



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Program Records, 1965-1990

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Program Records
Identifier:	Accession 95-169
Date:	1965-1990
Extent:	14.5 cu. ft. (14 record storage boxes) (1 document box)
Creator::	National Museum of Natural History. Assistant Director for Automatic Data Processing
Language:	Language of Materials: English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 95-169, National Museum of Natural History.
Assistant Director for Automatic Data Processing, Program Records

Historical Note

In 1963 the Director of the National Museum of Natural History formed a committee to explore the possibilities of data processing in a museum context. In July 1967 the museum received a three-year grant from the Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and with the assistance of the Smithsonian's Information Systems Division, later renamed the Office of Computer Services (OCS), it began developing the Smithsonian Institution Information Retrieval System (SIIRS), also known as the Natural History Information Retrieval system (NHIR). By December 1969 several thousand records from representative collections in NMNH had been entered, and groundwork had been laid for the establishment of data standards.

After the grant ended in 1970 a central organization named the Automatic Data Processing (ADP) Program was formed at NMNH under the direction of James F. Mello to develop and coordinate permanent data-processing services for the museum. Soon after the Program was established it began working closely with OCS to develop a new system to replace SIIRS. Named SELGEM, for "SElf GEnerating Master," it became the basic data processing system at NMNH and at several other museums, universities, and government agencies. In January 1973 Mello was appointed Assistant Director of the museum, but he remained in charge of the ADP Program until May, when T. Gary Gautier became Acting Chief. Gautier was later named Chief, and by 1980 he was the Museum's Information Systems Manager in charge of the ADP Program. In 1985 he was named Assistant Director in charge of the ADP Office.

Descriptive Entry

These records document the development of automated data management systems for the collections of NMNH and other museums, the establishment of data handling and storage standards, and the consolidation of administrative structures to control automation policy at the Smithsonian. They include documentation of the Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) Project, consisting of contract notes, quarterly technical progress reports from October 1967 through the interim report in January 1969, and the final report, issued in July 1970. The records also contain files of correspondence, memoranda, meetings, and reports created by Mello from 1968 through 1973, and as recently as 1983. The materials document Mello's involvement with several projects, including Flora North America (FNA), a tracking system for botanical loans and exchanges among institutions; and the Systematic Biology Collections Questionnaire, many of which were completed and returned to Mello in 1968.

The records also describe the evolution of the ADP Program through administrative files dating from 1971 through 1987; budget files for 1980, 1986, and 1987; memoranda files for 1981, 1982, 1988, and 1989; correspondence files from 1977 to 1980; and chronologic files from 1980 to 1985. In addition, the records contain collections inventory documentation dating from 1972 to 1982, which includes files and reports on data management in the different departments and divisions of NMNH, and files on techniques and procedures. The records also include subject and project files dating from 1967 to 1990, which document the development of SELGEM from 1970 to 1978; planning for the Smithsonian Institution Network (SINET); ADP's involvement with the Museum Computer Network (MCN); planning materials for data processing space at the Museum Support Center (MSC), 1979 to 1986; and ADP's interaction with OCS, later the Office of Information Resource Technology (OIRM).

The records also contain files on a project done in cooperation with the Rocky Mountain Laboratory (RML) in Hamilton, Montana, during which data on a tick collection belonging to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) was stored on a Smithsonian database. These materials, dating from 1976 to 1980, include program codes and microfiche. In addition, the records contain Museum Data Standards files from 1967 through 1977; the "Museum Data Bank Research Report," numbers 1 through 12, November 1974 through November 1976; the NMNH Records Manual, dated 1969; unidentified slides; and undated reel to reel recordings of speakers at various symposia.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Computers
- Museums -- Automatic data processing
- Natural History Information Retrieval system (NHIR)
- SELf GEnErating Master (SELGEM)

Types of Materials:

- Architectural drawings
- Audiotapes
- Black-and-white photographs
- Books
- Brochures
- Clippings

Electronic records
Manuscripts

Names:

Flora North America Project
Gautier, T. Gary, 1942-
Mello, James F., 1936-
Museum Computer Network
National Institutes of Health (U.S.)
National Institutes of Health (U.S.). Rocky Mountain Laboratory
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.). Automatic Data Processing Office
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.). Automatic Data Processing Office. Smithsonian
Institution Information Retrieval System
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.). Automatic Data Processing Office. Smithsonian
Institution Network
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.). Museum Data Standards
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.). Office of the Assistant Director for Automatic Data
Processing. Systematic Biology Collections
Smithsonian Institution. Information Systems Division
Smithsonian Institution. Museum Support Center
Smithsonian Institution. Office of Computer Services
Smithsonian Institution. Office of Information Resource Management

Preferred Titles:

Museum Data Bank research report

Container Listing

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- Box 1 of 15 Information Systems Division Reports and National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) Bibliographies
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[Digital Content: Automatic Data Processing Center, Arts & Industries Building, 1978, by John Spinner. \[Image No. SIA2010-0870\]](#)
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