registrars, and also chaired the Collections Policy and Management Committee created in spring of 1976 by Secretary Ripley to carry out a study of collections policy and management.

The Smithsonian issued the first Institution-wide collections management policy — Office Memorandum (OM) 808: Collections Management Policy — in 1980. In 1999 the Board of Regents approved an umbrella statement on collections management. Two years later, in 2001 the Secretary issued a revised Smithsonian Directive 600 Collections Management (SD 600) that establishes collections management policy intended to ensure operations consistent with the Regents’ statement. It replaced OM 808. In October 2003, NCP issued a draft implementation manual for SD 600 (Smithsonian Institution, Smithsonian Institution Archives, National Collections Program 2003).
refused collections

It is generally agreed that rejecting items or collections — that is, not acquiring them in the first place — is preferable to subsequently having to dispose of them. The Smithsonian’s history includes many instances of rejections of major donations, although evidence on the extent to which Smithsonian units have rejected materials on offer is largely anecdotal. For example, in 1927, then Assistant Secretary Alexander Wetmore, in discussing USNM, stated that

new materials come at the average rate of 200,000 specimens per year, with a refusal of an equal or greater number that are not judged to be of permanent value, or that have to be refused for other reasons (i.e., because of stipulations that cannot be met) (Smithsonian Institution 1927).

Studies conducted for the 1976 review committee established by Secretary Ripley found rejection rates of about 50 percent in NMNH’s Anthropology Department, and even higher rates (84-94 percent, depending on the object type) in NASM’s Aeronautics Department.

In January 1969, Marjorie Merriweather Post, the owner of Hillwood, a 25-acre estate in northwest Washington, bequeathed it to the Smithsonian. Hillwood houses the finest collection of Imperial Russian art of the 18th and 19th centuries outside of Russia. Over the next several years, Smithsonian management determined that it lacked the financial resources to operate a Hillwood museum in accordance with the terms of the bequest. In 1976, Secretary Ripley announced that the Smithsonian would transfer ownership of Hillwood to the Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation.

56 A list of the dozens of small museums that have been offered to the Smithsonian does not exist, but in principle such a list could be created from SIA and congressional records (Pamela Henson, personal communication to Z.D. Doering, September 29, 2003).
As a final example, in August 1961, Public Law 87-186 established the National Armed Forces Museum Advisory Board to assist and advise the Board of Regents, and to recommend the acquisition of land and buildings for this purpose. In January 1965, the Board recommended to the Regents that the Institution create a National Armed Forces Museum on a 340-acre tract bordering the Potomac River in Fort Washington, Maryland. The Regents approved the recommendation to establish the museum, but follow-up during and after the war in Vietnam did not take place.

transfers to outside organizations

The early history of the Smithsonian includes examples of research and operations that the Smithsonian transferred to other government agencies, but where collaborative relationships remained. For example, in 1847, under the direction of Secretary Henry, the Smithsonian began collecting records of meteorological observations and developed a system of obtaining weather data from voluntary observers throughout the country. In 1873, the Smithsonian transferred the services of these observers to the weather service of the Signal Corps, and subsequently to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The Smithsonian’s second secretary, Spencer Baird, aware of concerns about the decline of coastal fisheries off the southern New England states and northwest coast, perceived an opportunity to “bring science directly into the service of the nation by improving its food resources.” In 1871, he persuaded the Congress to create the US Commission of Fish and Fisheries, with himself as its unsalaried head. In its early years, the commission operated almost as a de facto bureau of the Smithsonian. Upon Baird’s death in 1887, Goode became acting commissioner until a permanent successor could be named. Shortly thereafter, the commission became an independent agency with salaried positions. Then, in 1903, it became the Bureau of

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57 While there, the US Weather Bureau became a civilian-operated meteorological service. It was transferred to the Department of Commerce in 1940, and its name changed to the National Weather Service in 1970.
Fisheries in the Department of Commerce and Labor, and in 1940 it was incorporated into the newly formed Fish and Wildlife Service.

In 1869 the Smithsonian sent its fungus collections to the Department of Agriculture as the foundation of what was first known as the Pathological Collections. Later these collections were renamed the Mycological Collections and finally, the US National Fungus Collections. 58 These are now split between Smithsonian and the Agriculture Research Service and contain over 1 million specimens of agriculturally important fungi.

