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ANNUAL REPORT 2020

**Smithsonian Institution
Office of International
Relations**

The Smithsonian Office of International Relations

**1100 Jefferson Drive SW
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Washington, DC
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DIRECTOR'S LETTER

I could never have predicted I would be taking the reins as the new Director of the Office of International Relations (OIR) from my home office. But here we are, nearly a year later, and I couldn't be prouder to lead my resilient and dedicated team in representing an institution that remains profoundly connected to our changing world—one that is literally collecting historical materials in real time and helping the public make sense of the events of the day by looking into the past to help us march boldly into our future.

As a global institution, the limitations imposed by a worldwide pandemic—no travel, no on-the-ground engagement with our international partners or communities—should have been catastrophic for the Smithsonian and for our office. Instead, our year of quarantine has proven that deep, meaningful, reciprocal relationships are more important than ever, and our global connectedness has been a powerful tool in staying strong during these confusing times. OIR has been able to continue to engage foreign audiences on an array of topics through virtual panels, workshops, symposia, and on more Zoom calls than we could ever possibly count. As you'll see in this report, we continued to support and champion the Smithsonian's international impact as well as deepen ties through new partnerships, new programs, and new project launches, all while laying the groundwork for new initiatives.

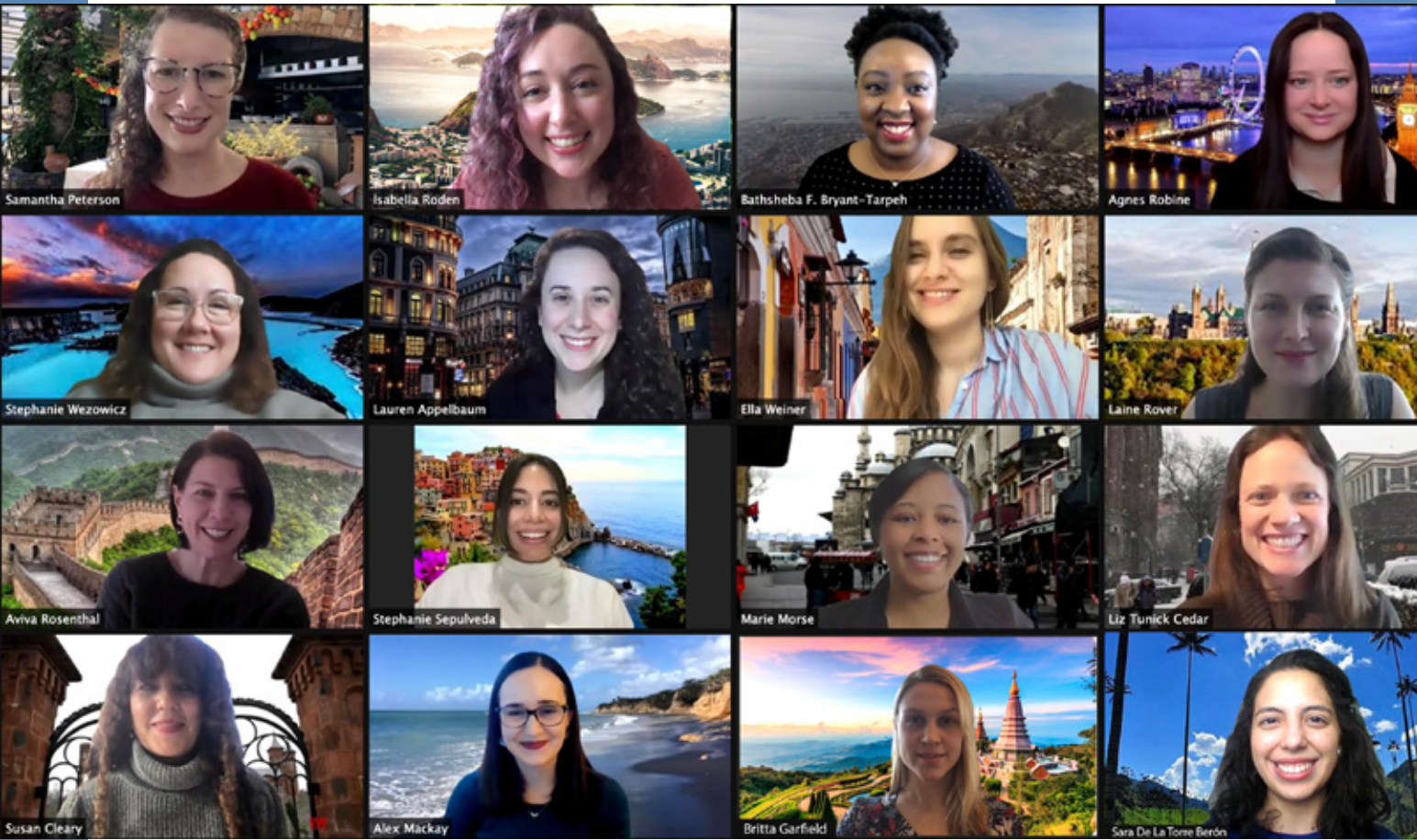
We also used this unique time to turn our focus internally, analyzing the Smithsonian's global footprint more thoughtfully and developing the Smithsonian's first ever International Strategic Framework. This Framework, launching in early 2021, will offer the Smithsonian a means to better articulate our global engagement, to align our efforts around a common vision and purpose, to manage our decision-making and resourcing, and to promote and amplify our impact among ourselves, our partners, and the broader public.

