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Collections and Research

Aeronautics Division

The Aeronautics Division is responsible for the historical research and collecting activities of the National Air and Space Museum related to all aspects of flight in the atmosphere. The goal of the division is to preserve, document, and interpret the history of aeronautical technology within a broad and appropriate political, economic, military and social context. As part of this responsibility, the division acquires, documents and maintains a collection of historically significant artifacts for public exhibition, study and reference. Staff members conduct historical research leading toward scholarly and popular publications, exhibitions, lectures, seminars and other forms of public presentation. Staff members also respond to a broad range of requests from news media, documentary makers, researchers and the public on matters related to the history of aeronautics.

The major aircraft collections are: Early Flight; Commercial Aviation (includes piston-engine aircraft, turboprop aircraft, and jet aircraft); Military Aviation (includes pre-1920, interwar period, World War II, Cold War and experimental); General Aviation (includes private aircraft, business aircraft, utility aircraft, gliders, homebuilt aircraft, ultralights and hang gliders); Special Purpose Aircraft (includes research and experimental, exploration, record-setting and racing aircraft); Vertical Flight (includes helicopters, autogiros, and vertical takeoff and landing aircraft); and Lighter-than-Air Flight (includes balloons and airships).

The extensive non-aircraft collections of the division include: Aero Propulsion (engines, propellers and auxiliary equipment); Armament and Ordnance (guns, cannons, bombs and bombsights), Art (includes space art); Awards and Memorabilia (trophies, medals and ribbons, insignia, memorabilia); Flight Material and Equipment (uniforms and personal equipment, including helmets, flight suits, etc.); Instruments, Avionics and Flight Management Systems (flight instruments, cockpit controls and related devices); Kites; Model Aircraft and Engines; Photographic Equipment (aerial cameras); and Posters.

In addition, the Aeronautics Division, with the Space History Division, edits the Smithsonian History of Aviation and Spaceflight Series. The series seeks to publish substantive works that further our understanding of the transformation aviation and spaceflight have brought about in our lives-our conceptions of time and distance, our daily routines and popular culture, and the conduct of exploration, business and war-in their social, cultural, political and military contexts.

Space History Division

The Space History Division is the focal point for space-related historical research, collecting, and exhibit work at the museum. Curators and staff within the division research and publish; engage in public outreach through exhibitions, lectures and other means; and collect and manage the care of rocket and space artifacts in the museum's collection. The collection includes rockets and missiles, human and robotic spacecraft, scientific instruments, and popular culture artifacts. The division also considers both the technical history of spaceflight as well as the broader political, international, cultural, social, economic, institutional, and military contexts of spaceflight in our work. The division embodies the

museum's mission to preserve, understand and communicate the history of rocketry and space exploration, as part of the larger story of United States and world history. Staff members also respond to a broad range of requests from news media, documentary makers, researchers and the public on matters related to the history of space exploration.

The museum possesses an unparalleled collection that preserves many facets of rocketry and space exploration undertaken by the United States and, to a lesser degree, other countries. The artifacts cover programs and technology created for human spaceflight, rocketry and missiles, computers and avionics, commercial satellites, military space, ground- and space-based astronomy, space sciences, and foreign space programs.

The department's Oral History Project documents through interviews the recollections of leading scientists, engineers, managers and political figures involved in the nation's space program. Oral histories in the collection deal with Space Astronomy, the Hubble Space Telescope and the RAND Corp.

Archives

The National Air and Space Museum Archives Division is responsible for document, film and photograph collections relating to the history and technology of aviation and space exploration. Archives materials are housed in two locations. The ready reference files, major photo collection, film and administration departments are located in Room 3100 at the museum building on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Center for Earth and Planetary Studies

Established in 1973, the Center for Earth and Planetary Studies utilizes a collection of more than 300,000 photographs and images—many obtained from Earth-orbiting satellites and manned and unmanned space missions—of the Earth, Moon, and planets in research related to planetary and terrestrial geology. The scope of research activities includes work on Mercury, Venus, the moon, Mars, asteroids, and some satellites of the outer solar system, as well as corresponding field studies in terrestrial analog regions. Staff study a variety of geological processes, such as volcanism, floods, cratering, tectonics, and sand movement. Many of the terrestrial studies also address topics of current concern for global climate change. Results of these research activities are disseminated as books, articles for the general public, scholarly papers in professional journals and lectures to the public and professional community.

The Center is a NASA-supported Regional Planetary Image Facility under the Planetary Geology and Geophysics Program of NASA's Solar System Exploration Division and also has curatorial responsibility for two galleries in the museum's Mall building—"Exploring the Planets" and "Looking at Earth."

For more information, visit <http://airandspace.si.edu/research/ceps/>.

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