As a final example, in 1870 John Wesley Powell, professor of geology and curator of the museum of the Illinois Wesleyan University at Bloomington, was put in charge of a congressionally mandated survey that in 1876 became known as the Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region. For a time associated with the Smithsonian and located in the USNM building, in 1874 it was transferred to the Department of the Interior, ultimately becoming USGS. 59

In each of these cases, as well as others that could be cited, “mission-oriented” work was moved to a separate government agency, while basic research remained at the Smithsonian, with collaboration continuing to this day.

reviews of the Smithsonian collections program

Aside from regular meetings of the Board of Regents, the Smithsonian Institution has periodically undertaken reviews of its activities and future directions that, to varying degrees, have addressed collections. These reviews discussed many of the

58 These changes in title reflected a broadened role. Several years ago, USDA’s Agricultural Research Service made available a new database compiled by its mycologists that contains records for 650,000 specimens.
59 Powell also served as director of the Smithsonian’s Bureau of Ethnology from 1880 until his death in 1902.
same challenges the Smithsonian faces today, such as those dealing with collections
preservation, personnel, and space. The need for clear policies on future collections
acquisitions was also at the forefront of these discussions. These reviews stressed
research as the priority of USNM and contemplated the role of government funding
in the future of the Smithsonian. Three reviews of particular relevance are discussed
here.

the 1927 review

Eighty years after the establishment of the Smithsonian, in February 1927, a
conference on the future of the Smithsonian was held “to advise with reference to
the future policy and field of service of the Smithsonian Institution (Smithsonian
Institution 1927, 3).” Attendees included President Calvin Coolidge, the Board of
Regents (with William Howard Taft, chief justice of the United States), officers of
the Institution, and 40 conferees (primarily scientists and university presidents). At
the time, Abbot was the Smithsonian’s Acting Secretary and Wetmore was the
Assistant Secretary. In enumerating the achievements of the Institution, the
proceedings listed the seven “government bureaus” that the Smithsonian had
established and was then administering: USNM, Bureau of Ethnology, NZP, SAO,
Bureau of International Exchanges, Bureau of the International Catalogue of
Scientific Literature, and (Smithsonian) National Gallery of Art. Also noted were the
Weather Bureau and US Fish Commission, which the Smithsonian originated but no
longer administered.

Presentations by the Chancellor and Smithsonian staff summarized the history of the
Institution and emphasized its independence from the government, as well as the
need for additional funds with which to carry out its work. The presentations also
outlined the Institution’s proposed plans with respect to research. Acting Secretary
Abbot saw the resource demands for the collections as competing with the very
value and purpose of such collections:
A great parent of [scientific research] in America has been the Smithsonian Institution, and with the great and constant increase of its collections the duty of pushing on this basic research becomes more and more pressing. Yet in the enormous collections of the United States National Museum, built up by and now under the direction of the Smithsonian, repose millions of specimens unexamined, unclassified, undescrped and so useless because the Smithsonian has no means to devote thereto (ibid., 29).

It was also warned that a lack of funds threatened the Institution’s ability to attract talented scientists who might benefit from the collections and extend their usefulness. In Abbot’s words, “We have among us the world’s acknowledged leaders of several branches of science who have never achieved a compensation exceeding $5,200 per annum. Had they been equally eminent in other activities, industrial, commercial, artistic or even in sports, they would have achieved fortunes (ibid., 36).”

In the comments made by conferees, there was complete support for encouraging the Institution to seek additional funds, both private and public. For example, William Henry Welch, a noted physician and former president of the National Research Council, pointed out that, as he understood it, “the Government undertakes the maintenance . . . I am told not adequately of these collections. Why should it not be appealed to also to support the study of the scientific material which is gathered here (ibid., 67)?” The then-president of the American Museum of Natural History supported a tenfold increase in private funds, as well as an increase in government funding. Unanimously, the conferees endorsed the programs proposed by the Institution and its need for additional funding.

the 1946 review

Near the time of the Institution’s 100th anniversary, the Regents established a Committee on Future Policies for the Institution. With the advice of the president of the National Academy of Sciences, the Smithsonian appointed a committee of
seven individuals in January 1946. William J. Robbins, director of the New York Botanical Garden, served as chairman.⁶⁰

Robbins presented his interpretation of committee discussions and discussions with others (such as staff members) at a meeting of the Regents on January 17, 1947. For its use, the committee had requested and received from Secretary Wetmore (1945-52) a statement on “The Smithsonian Institution: The History of Its First Hundred Years, Present Status and Philosophy for the Future.” Wetmore’s statement included a justification for the importance of collections, and noted that USNM collections in all fields “now include more than 18 million catalogue entries.” In describing the various collections and plans for the future, Wetmore’s emphasis was on continued research and collecting, and the need for additional resources. The statement described the collections in a way that reinforced the Institution’s emphasis on research, noting that only about 5 percent of collections was on public exhibition, while the remainder was for scientific study and investigation. The Secretary noted, “The output of research work is limited only by the size of the professional staff, as there is no lack of material in the collections waiting [for], and indeed requiring study (Smithsonian Institution 1946b, 18).”