Along with a newly framed strategic outlook, we are refreshing our [Smithsonian Global](#) website to be more interactive, intuitive, and informative in elevating the Smithsonian's global story. We're also reworking our Prism intranet site for internal knowledge sharing, establishing new policies and processes to make data on our international activities more accessible and illuminating to facilitate strategic collaboration and generate even more impact.

As an eternal optimist, I am always looking towards our future. This past year has certainly been an intense one with the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racial injustice, as well as the recent presidential election and its aftermath. It has shown us that we have much work to do. As we celebrate the Smithsonian's 175th anniversary in 2021, I am grateful to be serving at this particular moment in time, when we are poised to help shape the positive direction of the future. Onward!

Warmly,

Aviva Rosenthal
Director, Office of International Relations



Office of International Relations staff with virtual backgrounds from their favorite international locations.
Not pictured, Matt Lutkenhouse. Photo: Smithsonian Office of International Relations

OUR MISSION + VISION

Greater Reach. Greater Relevance. Profound Impact.

These ideas guide the Smithsonian in its ambitious mission to pursue “the increase and diffusion of knowledge” for all people. Working on all seven continents and in more than 140 countries, we are a truly global organization uniquely positioned to harness the collective power of the world’s knowledge, creativity, and innovation.

"The breadth of the Smithsonian is part of the wonder of it."

— Lonnie G. Bunch III, 14th Secretary of the Smithsonian

The Office of International Relations works to support the Institution's mandate by linking the deep expertise of the Smithsonian's body of researchers, curators, educators, and professionals with partners and colleagues around the planet. It is through our collections, research, and strategic partnerships that the Smithsonian can most effectively address our world's increasingly complex challenges—and also stimulate meaningful, lasting impact both at home and across the globe.

OIR works to fulfill its mission in four priority areas:

- **Leading Smithsonian Global Engagement**
- **Promoting Smithsonian Global Thought Leadership**
- **Supporting Smithsonian Global Programs**
- **Coordinating Smithsonian Global Operations**



Publication packages labeled with foreign country destination, early 1900s.
Photo: Smithsonian Archives

LEADING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

“The worth and importance of the Institution is not to be estimated by what it accumulates within the walls of its building, but by what it sends forth to the world.”

— *Joseph Henry, First Secretary of the Smithsonian (1850)*

When we at the Smithsonian Institution (SI) join together with our colleagues at home and abroad, we collectively transform big ideas into bold action and deeper impact.

To advance our mission of forging and strengthening international partnerships, OIR stewards many strategic relationships with key institutions, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and multilateral entities, and shares information across the Smithsonian about major international programs and priorities.

New Partnerships

In 2020, OIR continued to create and develop new international partnerships across the Smithsonian, including supporting the signing of multiple memoranda of understanding (MOUs).

Memoranda of Understanding with Brazil

The Smithsonian and **Brazil’s Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation** signed a new agreement to increase collaboration

across science, culture, and education. OIR helped spearhead negotiation of the broad agreement.

