Boorstin of MHT Wins Pulitzer Prize for History

Dr. Daniel J. Boorstin, former Director and now Senior Historian of the National Museum of History and Technology, has been awarded a Pulitzer Prize for history for his book, The Americans: The Democratic Experience.

It is believed to be the first Smithsonian staff member to win a Pulitzer Prize for history for his work. The book was published last June, and The Democratic Experience completed the "Americans" trilogy Dr. Boorstin began 16 years ago with The Colonial Experience. The second volume was The National Experience. The Pulitzer winner was the Book of the Month Club's main selection last July and was also a National Book Award finalist.

Dr. Boorstin gave up his duties as Director of MHT last October so that he could devote more time to research and writing. He had come to the Smithsonian to head the museum in October 1969 after a distinguished career on the faculty of the University of Chicago.

Among Dr. Boorstin's other books, all highly acclaimed, are The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America, The Genius of American Politics, The Decline of Radicalism, America and the Image of Europe, The Last World of Thomas Jefferson, and the Landmark History of the American People for younger readers. He has now shifted his focus from America to the world and is preparing to write a world history.

Smithsonian Offers New Tour for Groups

The Smithsonian is now offering to groups of adults a free tour in the National Museum of History and Technology, entitled "The Spirit of 1776." To schedule the tour for civic groups, clubs, or other organizations, please call Mrs. Reese at 381-6471. The tour will be given at 1 or 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday and must be scheduled in advance.

Latest News From the SI Animal World Features New Owlets, Playful Pandas

There was good news recently for animal lovers at the Smithsonian. Six owlets are expected to hatch in their tower home in the old SI Building where they are being raised by Alex and Athena, the barn owls brought there from the National Zoological Park in February. Mike Johnson of the NZP staff took the photo below of Athena and three of the youngsters. The others are behind her. He reported that Alex has dispatched three pigeons in the tower, but still seems to be depending on handouts to sustain his family. By putting bait outside, Mike hopes to persuade the owls to start hunting. Meanwhile at the Zoo, the giant pandas Hsing-Hsing and Ling-Ling have been allowed together for brief periods this spring. The photo is by Bernie Bouton of the Washington Star-News.
White, Able Are Asst. Directors For Associates

The appointments of Edward H. Able as Assistant Director for Administration of the Smithsonian Resident Associate Program, and Herbert W. White as Assistant Director for Programming, have been announced by Janet W. Solinger, Director of the Program.

Both posts are newly-created, reflecting the rapid growth of the program and the continuing effort to fulfill the cultural and educational aspirations of a membership that has grown from 8,500 to 22,000 in 115 years.

Mr. Able has served as Business Manager for the Resident Associate Program since 1973. A native of Atlanta, Mr. Able was educated at Emory University in that city and holds an MBA from George Washington University. Before coming to the Smithsonian, he was staff executive with a multiple management and consulting firm in Washington and had served as an aide to Senators Richard B. Russell and Mike Mansfield.

Mr. White brings to his new position extensive experience gained as Manager of Special Projects Consulting in which capacity he served as consultant to a wide variety of local businesses, including the Wayside Inn in Middletown, Va., where he played a leading role in the reestablishment and development of the Inn and was instrumental in the establishment of the Wayside Theater. Mr. White is graduate of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.

The arrival of Mr. White places the number of full-time Resident Associate staff members at 25, plus four part-time staff members, 18 more than existed in August, 1972. The membership figure of 22,000 represents approximately 65,000 individuals being served by the Program when “double” and “family” memberships are taken into account.

The National Museum of Natural History recently sent two specimens of the North American Nightingale to the National Museum of Natural History in Montevideo, Uruguay. The specimens of these birds, which are insect-eating nocturnal birds found in urban and country habitats across the United States, were exchanged for those of a peculiar South American gull occurring on the south Atlantic coast, Larus aitinaicus. They are the counterpart of the Pacific coast gull called Belcher’s Gull or Larus belcheri. The exchange was arranged by Robert L. Brownell, Jr., research collaborator in the Smithsonian’s Department of Vertebrate Zoology, who was in Uruguay recently. Shown accepting the birds in the photo above is Prof. Miguel Krappeheck, left, Director of the national museum in Uruguay. Making the presentation is Abraham N. Hopman, U.S. Cultural Affairs Officer.

The Smithsonian Institution has sent more and more exhibits on the roof of its building-from a crystal kiosk that contains copies of famous paintings to the main entrance to the museum. There are now six exhibits there, each on a different floor. The most recent exhibit is called "Tropical Forest." It has been created by the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum (NMNH) in the 1970s.

