

FIELDIANA

Patricia M. Williams



Last year was *Fieldiana's* 75th birthday. In those 75 years Field Museum has published over 1,100 issues of *Fieldiana*. The list of *Fieldiana* titles stands a towering 22 feet high in the Museum's 75th Anniversary Exhibit and *Fieldiana's* distribution is worldwide in scope. And yet, unless you're a professional scientist, you may have never even heard of *Fieldiana*, let alone read a copy.

Fieldiana is a continuing series of scientific papers and monographs dealing with anthropology, botany, geology and zoology intended primarily for exchange-distribution to museums, libraries, and universities, but also available for purchase.

Fieldiana was begun in what is often referred to as the "Museum Age"—the 1800's. Many of this country's great natural history museums were founded in the nineteenth century and their scientific series began to proliferate toward the end of that century. For example, the *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* first appeared in 1881, the *Proceedings of the U.S. National Museum* in 1878, the *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* in 1860, and the *Contributions from the Gray Herbarium* in 1891.

Field Museum's *Annual Report of the Director* for 1895 introduced the series which would one day be called *Fieldiana* as "the medium of presenting to the world the results of the research and investigation conducted under the auspices of the Museum. The publications are intended primarily to convey information upon the collections and expeditions of the Museum. There is no restriction, however, as to authorship or subject, provided the papers come within the scope of scientific or technical discussion."

At that time the Museum itself was still evolving toward its present division of interests and the scientific series reflects this evolution. Then, as now, there was a Botanical, Zoological and Anthropological Series but instead of a Geology series the Museum offered both Historical and Geographical publications. In fact, publications 1, "An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Field Columbian Museum" and 2, "The Authentic Letters of Columbus" were both in the now defunct Historical Series.

Fieldiana has reflected not only the growth and development of Field Museum, but of the various sciences as well. For example, anthropology was just emerging as a professional discipline in the United States at the time of *Fieldiana's* introduction and some of the most important early anthropologists contributed to the series. W. H. Holmes published one of the world's first reports on the archaeology of the Yucatan in the new-born Anthropological Series. G. A. Dorsey contributed several landmark publications on various American Indian tribes, recording firsthand details of ceremonies and myths which were impossible to obtain even a few years later. H. R. Voth, a missionary, recorded descriptions of sacred American Indian ceremonies and his publications are standard references today.

Dorsey and Voth published in Field Museum's series between 1897 and 1912. Around 1912 Berthold Laufer, a

scholarly giant of world renown, began to publish. His "Jade, a Study in Chinese Archaeology and Religion" (1912) was one of the first authoritative works on jade and is now a classic. In 1927 J. Eric Thompson published a very short, very technical paper called "A Correlation of Mayan and European Calendars." This calendar, which correlates Christian chronology with Mayan hieroglyphics, continues to be the standard reference point for workers in this field. In 1931 Roy L. Moodie contributed "Roentgenologic Studies of Egyptian and Peruvian Mummies,"—one of the first published collections of mummy X-rays. Paul S. Martin, who has published more on the Southwest than any other anthropologist, authored several volumes in the *Fieldiana: Anthropology* series. Ralph Linton, A. L. Kroeber, W. Hambley, Fay Cooper Cole, and Alexander Spoehr are among the prominent anthropologists who have contributed to *Fieldiana* in the past.

Reviewed in the same detail, the lists of *Fieldiana: Botany, Geology, and Zoology* are seen to be studded with the



names of outstanding scientists advancing new ideas, describing new genera and species. The colossal floras in the Botanical Series are known to botanists the world over and represent the work of many men. The "Flora of Peru," begun in 1936 and still in progress, runs to over 6,000 pages to date. The "Flora of Guatemala," begun in 1957, continues. Just beginning is a series on the flora of Costa Rica to record the remarkable botanical diversity of that area before much is eradicated by encroachment of the human species and its technology.

Many of the geology publications have been landmarks in the study of the earth and early life, presenting new concepts, data, techniques, and interpretations. One outstanding example, "The Paleoecological History of Two Pennsylvanian Black Shales" by Rainer Zangerl and Eugene S. Richardson, is now used as advanced reading in universities.

Fieldiana: Zoology is an abundant source of descriptive and interpretative material dealing with insects, invertebrates, and vertebrates from every area of the world. W. H. Osgood and K. P. Schmidt, both former chief curators, were prolific writers and published often in the *Fieldiana* series. D. Wright Davis' mammoth "The Giant Panda: A Morphological Study of Evolutionary Mechanisms" is certainly one of the most noteworthy issues of *Fieldiana* from a standpoint of both quality and size (339 quarto pages, 160 illustrations).

It is largely through such publications that Field Museum's reputation as a scientific institution is maintained and enhanced, that its collections and staff become known to the scientific community.



Any title of *Fieldiana*—dated 1895 or 1971—can be examined in the Museum library. All that are not out of print are available for purchase.

In this age of imperative relevance, *Fieldiana* is relevant. It describes and interprets our world and its inhabitants as it was and is. For conservationists of both human and natural resources, *Fieldiana* provides a record of what was so that we can measure what we have changed, improved or destroyed. *Fieldiana* has been pure science as well—irritating to those who demand "But what can you use it for?" but inspiring to those who appreciate and desire knowledge for its own sake.

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