2021 will mark the 175th anniversary of the Smithsonian Institution, and throughout that history its connection with Brazil has been foundational. Some of the very first plant and animal specimens in SI’s collection came from early interest in Brazil’s rich natural diversity and culture. More than **500** Brazilian researchers over the past five decades



Smithsonian and Government of Brazil sign a new agreement on scientific, educational, and cultural cooperation.

Photo: Leonardo Marques - ASCOM / MCTI

have come to the Smithsonian as research associates, visiting researchers, fellows, and interns. In recent years, there have been more Brazilians conducting research at the Smithsonian than from any other country.

This MOU outlines opportunities for expanding cooperation through the sharing of STEM curriculum, professional exchange, and joint research opportunities. Currently, at least **14** Smithsonian units actively conduct work in Brazil and virtually all units have had some connection to it. OIR plans to host discussions in 2021 to convene stakeholders from across the Smithsonian to activate this new agreement.

A testament to many overlaps in research interests and expertise, Smithsonian researchers

have a long history of collaborations with **Brazil’s Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR)**. To further open up opportunities for grant funding and collaboration, OIR coordinated the development of a pan-Institutional MOU with UFPR, with input from multiple SI units. Aligned with UFPR’s university-wide “internationalization” program, this MOU will provide support to engage in research activities in diverse areas, including but not limited to: biodiversity and environment; bioscience and health; and democracy, culture, and development. The Smithsonian is eager to jointly identify opportunities to exchange knowledge, conduct groundbreaking research, and support both emerging and established professionals through this exciting university partnership.

Memorandum of Understanding with Qatar

In September, OIR, together with the Director of **Smithsonian’s Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery**, participated in the U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue, hosted by the U.S. Department of State. As part of this important bilateral event, OIR facilitated and announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Smithsonian, **Qatar Museums**, and the **Qatar Foundation**, with support from the **Embassy of Qatar**. This MOU supports collaborations on cultural, education, and exhibition exchange, as well as joint research and programming, with several Smithsonian units during and beyond Qatar’s 2021 Year of Culture initiative with the United States.

Developing a Theory of Change for Biodiversity Work in Peru

OIR is helping develop a Theory of Change for the Smithsonian’s biodiversity work in **Peru** aligned with current efforts underway to develop an International Strategic Framework that helps prioritize Smithsonian’s global activities. A Theory of Change identifies intermediate outcomes and the pathway required to achieve a desired long-term goal, in this case “healthy, resilient, and more productive land and seascapes”. Throughout the second half of 2020, OIR facilitated stimulating discussions among colleagues from the **Conservation Commons** (CC), the **National Zoo** (NZP) and **Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute** (SCBI), the **Smithsonian Environmental Research Center** (SERC), the **Smithsonian Marine Station** (SMS), and the **Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute** (STRI), confirming pan-Institutional interest in a wide range of potential research opportunities. Given the Institution’s significant and deep history in Peru, strong foundation for impact-driven work, and excellent in-country relationships, this Theory of Change will strengthen Smithsonian’s ability to compete for funded opportunities for work in the country. This process has also identified the varied stakeholders and partners who must be engaged in order to achieve desired outcomes, including Peruvian government entities, large international nonprofits, local co-ops, university and academic institutions, the donor and private sector, and other relevant organizations.



A jaguar caught on camera in August 2018 as part of a Center for Conservation and Sustainability wildlife monitoring program in Peru. Photo: Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute

International Strategic Framework

OIR had a busy year leading the development of the Institution’s first International Strategic Framework. This Framework will identify aims and objectives, establish strategic areas of work, and set a clear vision and purpose for the full spectrum of the Smithsonian’s global activities, relationships, and communications. Intended to be a collection of resources, the Framework will provide direction and support to Smithsonian colleagues in designing, planning, undertaking, and evaluating international work. The Framework creates opportunities for knowledge sharing and consistency – as One Smithsonian – while maintaining the freedom of individual experts and units to be curious, flexible, and responsive in our global work. Focus groups and interviews have been an essential part of the process for gathering ideas and feedback from individuals across the Institution to inform and shape the Framework, and OIR is grateful to these colleagues for their thoughtful input. We look forward to rolling out the finalized Framework in 2021.

