

# Our Collections: Our Treasures

## OUR COLLECTIONS: OUR TREASURES

Field Museum's scientific research programs encompass man and his total environment — past and present. Our collections of over 13.5 million specimens comprise a vast storehouse of data on man, plants, animals, and the earth. New specimens are constantly being added to this body of material through purchase, transfer, bequests, gifts, exchanges with other institutions, and staff field work.

The Museum's staff bases its research on these collections; however, that is not the extent of their use. Today institutions share exhibits, books, and computerized data; they have been sharing collection materials for many years. In 1977-1978 the scientific departments made loans of more than 125,000 specimens to scientists and students for research and to other museums for exhibition. Additionally, more than 2,500 researchers and university students visited the Museum to consult with our staff or to examine specimens.

Although the size of our collections is one of the major strengths of Field Museum and has done much to enhance our stature worldwide, we do not acquire new material simply for the sake of growth. Several years ago, the staff and Trustees collaborated to develop an accession policy which, among other things, sets conditions and priorities for the acquisition of new materials in terms of our traditional and current areas of interest. This policy has been described by one writer as "... more complete, more specific and more detailed than any we have seen ... a polished, detailed and sophisticated document, very evidently compiled by a group of responsible persons after a lengthy and serious study of a set of very complex problems involving the museum and its relations with the world."

The acquisition of collections is one of the major responsibilities of a museum; the preservation of those collections for generations yet to come is another. As a means of fulfilling this trust and, simultaneously, providing for expansion space which will be required even for the limited collection increase that will result from the new accession policy, significant new storage areas and much-needed laboratory and office spaces were added in the departments of anthropology, botany, and zoology. This was yet another facet of the building renovation program.

Field Museum now has what we believe to be one of the finest anthropology study facilities in the museum world. Protected by a rate-of-rise heat indicator and sprinkler system, as well as a security system, the four-level, climatically controlled area houses about 300,000 specimens or 75 per cent of the Department of Anthropology's collections.

In conjunction with this central storage facility, an Anthropology Information Management System is being developed. Assisted by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and an equipment gift from the Digital Equipment Corporation, this computerized system will assist in the management of the collection, including maintaining the inventory and recording the location of all objects within the facility.

*Upper left: Chinese scientists visit Museum zoology laboratory. Upper right: A portion of the Division of Insects collection storage area. (Fleur Hales photo) Lower left: Video screen of computer terminal from Anthropology Information Management System. Lower center: Division of Invertebrates laboratory. Lower right: Entomologist John Kethley examines mounted insects. (Dave Walsten photo)*







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On the other side of the building, the new Ellen Thorne Smith Bird and Mammal Study Center provides a modern, secure, and functional facility for the housing of one of the world's great collections, as well as work and study space for staff, visiting scientists, and students. The center was made possible by a generous gift in honor of Mrs. Smith by her husband, Hermon Dunlap Smith.

Also in the Department of Zoology, the space of the Division of Insects was almost doubled and most offices and collections were relocated for greater efficiency as a result of the renovation. Further, the Division of Fishes was enlarged by one-third through the addition of new shelving. The Biological Research Resources Program of the National Science Foundation continued to provide support for several of the biological collections.

The Department of Botany, too, benefitted from the renovation program as it was both expanded and improved.

Entirely new quarters were provided the Division of Photography, aided by generous gifts from Mrs. David W. Stewart of Rochester, N. Y. in memory of her aunt, Hedwig H. Mueller. Our collection of more than 300,000 negatives dates back to the 1890's and includes many photos of historic significance.

Even as new space was being allocated, collection growth went on — as it must. Collections of breadth and high quality are essential to a great museum for both scholarly and exhibition purposes. Therefore, the selective building of our collections continues to be a priority of the Museum. Although all departmental collections grew during this biennium, a number of particularly noteworthy gifts have been made recently to the Department of Anthropology.

A collection of more than 100 Japanese lacquer objects, boxes, inro, and miniature shrines, collected with great care and discrimination by John Woodworth Leslie over a period of decades, was presented by Mr. Leslie. Many of these pieces of extraordinary quality will be exhibited in 1979.

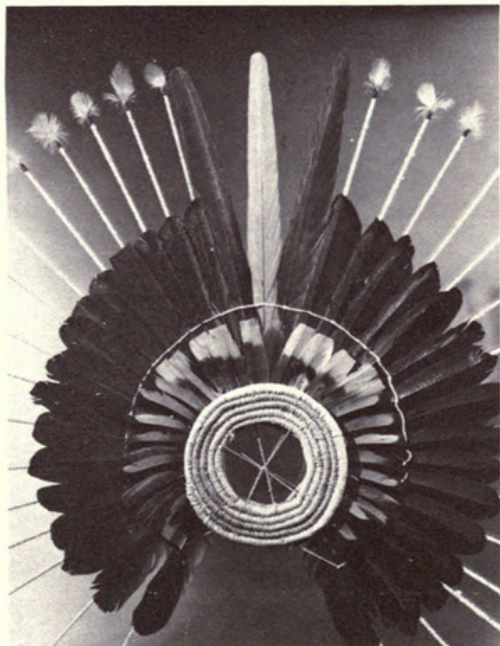
Mr. and Mrs. Theodore VanZelst continued to make generous gifts, including a collection of American Indian trade silver and three fine groups of Alaskan, Pacific Northwest, and Canadian Arctic ethnological specimens.

