Smithsonian Institution Archives

Smithsonian Institution Paleontology Videohistory Collection, 1987-1988

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Smithsonian Institution Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., *osiaref@si.edu*
Title:	Smithsonian Institution Paleontology Videohistory Collection
Identifier:	Record Unit 9530
Date:	1987-1988
Extent:	5 videotapes (Reference copies). 7 digital .wmv files and .rm files (Reference copies).
Creator::	
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Prefered Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9530, Smithsonian Institution Paleontology Videohistory Collection

Historical Note

The National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) of the Smithsonian Institution houses one of the world's major paleontological collections. In addition, museum curators have developed many innovative techniques for handling, processing, and interpreting fossils.

Scientists interviewed for the project included G. Arthur Cooper (1902-2000), who received a B.S. degree from Colgate University in 1924 with a major in chemistry and an M.S. in 1926. He was awarded a Ph.D. from Yale University in 1929 for his thesis on the stratigraphy of the Hamilton formation. In 1930 he was appointed Assistant Curator in the Division of Stratigraphic Paleontology of the United States National Museum (USNM) and by 1957 assumed head curatorship of the Department of Geology, where he oversaw its division into separate departments of Paleobiology and Mineral Sciences in 1963. He continued as Chairman of the Department of Paleobiology until he was appointed Senior Paleobiologist in 1967. He retired from federal service in 1974 but continued his research as paleobiologist emeritus at the Smithsonian Institution until June 1987.

J. Thomas Dutro, Jr., (1923-2010) began his career as a geologist and paleontologist with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 1948. He received his A.B. from Oberlin College in 1948 and his M.S. and Ph.D. from Yale University in 1950 and 1953 respectively. He was stationed in the USGS offices in NMNH, and, in 1962, was appointed Research Associate of the Smithsonian Institution. His interests include the Paleozoic stratigraphy of Alaska and the western United States and the systematics of late Paleozoic Brachiopoda.

Richard E. Grant (1927-1995) received his B.A. in 1949 and M.S. in 1953 from the University of Minnesota and his Ph.D. in geology from the University of Texas at Austin in 1958. From 1961 to 1972 he worked

as a geologist and paleontologist with the USGS until he assumed the position of Chairman of the Department of Paleobiology at NMNH in 1972. In 1977 he was appointed Geologist in that department and in 1983 became Curator and Senior Geologist. His research interests include the brachiopods and stratigraphy of the Permian period.

Ellis L. Yochelson (1928-2006) was a paleontologist with the USGS from 1952 until his retirement in 1985. During those years he occupied an office in NMNH and in 1967 was appointed a Research Associate in the Department of Paleobiology. A specialist in extinct mollusks, concentrating on the evolution of gastropods, Dr. Yochelson received B.S. and M.S. degrees from the University of Kansas and a Ph.D. from Columbia University. His research interests included the history of geology.

Introduction

The Smithsonian Videohistory Program, funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation from 1986 until 1992, used video in historical research. Additional collections have been added since the grant project ended. Videohistory uses the video camera as a historical research tool to record moving visual information. Video works best in historical research when recording people at work in environments, explaining artifacts, demonstrating process, or in group discussion. The experimental program recorded projects that reflected the Institution's concern with the conduct of contemporary science and technology.

Eighteen Smithsonian historians participated in the program to document visual aspects of their on-going historical research. Projects covered topics in the physical and biological sciences as well as in technological design and manufacture. To capture site, process, and interaction most effectively, projects were taped in offices, factories, quarries, laboratories, observatories, and museums. Resulting footage was duplicated, transcribed, and deposited in the Smithsonian Institution Archives for scholarship, education, and exhibition. The collection is open to qualified researchers.

Descriptive Entry

Pamela M. Henson, Institutional History Division, Smithsonian Institution Archives, interviewed scientists in the museum's Department of Paleobiology who developed its extensive fossil collection. She used the fossil collections to stimulate discussion of the history of the collections and visually documented fossil preparation techniques.

This collection consists of three interview sessions, totaling approximately 4:04 hours of recordings, and 115 pages of transcript.