At A Glance: International Strategic Framework

- Conducted 25 interviews with 51 individuals from 30 units
- Convened 5 focus groups with 76 individuals from nearly 40 units, consisting of directors, principal investigators, and key staff from enabling units
- And more focus groups and consultations to come in 2021

PROMOTING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

With thousands of scientists, curators, researchers, historians, and scholars, the Smithsonian is a deep repository and generator of knowledge. Our world-class professionals are a trusted source of expertise, inspiration, and innovation.

That reputation enables us, as an institution, to stimulate discussions around the big questions that affect us all. Working closely with Smithsonian leadership, OIR facilitates conversations on these critical issues between our experts and partners around the globe, with the aim of multiplying success, enacting sustainable change, and turning ideas into reality.

OIR brings Smithsonian expertise to critical platforms and global stages where we can move the needle on issues as diverse as climate change, accessibility, biodiversity conservation, and cultural heritage protection.



The Smithsonian Global website shares stories from across the Institution with key international partners, and features **42** projects, **17** videos, and **75** staff from across the Smithsonian.



This page: From the video *The Heartbeat*, featuring the Salmon and People project. Photo: Smithsonian Global
Facing page: From the *Helping Recover and Preserve Cultural Heritage in Iraq* video. Photo: Smithsonian Global

Smithsonian Global Website Refresh and Video Series

In 2020, OIR began a refresh of the [Smithsonian Global](#) (SI Global) website which highlights international programs and activities from across the Institution. Once complete, the site will be even more intuitive and relevant to the needs of the public, partners, and the greater Smithsonian.

The SI Global **International Video Series** continues to expand its reach, highlighting some of the impact of the Smithsonian’s work around the world and featuring projects from across museums, disciplines, and continents. **Nine** SI Global conservation-focused videos were featured in the 2020 **Earth Optimism Summit**, as well as part of an [educational tv series](#) for students in **Indonesia**. *The Heartbeat* video, highlighting salmon ecosystem research in Alaska and made in partnership with the Smithsonian’s **Working Land and Seascapes Initiative**, was featured in the 2020 **Environmental Film Festival in the Nation’s Capital**.

World Economic Forum Partnership

Our multiyear partnership with the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** continues to expand year-round and connect SI to the pressing challenges facing our people and our planet.

In Davos, Switzerland, in January 2020, an interactive adaptation of the **Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum's NATURE Triennial** at the **Forum's Annual Meeting** highlighted the massive potential of working with nature as a partner in economic production, using natural materials and decisively low-tech approaches to revitalize agriculture, industry, and the labor economy. The exhibition was featured for 3,000 government leaders, heads of state, CEOs of corporations and foundations, and influential thinkers, creating opportunities to reflect on nature, sustainability, and design, and offered a hopeful message tied to Earth Optimism, SI's signature conservation initiative.

The unprecedented challenges we faced in 2020 inspired a wave of rethinking around the Smithsonian, and the WEF thought leadership platforms amplified our Institutional messaging to a global audience. In **three** pieces published on the WEF's Agenda platform, **Secretary Lonnie Bunch** [contextualized](#) the civil unrest unfolding across the U.S. against the historic backdrop of systemic racism, while **Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History** Curator Nick Pyenson and **Conservation X** founder Alex Deghan [wrote](#) of science as a source of hope for the future in cosmically dark times, and **Smithsonian Global Health Program** Director Suzan Murray [answered questions](#) on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our ongoing partnership with the World Economic Forum enables the Smithsonian to showcase our thinking, writing, and research to a diverse audience of more than 100 million people engaged in-person and online year-round.

