2013 Grants Awarded by Smithsonian Women’s Committee

The all-volunteer Smithsonian Women’s Committee (SWC) researches and awards competitive grants to Smithsonian projects that open knowledge, adventure and discovery to the world. Funding for grants comes primarily from SWC’s two signature events: the Smithsonian Craft Show and Craft2Wear.

An annual request for proposals goes out to all 19 Smithsonian museums, programmatic offices, scientific facilities, libraries, and the National Zoo. Applications undergo a rigorous investigation and evaluation by committee members. The final grantees are selected by full committee vote.

Each of the following grants, awarded in January 2013, addresses one or more of the Smithsonian’s Grand Challenges: Unlocking the Mysteries of the Universe, Valuing World Cultures, Understanding and Sustaining a Biodiverse Planet, and Understanding the American Experience.

In January 2013, the SWC awarded 21 grants totaling $393,574.

We are extremely grateful to the generous individuals, corporations and foundations that helped make these grants possible through their participation, contributions, and support.

For Research

$9,278 to the National Zoo for laboratory testing to study great ape heart disease, management, and prevention. Zoo veterinarians know the blood levels of certain markers in U.S. captive apes, but do not know if these are normal levels for the ape species. To compare these metabolic markers to wild populations, this pilot tests sanctuary apes in Cameroon to provide insight into the cardiac health of apes in the middle of the spectrum between captive and wild.

$28,940 to the National Museum of Natural History to conduct a comparative analysis of the traits that predict mammalian species extinction or persistence. Comparing the 1909-1911 Roosevelt African Expedition with a modern re-survey of the same area, this research will predict patterns of species extinction and persistence in order to inform future conservation action.

$20,000 to the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, for a contract cataloger to research and describe 425 objects by 20th century women to make them publicly accessible online and for self-guided tours for the Museum’s reopening in early 2014. The Cooper-Hewitt has photographs of most of the objects and will use these funds to underwrite the photography of 120 more.

For Education

$32,329 to The Smithsonian Associates for "Meet the World with Discovery Theater," a series of five large-scale world culture programs for underserved students ages 5-14. These performances and online teaching materials encourage and support the social studies curriculum and provide joyous, artistic, positive connections among the many countries represented in the students’ schools and communities.

$7,088 to the Friends of the National Zoo to purchase four portable sound systems to provide flexibility for staff to reach visitors in exhibit areas that are not supported by permanent sound systems. Currently the Zoo offers 15-20 animal demonstrations daily; only a quarter are in buildings with permanent sound systems. The portable systems will enable coverage of the entire park, including popular outdoor talks that attract large crowds.
$16,000 to the Archives of the American Art Museum for transcription and online accessibility of 20 interviews of craft artists and designers from the Archives’ Oral History Program. These 20 are the last in a series of 200 firsthand accounts of the artists who shaped American craft and design.

$4,130 to the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery for the printing of 8,000 two-sided family self-guides and the development and printing of four themed-inserts for the heritage months, Women’s History Month, Asian-American Month, Hispanic-American Month, and African American Month. This is a two-year supply. In addition, both museums will feature the self-guide and inserts on their websites, with links to each museum’s collection of featured artworks, to enable online visitors to complete a virtual tour.

$34,356 to the National Museum of African Art to contract with a web developer to assess NMAfA’s online collections database, eMuseum, to make it more user-friendly and interactive and add zoom-in capability, audio and video playback, and greater searchability. To complete the upgrade of eMuseum, NMAfA will hire a graduate student intern to work with curators and educators to add at least 100 enhanced records to the collection website.

$17,000 to the Anacostia Community Museum to underwrite the digitization of 75 oral histories in the archival audio-visual collection and contract for the web development of a portal to provide on-line access to digitized collections. The request also includes the purchase and installation of an interactive computer workstation in the Museum to enable the community east of the Anacostia, where broadband Internet access is very limited, to view the on-line audio-visual collection.