At the Regents’ meeting, Robbins endorsed the Secretary’s statement and made specific comments on three areas: USNM, NZP, and the art collections. His comments on USNM included the following view of its purpose:

> The National Museum . . . has functioned in the past largely as a working or reference collection analogous in its fields to the Library of Congress in its field, and this would appear to be its proper and greatest usefulness. There is a need for great reference collections in each of the sectors represented by the Museum, and the National Museum would appear to be a natural and logical place to locate such essential collections. Display is a desirable function for a Museum but in the National Museum it should be secondary and not primary.

⁶⁰ The other members were from the Mount Wilson Observatory (Pasadena, California), American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), General Electric (Pittsfield, Massachusetts), Carnegie Institution of Washington (Cambridge, Massachusetts), US Weather Bureau (Washington, DC), and American Museum of Natural History (New York, New York) (Smithsonian Institution 1946a).
The main purpose of the Museum should be to obtain and to maintain reference or type materials which would be available (as they are now) for study by its own staff and students in other institutions where such extensive collections cannot be maintained. The Museum should not be a ‘National Cabinet of Curiosities’ nor become ‘the attic of the United States.’ (Smithsonian Institution 1947, 125-6).

Robbins went on to suggest that the Smithsonian consider a reorganization of its collections to create more or less autonomous units under the Smithsonian:

A firm stated policy, implemented by adequate financial support, would help in defining the proper division of functions between Museum departments and between the Museum and other organizations, both within and without the government. Collections are expensive to obtain and still more expensive to maintain. It is obvious that duplication is to be avoided whenever possible (ibid., 125).

On the issue of NZP, the committee believed the zoo functioned effectively as a means of “entertainment, recreation and, to some extent, instruction for residents of Washington and visitors to Washington.” Robbins questioned, however, whether it should come under the Smithsonian, and indicated that to develop it into a “national institution and . . . a scientific institution would require far greater funds than it now has.” Comments on the art collections were primarily organizational and included the suggestion that the Smithsonian should have a gallery of modern art to complement the more traditional art of the National Gallery of Art.

Finally, Robbins said:

In concluding this report, may I emphasize in the strongest possible terms the burden borne by the Secretary of the Smithsonian and his staff. The work load measured on the basis of floor space occupied, number of visitors, or number of specimens and activities has increased during the last 20 years, but the permanent personnel has
remained stationary. This situation can only be corrected by limiting the activities of the Institution or increasing the personnel or both. Even a devoted staff is limited in what it can accomplish (ibid., 126).\textsuperscript{61}

\textbf{the 1993 review}

As part of the activities surrounding the Smithsonian’s 150th anniversary, in September 1993 the Board of Regents established the Commission for the Future of the Smithsonian Institution, charging it with “. . . an examination of the Smithsonian, its mandate and its roles and an examination of the cultural, societal and technological factors that influence its capacity to act (Smithsonian Institution 1995, iii).”

The commission considered how the Institution might evolve and what solutions might address the gap between current activity levels and expected financial support. It also weighed an appropriate size for the Institution and how to obtain resources for investment in technologies that might expand the reach of the Smithsonian to more Americans.

The commission’s report in 1995 shifted some of the earlier emphasis on basic research to a more earnest consideration of education, both on the Mall and through electronic means, traveling exhibitions, and public programs. However, the commission also stressed the importance of research: “Without research, objects and specimens are of little educational, cultural or scientific significance (Smithsonian Institution 1995, 9).” It asserted that the Institution should pursue certain distinct, even unique, research objectives by stressing carefully articulated, pertinent themes.

\textsuperscript{61} Appended to the committee’s report is a chart summarizing a workload analysis. It shows increases in personnel, specimens, floor space, and visitors between 1905 and 1945. The major changes were from 1915 to 1945: staff grew from 391 to 399, while specimens doubled from 9.2 million to 18.0 million; floor space went from 690,000 to 846,000 square feet; and the number of visitors tripled from 579,000 to 1,717,000.
Collections storage, exhibition space, and personnel issues were still, as they had been in past reviews, relevant subjects at the commission’s meetings. The commission raised many questions about collections: “Can collections be moved to other institutions outside Washington? Will such removal have an impact on the expectations of tourists, the planning of educational programs, the character of scholarly research, and the duties of curators (Smithsonian Institution 199, 7)?” The commission, however, drew no strong conclusions.

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