Totomoxle featured in the *Partnering with Nature* exhibition at Davos.
Photo: World Economic Forum / Valeriano Di Domenico



Host Yohanis Lamere talks with Dr. Amy Johnson in episode five of EOTV, a special broadcast series created during the pandemic to reach Indonesian students. In "Living with Elephants and other Species!" Dr. Johnson answered student questions about how scientists and communities work together to prevent human-animal conflict.
Photo: Earth Optimism TV

Earth Optimism TV

[Earth Optimism TV](#) (EOTV) Indonesia is a ten-episode series created as a rapid response project to deliver Smithsonian educational content to millions of Indonesian students during school closures due to COVID-19. The world's fourth largest country spread out over 6,000 islands, Indonesia identified a national educational TV broadcast as the best solution for reaching students and were in search of content suitable for broadcast on a public platform. Through a partnership between OIR, the SI **Earth Optimism** and **Conservation Commons** teams, the **Ministry of Education of Indonesia**, and the **U.S. Embassy in Jakarta**, the TV series was created in record time. Working across SI units, and with the production team from the 2020 Earth Optimism summit, OIR helped share stories of conservation success with youth audiences. Smithsonian scientists answered questions from Indonesian students across the country, moderated by an Indonesian student involved with an SI youth leadership program. Educational resource guides were created for each episode by the **Smithsonian Science Education Center** to support teachers in activating the material. The series ran through December 2020 and teacher engagement sessions on conservation topics will continue in the lead up to Earth Day 2021.

SUPPORTING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL PROGRAMS

Smithsonian programs span the globe, taking place in over 140 countries. Through understanding the priorities of our museums and research centers, OIR aims to expand institutional opportunities and engagement in relevant regions and countries.

Conservation Commons

The Smithsonian's **Conservation Commons** (CC) is an action network that was founded to link conservation science, practice and expertise from across the Institution, and aims to elevate SI research and develop solutions around key issues affecting the health and wellbeing of people and nature. With continued OIR support, CC is making exciting progress in building and activating a growing network of hundreds of internal and external conservation scientists, practitioners, and researchers.

Much of the past year has focused on the sustainability of CC, aligning its work with SI priorities to ensure continuity and longevity of this solutions-oriented initiative. Via CC's three action areas, nearly **\$1 million** in grants and opportunities has been distributed to elevate research and build greater visibility of SI's and SI partners' work in **Peru, Brazil, Malaysia, Kenya, and Gabon**, among other

key countries where Smithsonian has an active presence and partnerships on the ground.

Earth Optimism

A flagship initiative of the Smithsonian Conservation Commons, Earth Optimism is a global movement focused on changing the conservation conversation from "doom and gloom" to "optimism and opportunity." Through the art of storytelling, this movement focuses on sharing solutions around scientific data, discovery, and community-led interventions about environmental conservation, sustainability, and climate successes with audiences around the world.

In April 2020, the Conservation Commons, with the support of OIR, hosted the **2020 Earth Optimism Digital Summit**, marking the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day. The



The Director of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Sabrina Lynn Motley leads a discussion on environmental justice and hope for the future with Queen Quet, Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation; Fred Tutman, Riverkeeper, and Dejah Powell, Sunrise Movement. (left to right). Photo: Earth Optimism

Summit featured a series of conversations with more than **180** speakers from over **20** countries and films from around the world reaching **50,000** online viewers from **171** countries. The Summit had **241** news mentions, reaching a potential audience of over **440 million**. Social media alone engaged **19 million** users.

To further strengthen the impact of the event, OIR coordinated Corridor Conversations with U.S. embassies in several countries including **Trinidad and Tobago, Peru, and Indonesia** – virtual side events that featured SI scientists and local experts on topics such as sustainable food,

coral reef restoration, and marine conservation. About **1,200** people participated in the Corridor Conversations presenting a great opportunity to follow up and build relationships internationally. OIR also led a Global Earth Optimism working group that provided coordination of **50** Sister Events with partners from around the globe. Along with the Summit itself, over **25** Smithsonian units planned nearly **200** Earth Optimism-themed public programs in 2020, an indication of how well this "One Smithsonian" message resonates with the entire Institution and its audiences.

At A Glance: Earth Optimism Summit

- **180 speakers from over 20 countries**
- **50,000 online viewers from 171 countries**
- **241 news mentions and social media engagement from 19 million users**

Iraq Cultural Heritage Project

Smithsonian’s Iraq Team – consisting of staff from the **Museum Conservation Institute** (MCI), **Cultural Rescue Initiative** (SCRI), and OIR – faced a challenging year for in-person engagement. Despite these issues, the Iraq Team managed to keep relationships in Iraq strong and to remain trusted partners for the Iraqi cultural heritage establishment. At the very end of 2019, MCI wrapped up nine weeks of a “Fundamentals of Heritage Conservation” course at the **Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage** (IICAH). SI kept up with students and Iraqi teaching assistants throughout 2020 by email and through social media. Remotely, SI also supported continued efforts to stabilize and recover the **ancient city of Nimrud** and looks forward to two more years of collaborative recovery work, supported through a new **U.S. Department of State**-funded grant.

