# Table of Contents

- Collection Overview ........................................................................................................ 1
- Administrative Information .............................................................................................. 1
- Historical Note.................................................................................................................. 1
- Introduction....................................................................................................................... 1
- Descriptive Entry.............................................................................................................. 2
- Names and Subjects ........................................................................................................ 2
- Container Listing ............................................................................................................ 4
## Collection Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repository:</th>
<th>Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <a href="mailto:osiaref@si.edu">osiaref@si.edu</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Videohistory interviews with Margaret J. Geller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifier:</td>
<td>Record Unit 9546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>1989-1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent:</td>
<td>4 videotapes. 7 digital .wmv files and .rm files (reference copies).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator::</td>
<td>Geller, Margaret J. interviewee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language:</td>
<td>Language of Materials: English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Administrative Information

### Prefered Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9546, Videohistory interviews with Margaret J. Geller

## Historical Note

Margaret J. Geller, professor of astrophysics, Harvard University, and astrophysicist, Smithsonian-Harvard Center for Astrophysics, was universally regarded for her revolutionary work on the large-scale structure of the universe. The discovery by Geller, John Huchra and Valerie de Lapparent of the bubble structure of galaxies was arguably among the most important work in late twentieth century astronomy.

Geller received her A.B. from the University of California, Berkeley in 1970. In 1972 she completed her M.A., followed by a Ph.D in physics in 1975, both from Princeton University. Her professional experience included a research fellowship in theoretical astrophysics at the Center for Astrophysics, 1974-1976. She was a senior visiting fellow at the Institute for Astronomy in Cambridge, England, 1978-1980, and a research associate at the Harvard Observatory (HCO), 1978-1980. She has taught astrophysics and astronomy at Harvard University since 1980, and reached the rank of full professor in 1988. In July, 1990, she was awarded a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. She conducted research at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) on the nature and history of galaxy distribution, the origin and evolution of galaxies, and x-ray astronomy. She has published prolifically in these areas. Her long-range research goals include the development of a coherent picture of the formation and evolution of clusters of galaxies, and the relationship between individual clusters and the cluster environment.

## 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.

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

In Session One, Matthew H. Schneps, co-director of the Wolbach Image Processing Laboratory at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, interviewed Geller about her personal and family history and the early influences on her life and work as a student and scientist. Schneps also touched on Geller’s research on the structure of the universe. The interview took place on February 5, 1989, at Margaret Geller’s home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Schneps’s intention was to examine the personal, social, political and psychological forces that determined the direction of Geller’s scientific research. In Session Two, David H. DeVorkin, curator at the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum (NASM), focused on Geller’s scientific interests and activities, including publications, major collaborations and specific research projects. DeVorkin’s goal was to gain a greater sense of Geller’s extensive contributions to the field of astronomy. The second session was conducted at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, Cambridge, Massachusetts, first in Margaret Geller’s office and later in the image processing laboratory, where DeVorkin and Geller were joined by visiting professors Emilio Falco and Massismo Ramella. The interview took place on July 16, 1990, shortly after Geller was notified about winning the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship.

This collection consists of two interview sessions, totaling approximately 7:00 hours of recordings, and 199 pages of transcript. There are three generations of tape for each session: originals, dubbing masters, and reference copies. In total, this collection is comprised of 21 original videotapes (21 Beta videotapes), 7 dubbing master videotapes (7 U-matic videotapes), and 4 reference copy videotapes (4 VHS videotapes). The collection has been remastered digitally, with 7 motion jpeg 2000 and 7 mpeg digital files for preservation, and 7 Windows Media Video and 7 Real Media Video digital files for reference.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
- Astronomy and astrophysics
- History of science and technology
- Women -- History

Types of Materials:
- Interviews
- Oral history
Transcripts
Videotapes

Names:
DeVorkin, David H., 1944- interviewer
Geller, Margaret J.
Harvard College Observatory
Harvard University
Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics
Huchra, John P.
Institute for Astronomy (Cambridge, England)
Princeton University
Schneps, Matthew H. interviewer
Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory
University of California, Berkeley
de Lapparant, Valerie
## Container Listing

**Box 1**

**Transcripts of Interviews**

| Box 1 of 1 | Session 1: 5 February 1989 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Session 2: 16 July 1990 |

**Video Recordings of Interviews**

| Box 1 of 1 | Session 1: 5 February 1989 |
| Box 1 of 1 | Session 2: 16 July 1990 |