In 1962, the NMNH expedition spent six weeks in a rain forest in British Guiana (now Guyana). They collected and photographed specimens to use as the basis of a life-size imitation of a rain forest for an exhibit hall on plant life. The exhibit proposal was later abandoned, but in the late 1970s, John Widener and William Minor of the Smithsonian's exhibits staff, accompanied by NMNH scientist Dr. Donald Duckworth, visited an actual rain forest in Panama near the NCFA's entrance, with steps-"the mache trees are tapered to increase the illusion of height. They rise into the sky, the forest foliage. They rise along with the mache trees, giving a visitor the impression that he is seeing the sky 80 feet above him. The throbbing life of the tropical rain forest is heard in the background—birds, the screech of a howler monkey, the sound of rain—and the visitor can see in the forest foliage such inhabitants as a monkey climbing a vine, a brilliantly colored parrot perched on a limb, and an anteater climbing a vine towards a термитник.

Other environments are exemplified in glass cases depicting life in the desert and marine life. The five motion pictures of a forest stretching endlessly around the visitor, the branches were sculpted and molded at the Smithsonian's plastics laboratory by experts, including Bud Sayre. Branches were made by covering plastic water piping with mache. Thousands of leaves molded in the laboratory were wired on the branches, and then the branches were hoisted high up into the silo by rope and pulley, attached to the trunks of the trees and properly adjusted. Boulders and rock outcroppings were sculpted at the base of the trees. Dr. Thomas Soderstrom, NMNH botanist who was one of the scientists who went along on the expedition in the early 1960s, explained what he remembers about the "All Depends"—the title of the exhibit. Here all the plants and animals, like actors in a play, are intimately related to each other. If this balance is upset, the whole environment can be plunged into jeopardy. Smithsonian exhibit experts created the rain forest environment inside a 27-foot-wide, 34-foot-high silo. The exterior of the silo is a stainless steel structure covered by natural colored paper paneling. Inside, the surface of the silo is covered by plastic mirrors 2/1000 of an inch thick which give a visitor the impression of a forest stretching endlessly around him.

After many months of painstaking labor, Smithsonian exhibits experts have created a walk-through tropical rain forest in the National Museum of Natural History as the centerpiece for a new ecology exhibit which opened there April 6. 34 feet upwards to a translucent plastic screen through which a small amount of light is filtered. Looking up through the foliage gives a person the illusion that he is seeing the sky 80 to 100 feet above him. If the balance is upset, the whole environment is upset, the whole environment will collapse. The exhibit is designed to serve as an ecology model that gives continuity to the exhibit. The overall design of the exhibit was created by the Smithsonian Board of Canada and performed by the Smithsonian Maintenance Division.

ANACOSTIA DIRECTOR DIVES—This scuba diver surveying a coral reef in the Caribbean is not a Smithsonian scientist, but a Smithsonian administrator—John Kinard, Director of the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum. During a conversation last year with Dr. Porter Kier, Director of the National Museum of Natural History, in which they discussed setting up a cooperative NMNH-Anacostia Museum program, Kinard said he would like to learn more about what SI scientists do. Dr. Kier invited him to come along on a spring field trip to British Honduras where SI scientists had engaged in a comprehensive study of a coral reef ecosystem. To prepare, Kinard took a crash one-week scuba diving course, passing it with high honors. In British Honduras, he spent a week making dives in deep and shallow waters and was able to see the scientists in a survey of organisms and environments in the reef waters. The photograph was taken by Dr. Kier.
To educate and entertain millions of Americans who may never get to museums in Washington, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) brings the Smithsonian to the Broadway's and Main Streets of communities across the nation.

The service has been in existence more than 20 years, but is still expanding and developing under the innovative and enthusiastic leadership of its director, Dennis Gould, who is assisted by a talented staff of professionals.

Although it is located away from the Mall in the picturesque Barney Studio House at 204 Massachusetts Avenue, SITES is very much a part of the day-to-day operations of the Institution in Washington (it is, incidentally, on the SI switchboard and has SI mail service). SITES operates on some of the same principles originated at the Smithsonian and hopes to increase the numbers. Although 80 per cent of the exhibitions now traveling come from outside the Institution, many from foreign countries,Therefore, SITES depends greatly on the advice of Smithsonian curators in various fields to provide the expert opinion necessary to evaluate a prospective exhibit.

"We will not circulate a show unless it gains the approval of a Smithsonian expert in the field," Mr. Gould emphasized. "We depend on the curators to give a careful review of the scripts of each show. They really have the life-and-death, 'go-or-no-go' decision." SITES is placing new emphasis on science, technology, and history exhibits, while maintaining its reputation as a circulator of art shows. Several other institutions also circulate art exhibits, but SITES is almost alone in the other categories. Colleges and universities are developing their own exhibitions.

In the past, SITES has focused on reproducing foreign exhibitions, which are made and circulated, if feasible. Mr. Gould noted. It is also working to place more emphasis on SI-originated exhibits.

Information Wanted

"We want to put more Smithsonian exhibitions on the road, and to do this we also need the cooperation of SI staff members in telling us about transportable exhibits," Mr. Gould commented. "We can assure them that we will not circulate items that should not be moved about. If an item is essential to the show, we will make a replica."