Recovery of the Mosul Cultural Museum

The rebuilding of the **Mosul Cultural Museum** (MCM) remains an important signal of Iraq’s recovery following the destruction wrought by ISIS. SI’s Iraq Team continued to work with the **Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage**, the **IICAH**, and the staff of the MCM – in partnership with the **Louvre Museum**, the **World Monuments Fund**, and with support from ALIPH (the **International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas**) – to move towards reopening. Now in the process of designing a museum training program, SI’s Iraq Team continues to build on well-established relationships with Iraqi colleagues to support this important institution.

Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative

Mission Bahamas: Collaboration to Save Heritage after Hurricane Dorian

The Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI) is a recognized global leader in disaster response for cultural heritage. When local infrastructure is overwhelmed by a disaster, SCRI works with local organizations to help keep sites and collections accessible for the future. A five-member Smithsonian team that included representation from the **Smithsonian Libraries** traveled to the **Bahamas** to conduct preliminary damage assessments after Hurricane Dorian in 2019. The team visited close to **20** sites affiliated with the **National Art Gallery of The Bahamas** and the **National Museum of The Bahamas, Antiquities, Monuments and Museum Corporation**. The collaboration was enriched by the Smithsonian’s relationship with the Bahamian cultural community, built when the **Smithsonian Folklife Festival** featured the Bahamas in 1994. The team worked with local heritage stewards to save and secure paintings, historical artifacts, books, photographs, and other collection items that represent the islands’ culture and history. The mission concluded with a commitment to continue the project.

Investing in the Next Generation: First Aid for Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis Course (FAC)

A consistent and routine practice of preparedness is the most effective means of preventing cultural damage and loss. To develop this capacity, the FAC course trains professionals from around the world in what to do before, during, and after a crisis. Organized by the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative, **ICCROM**, and the **Prince Claus Fund**, **16** participants from **14** countries came together to work in Rome and Norcia, **Italy**. Participants engaged with world-class faculty, mentors experienced in emergency response, and coursework loaded with practical knowledge. The classroom sessions were underscored by hands-on learning experiences in the earthquake-impacted town of Norcia and a final simulation exercise in Rome. The participants now belong to a global FAC alumni network and use the knowledge learned to benefit their home countries.



Facing page: Cori Wegener (*right*, SCRI Director) and Rebecca Kennedy (*left*, SI Contractor/ Curae Collections Care) look through collections at the Albert Lowe Museum in Green Turtle Cay, Abaco, Bahamas.
Photo: Kate Wagner/Smithsonian

Virtual Museum Roundtable

OIR, in partnership with colleagues from the **Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History**, **Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden**, the **Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access**, the **Museum of Bogotá**, and the **Museum of Contemporary Art of the Republic of Srpska**, organized a virtual roundtable meeting in June to discuss how museums are using digital resources to reach and engage audiences while many museums around the world are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program highlighted perspectives from the **United States**, **Colombia**, and **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and served as a virtual space for **45** educators, curators, digital engagement managers, and other museum professionals from **13** countries to share ideas and specific tactical suggestions to help museums stay relevant and reach diverse audiences during the time of COVID-19 and beyond. OIR looks forward to facilitating more exchanges that contribute to international networks of practice.

Comments from Virtual Museum Roundtable participant evaluations:

- “Thank you for hosting us for the virtual round table. It was indeed an eye opener getting to learn from one another what they are doing during these tough times for the museums. Looking forward to attending more of these!”
- “A very good initiative and excellent opportunity to listen to the voices of museum professionals from different parts of the world and come up with ideas together in this special context of COVID.”