Mr. and Mrs. John Mayo Mitchell presented a fine collection of American Indian trade silver that complements nicely both the Museum's original collection and the collection given by Mr. and Mrs. VanZelst.

Mrs. Helen L. Kellogg, who died in 1978, bequeathed a pair of fine T'ang pottery horses, as well as a generous sum of money, to the Museum.

*Upper left: Curator Emeritus Emmet Blake studying specimens from bird collection. Upper right: Inro from collection of lacquerware given to Museum by Mr. John Woodworth Leslie. Lower left: Headdress of parrot and macaw feathers; a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Theodore W. VanZelst. Lower right: Chinese ceramic horses, T'ang dynasty; gifts of the Helen L. Kellogg Trust.*







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An outstanding collection of Japanese art, especially strong in ceramics and book illustrations, was given to the Museum by G. E. Boone in 1978. This collection will provide the nucleus for a systematic and comprehensive collection of Japanese arts and crafts.

All of these gifts came from private individuals. We believe that our evident concern and care for our vast collections and our efforts to maintain their high quality offer assurance to these collectors that their collections will be treated with equal respect.

Collections — as well as scientific knowledge — are also enlarged by field work. Some field trips take our scientific personnel only a few miles from the Museum, others require journeys of thousands of miles. In 1977-1978, 35 staff members from the scientific departments conducted field

work. They went to several locations in the United States, to Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Argentina, Antarctica, England, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Southern Sudan.

Finally, publication is the end result of most scientific research and field work. In 1977 two especially noteworthy books by Museum curators were published: *Manual of Neotropical Birds*, Volume 1 by Emmet R. Blake (704 pp.) and *Living New World Monkeys (Platyrrhini)* Volume 1 by Phillip Hershkovitz (1,137 pp.). Both volumes were published by the University of Chicago Press. These works, which have each received laudatory praise, are the culmination of years of meticulous preparation.

Forty-five titles, amounting to a total of 2,650 pages, were published in *Feldiana*, the Museum's four scientific series, in 1977-1978. Including those appearing in *Feldiana*, Museum staff published 153 scientific papers and books in this period.

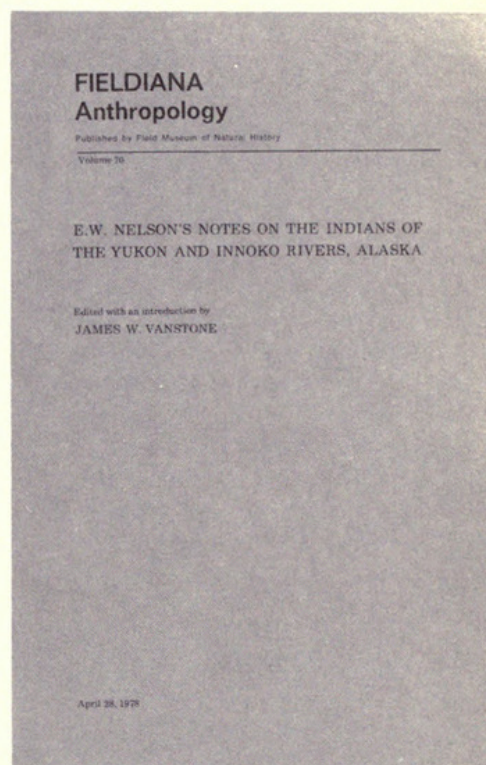
Of course, we buy books as well as produce them. However, our Library is struggling to cope with a major budgetary problem caused by the sharp rise in the cost of books and periodicals due to inflation and the decline of the value of the dollar with respect to other currencies. The loss in the purchasing power of the dollar in many countries is a particularly thorny

problem as much of our buying is done overseas. For these reasons, the cost of subscriptions to on-going periodicals accounts for a greater share of the budget every year.

We were able, nevertheless, to increase the number of books purchased in 1977-1978 by a significant 30 per cent. This was largely due to generous gifts made to the Museum for this purpose by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Cherry in memory of their son, Samuel M. (Cherry Library Fund); Mrs. Chester D. Tripp (Jane B. Tripp Library Fund); and Mr. and Mrs. Louis A. Wagner (Louis A. Wagner and Francis B. Wagner Library Fund).

*Upper left:* Researcher using auger along Wiscansao Canal as part of Programa Riego Antiguo (Ancient Irrigation Project) in Peru. (Robert Feldman photo) *Upper center:* Paleontologist Larry Marshall with emu while on field trip to Argentina. *Upper right:* One of 45 issues of *Feldiana* published in 1977-1978. *Lower left:* Curators Emeritus Hershkovitz (left) and Blake at reception in honor of their books published by University of Chicago Press. *Lower right:* Plate depicting Shoveller Duck from John James Audubon's *The Birds of America*, a fine and rare work in the Library's collection.









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