SITES, under the administration of Paul Perrot, Assistant Secretary for Museum Programs, is now circulating 115 exhibit units. Each year 40 new shows are needed to keep 100 exhibit units in circulation. Duplicates of some exhibits are made and circulated, if feasible. Mr. Gould explained. "If an exhibit is very popular, we may make it two or three times the original exhibit unit."

In the past, SITES has used an average of 8,000 persons per exhibit, or a total audience of approximately 4,800,000. SITES supports its direct costs largely through the fees it charges for exhibitions. Most indirect costs are met by the Smithsonian. In the current budget of $480,000, federal funds are included for the first time—$50,000 which is being used to provide a base appropriation that enables SITES to keep exhibition rental fees low.

Recent shows in Washington that were organized by SITES include "Antwerp's Golden Age," and the Kurt Kranz exhibition, both at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and three shows at the Renwick Gallery: "American Pieced Quilts," "The Avant-Garde in Theater and Art," and "Two Hundred Years of Royal Copenhagen Porcelain."

SITES reviews six to eight exhibit proposals each year, submitted in many forms from both within and outside the Institution. Factors considered include quality and accuracy of content and preparation, how well the topic is suited to an exhibit format and to SITES' program, desire for certain exhibits expressed by SITES' customers, and ability of the exhibition to carry its expenses and the expense of administering the tour from rental fees.

How Fees Are Set

To meet its expenses, each exhibition must be booked to its full potential at the rental fee determined by SITES. The fee is determined by estimating all direct costs such as insurance premiums, expense of design and production, and printing and transportation expenses. Then 100 to 200 per cent for overhead is added to cover indirect costs such as staff time. These costs are divided by 12 (the number of exhibits displayed in a two-year loan period). The result is the rental fee per exhibitor. Lower rental fees result in more successful tours. SITES is trying to keep rental fees low to service smaller museums, and to enable the federal funds now in its budget to help do this.

In addition to circulating "outside" shows and exhibitions by the SI museums, SITES is sponsoring research and developing its own exhibitions. "Ride On!" an exhibit about bicycles, was developed by Andrea Stevens, SITES exhibits coordinator. An exhibit of dolls in America is being put together by Elizabeth Rose, SITES administrative assistant.

The growing list of SITES "customers" and the number of institutions that rely on SITES regularly solves special packing problems. Makonde sculptures were embedded in hollowed-out foam rubber. Dennis Gould, SITES director, is shown making a final check of crates at the SI's 24th Street facility in Washington.

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 Model below shows appearance of bicycling exhibit.
New Museum Rooms for Children Had Predecessor

The recently opened Discovery Room at NMNH and the Explorer Room at NFCF contain an assortment of natural history and art objects which children—as well as adults—may touch and examine.

This development doubtlessly would have delighted the Smithsonian's first Secretary, Samuel P. Langley (1887-1906), the great astrophysicist and pioneer designer of aeroplanes, who once quoted as saying to an SI visitor, "Madame, I am chiefly interested in children and fairy stories."

Langley was not joking. In 1901 he established Ms. Langley, his own children's room in an American museum. Located in the room that is now the Associates' Lounge off the SI Building's Great Hall, it was filled with cases of natural history objects that included birds' nests, eggs, shells, minerals and fossils, corals and sponges. There were also singing birds in gilt cages and an aquarium.

Brentano's Features Books From SI Press

For the past two months Brentano's bookstore on Fifth Avenue in New York has been highlighting a full selection of books from the Smithsonian Institution Press, accompanied by newspaper advertising, interior displays, and prominent window treatment featuring the theme "The Smithsonian Comes to Brentano's."

Gordon Hubel, Director of the Smithsonian Press, and Miss Lilian Friedman, Vice President of Brentano's, said the test program is designed to measure the impact and influence of the Smithsonian name and its contribution to the sale of books when properly advertised and merchandised by a prominent retail bookstore.

The test was launched with an 800-line ad in the New York Times two months ago. Since then SI Press books have been prominently displayed in the Fifth Avenue window as well as in an attractive interior shelf display, Brentano's is stocking about 40 Smithsonian Press titles. According to Miss Friedman more than two-thirds of the titles have moved extremely well. She said the company plans to extend the program to two other stores soon.

Mr. Hubel explained: "For the past year we have been evaluating a variety of marketing and merchandising techniques designed to increase the visibility and sale of our books in retail bookstores. During the past few months we have become increasingly convinced that we can attract the attention of book shoppers and increase our sales if we show a significant number of titles in a prominent shelf display adequately identified with the Smithsonian Press name. We have been extremely conscious of the fact that our museums are host to more than 20 million visitors annually who return to our homes, we believe, with a favorable impression of the Smithsonian Institution and its many products and services. Accordingly, a few weeks ago we asked Brentano's, whom we consider to be among the world's leading retailers of scholarly books, to help us put our titles to the test. Miss Friedman and her associates have been kind enough to lend us their support in this effort, and we are extremely pleased at the early evidence of success."