For additional information on Cooper, see Record Unit 7318, G. Arthur Cooper Papers, Record Unit 328, Department of Paleobiology Records, and Record Unit 9524, G. Arthur Cooper Oral History Interviews, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Geology

Interviews
Museum curators -- Interviews
Oral history
Paleontology

Types of Materials:

Transcripts
Videotapes

Names:

Cooper, G. Arthur (Gustav Arthur), 1902-2000
Dutro, J. Thomas
Grant, Richard E., 1927-1994
Henson, Pamela M., interviewer
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.). Department of Paleobiology
United States National Museum. Department of Geology
United States National Museum. Division of Invertebrate Paleontology
United States National Museum. Division of Stratigraphic Paleontology
Yochelson, Ellis L. (Ellis Leon), 1928-2006

Container Listing

Interviews

Interviews **Session 1: May 14, 1987**

Interviews Consists of three interviews with Cooper by Yochelson, Dutro, and Henson in three locations in the Collections Storage Area of the Department of Invertebrate Paleontology concerning the history of those collections. Henson also interviewed Cooper in his office about his photographic and illustration techniques, c. 1925-1987. In the New York Devonian Aisle of the Collection Storage Area, Yochelson interviewed Cooper about: Cooper's early interest in fossils; importance of good fossil collections; collections from New York Paleozoic and Devonian; study of paleoecology; evolution of brachiopods; work in Michigan Devonian. In the Michigan Devonian Aisle of the Collections Storage Area, Dutro interviewed Cooper about: type of fossils found in Devonian in Michigan; Cooper's collecting efforts in Michigan; visual survey, with discussion, of fossils in Michigan collection, including Upper Devonian; reminiscences of colleagues who joined his Devonian collecting trips. In the Permian of the Glass Mountains, Texas, Section of the Collection Storage Area, Henson interviewed Cooper about: development of Permian collection at SI; visual description of specific specimens; procedure for sorting and evaluating specimens; reminiscences of colleagues who joined his Permian collecting trips; means for preserving, selecting, and interpreting fossils; Cooper's demonstration of "picking" fossils. In Cooper's office, Henson interviewed him about: preparation of specimens for photographic documentation; demonstration of Cooper's photographic setup; problems of securing adequate equipment in early years at museum; the use of photographs as scientific illustrations in publications.

Interviews Transcript, pages 1-52, of videotape recording, 1 hour, 49 minutes.

Interviews Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1 hour, 49 minutes

Note:
- Original Masters: 3 U-matic videotapes
- Videotape 1: 51 minutes
- Videotape 2: 41 minutes
- Videotape 3: 17 minutes
- Preservation Masters: 3 Motion jpeg 2000 and 3 mpeg digital files
- Dubbing Masters: 3 U-matic videotapes
- Reference Copies: 2 VHS videotapes, 3 Windows Media Video and 3 Real Media digital files

Interviews **Session 2: May 18, 1987**

Interviews Consists of a group interview with Cooper, Dutro, Grant, and Yochelson in the G. Arthur Cooper Room, Division of Invertebrate Paleontology, NMNH; followed by Cooper and Grant in Acid Etching Room; c. 1930-1987. In the

Cooper Room, Henson interviewed the group about: processes for collecting, transporting, shipping, and accessioning; invertebrate specimens from the field; colleagues on collecting field trips; field conditions, specifically in the Glass Mountains of Texas; publications; visual display of artifacts, slides, photos, and books, and discussion about each; recognition of Cooper's work by the professional community; preparation of dioramas for exhibits. In the Acid Etching Room, Henson interviewed Cooper and Grant about: the acid etching process; demonstration of the process, step-by-step, with description.

Interviews

Transcript, pages 1-63, of videotape recording, 2 hours.

Interviews

Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 2 hours

Note:

- Original Masters: 3 U-matic videotapes
- Videotape 1: 53 minutes
- Videotape 2: 59 minutes
- Videotape 3: 8 minutes
- Preservation Masters: 3 Motion jpeg 2000 and 3 mpeg digital files
- Dubbing Masters: 3 U-matic videotapes
- Reference Copies: 2 VHS videotapes, 3 Windows Media Video and 3 Real Media digital files

Interviews

Session 3: August 3, 1988

Interviews

Consists of close-up views of Permian brachiopods of West Texas described during interviews.

Interviews

Transcript: videotape recording, 15 minutes, was not transcribed, but original footage was summarized.

Interviews

Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 0.25 hours

Note:

- Original Masters: 1 Beta videotape
- Videotape 1: 15 minutes
- Preservation Masters: 1 Motion jpeg 2000 and 1 mpeg digital files
- Dubbing Masters: 1 U-matic videotape
- Reference Copies: 1 VHS videotape, 1 Windows Media Video and 1 Real Media digital files