

Smithsonian Institution.

Aug. 14th 1860

My Dear Dr.

I have received an application from Dr. Torrey for a set of duplicates of the Brackenridge ferns to be presented to Antennaria to assist him in the preparation of an important work on the subject, and I write to request that if you think this disposition of the duplicate specimens a proper one, that you will send the collection which is now in your possession to the Dr. All we desire is a full set for the Smithsonian Museum and that the duplicates may be disposed of in the best manner for the advancement of science.

I regret that I did not meet you at the meeting of the Association at Newport. I wished to have [some]

conversations with you on the
operations of the Institution in
regard to natural history. Prof.
Agassiz complained to me that
we were doing injury to the
cause of the advance of this
branch of knowledge by the encourage-
ment we were giving to young
men to devote themselves to
descriptive natural history,
instead of applying themselves
to the higher study of the laws of
structure and the philosophy
of life.

You know I wish to give
such a direction to the operations
and influence of the Institution

as will best advance general
science, and I am desirous of
obtaining definite ideas as to how
this may be accomplished here in
the Department of Natural History.
I failed to obtain from Prof. Agassiz
a clear exposition of his views, al-
though he appeared to be unprepared
with ideas of the necessity of a change
in the Department.

The following are the questions
to be answered in relation
to the subject as it presents itself
to me.

1. Is it important to make col-
lections of discharges in Natural
History?

2. Is it important to ^{objects in Natural} study
history should be described in
order that they may be identi-
fied and if so, in what manner?

3 What plan ought to be adopted
to do this in the best manner?

4 So then at the present time

is a system of classification

for animals similar to that

for plants, founded on natural

affinities, which would be

generally adopted by natural-

ists?

5 Ought the Institution to

encourage young naturalists

to devote themselves to the

description of species, or to their

impediments in this way by re-

fusing free access to the specimens?

6 Finally, how can the Institution
most effectively promote Natural
History? I remain very truly

Dr. A. Gray

Yours Joseph Henry



Henry, Joseph. 1860. "Henry, Joseph Aug. 14, 1860." *Joseph Henry letters* –.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/310572>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/340507>

Holding Institution

Harvard University Botany Libraries

Sponsored by

Arcadia (Open Collections)

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.