$22,500 to the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service to develop, design, and print a curriculum guide for free distribution during a six year tour of the Hometown Teams traveling exhibition to a total of 180 communities in under-resourced rural schools. The curriculum guide will engage K-8 students and teachers by exploring how sports impact the American experience.

$14,000 to the Friends of the National Zoo to contract for a videographer to film and edit a series of four science-related podcasts to enable students, teachers, and parents to learn about science careers at zoos. Most zoos, including the National Zoo, do not grant personal interviews due to the volume of requests for career information. The podcasts will be accessible world-wide.

For Exhibitions

$14,050 to the National Zoo to purchase video equipment for the Invertebrate Coral Capture exhibit to show scientists capturing coral gametes and larva in Puerto Rico, Indonesia, and Belize. The Zoo will purchase a fiberglass filter tank and system to update the existing 25-year old coral exhibit and enhance the Zoo’s ability to improve the public's awareness of how coral grows when threats to survival are removed.

$28,072 to the National Museum of Natural History for a postdoctoral contractor, the purchase of imaging equipment, and the manuscript publication cost above that available at Natural History for the BioCube exhibit that opens in the Sant Ocean Hall in 2014. The BioCube research and exhibit will show the diversity and abundance of living organisms that inhabit one cubic foot of ocean water during a 24 hour period at a target depth of 300 meters (approximately 984 feet).
$30,000 to the National Portrait Gallery to provide an audio-visual component to Dancing the Dream, the first Smithsonian visual biography exhibition to focus on American dance. To augment traditional images from NPG’s collection and to exhibit figures in motion, NPG seeks audiovisual editing, captioning, licensing, and content fees for dance images from movies, network television, MTV, and You Tube to demonstrate how “culture in motion” embodies the diversity of American life.

$12,650 to the National Zoo for high definition photography and videography; an improved fog system and plants; and variable lighting video equipment to enhance the 1988 orb spider exhibit. The purpose is to teach and inspire visitors and to introduce conservation efforts for lesser known organisms that provide the foundation of saving biodiversity.

For Conservation

$18,750 to the National Museum of African Art to contract with a paper conservator to preserve 19 unique linocut prints from the Oshogbo art movement, initiated in Nigeria in the 1960s and 70s. Through the introduction of new printmaking techniques, four artists of the Oshobo art movement produced these innovative expressions of their traditional Yorba culture.

$3,239 to the National Portrait Gallery to contract for high-resolution, digital documentation of a very rare Civil War-era photograph album of the Confederacy, and to conserve and re-house the album to ensure its long term preservation. By digitizing and conserving the album, these fifty portraits of Civil War-era Southerners will be available to the public for the first time through on-line dissemination, a teacher workshop, exhibitions, and publications.

$29,117 to the National Zoo’s new Department of Conservation Medicine at the Conservation Biology Institute for critical care thermal support, ventilation, and blood gas monitoring equipment to improve care and survivorship for neonates and critically ill endangered wildlife species. Resulting critical care studies will advance and lead the new field of conservation medicine world-wide.

$6,640 to the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Library, a branch of Smithsonian Libraries, to contract with a book conservator to conserve two important and rare manuals, a 1604 Italian handwriting sample and lace manual pattern book and a 1795 illustrated embroidery manual. Currently too fragile to be handled by researchers, once preserved, the manuals may be exhibited and digitized, providing world-wide access for the public and researchers.

For Equipment and Capital Projects

$34,845 to the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center to expand the capacity to reach new audiences around the world. With funds to purchase and install a SMARTBoard interactive board for SERC’s education center and a portable Tandberg Tactical Responder, SERC scientists in the field or from labs can be connected by satellite to Internet-connected classrooms and laptops around the world.

$10,590 to the Office of Exhibits Central to expand the capabilities of the Haas TM-1 CNC (computer numerical controlled) milling machine by purchasing an air turbine spindle unit, highspeed machining option, A-frame work-holding support for the 4th axis rotating table, and two licenses of Deskproto Cam software. The machine is used to replicate objects for repatriation, research, and exhibits.