Nane Asatryan, Deputy Governor of Vayots Dzor, opening the Yeghegnadzor International Conference.
Photo: My Armenia Program

My Armenia Program

In 2020 the Smithsonian continued its work with the **My Armenia Program** (MAP) and received a formal extension through 2021 for the program’s final year. MAP is a six-year interagency agreement with the **United States Agency for International Development** (USAID) that aims to build and strengthen cultural heritage tourism in Armenia through research, documentation, and storytelling.

Started in 2015 and jointly managed by OIR and the **Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage** (CFCH), MAP continued to build on the success of previous years by providing material and technical support to local museums, festivals, guides, and artisans. In 2020 MAP worked toward its goals for program sustainability through initiatives such as the **Destination Management Organization (DMO) Development Virtual Learning Program**, which brought together more than **50** key stakeholders from MAP’s five target regions to learn about creating and maintaining a successful DMO.

In March 2020, MAP worked with local partners to implement the first **Yeghegnadzor International Conference**, which brought together **20+** leading scholars from different disciplines to present their latest research findings about the Vayots Dzor region’s historical and cultural heritage.

Following the global spread of COVID-19, MAP quickly pivoted to remote work aimed at maintaining program gains and supporting local beneficiaries and partners to withstand and recover from the impact of COVID-19.

Spotlight: Building the Capacity of International Museum Colleagues

How the reciprocal exchange of museum best practices can strengthen the global cultural sector



During this virtual session, NMAI colleague Marielba Alvarez provides an overview of public affairs strategies and community bilingual outreach. Photo: Sara De La Torre Beron

Virtual Speaker Series with Argentinian Colleagues

Building off of a productive and long-standing relationship with the **U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires** and **Argentina's Ministry of Culture**, OIR developed an engaging **eight-session** speaker series. Aimed at connecting **37** diverse participants from Argentinian museums and cultural institutes and Smithsonian leaders from the **National Museum of American History**, **National Museum of the American Indian**, **Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service**, and **Smithsonian Latino Center**, sessions focused on best practices ranging from engaging youth audiences to developing educational programming. Smithsonian experts led animated discussions on creative approaches and solutions, both digital and analog, to shared challenges—particularly ways Smithsonian and Argentinian institutions have adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Taking place each week during October and November 2020, the series provided an opportunity for continual connection, reciprocal learning, strengthening of professional networks, and room to imagine future collaborations.



Michael Lawrence, Assistant Director for Exhibitions at NMNH, discusses the importance of designing exhibitions for a wide variety of visitors. Photo: Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History | Office of Exhibits

Virtual Capacity Building for Uzbek Colleagues

As part of OIR's collaboration on the **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's** Integrated Cultural Heritage Framework in Khiva, **Uzbekistan**, OIR, alongside staff from the **Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute**, **Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture**, **Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian**, **Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History**, and **Smithsonian's Office of Protective Services**, hosted a **three-part** virtual capacity building series to facilitate professional dialogue and exchange with **17** staff from the **Ichan Qala State Reserve Museum** and **three** representatives from the **Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan**. Smithsonian colleagues hosted sessions focused on collections care and preservation, exhibitions and interpretation, and security and risk mitigation, each expanding upon findings from a 2019 Smithsonian site assessment of Ichan Qala.

COORDINATING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL OPERATIONS

The Smithsonian plays a critical role in safely sending our scholars and experts abroad while welcoming international colleagues and visitors to our Institution.

Global Activities Tracking Process

In 2020, OIR worked closely with the **Office of Sponsored Projects** (OSP), the **Office of the General Counsel** (OGC), and the **Offices of the Under Secretaries** to develop a uniform method for the tracking of global activities undertaken across the Institution, as well as criteria for activities that will benefit from Under Secretary review. Together, these units form the **Global Activities Committee**, which began piloting the process in late 2020 and anticipate an official roll-out in coordination with the new **International Strategic Framework** in the spring of 2021. The new process will allow for greater transparency and recognition of the breadth of global work occurring at SI, as well as provide a platform for mission-enabling units to provide coordinated program support and risk management.

Official and Diplomatic International Visits

While COVID-19 and resulting travel limitations greatly reduced international delegation visits to the Smithsonian, OIR was pleased to find ways to creatively connect SI and international colleagues through virtual conversations and panel discussions. Last year, OIR coordinated **15** international delegation requests representing more than **200** visitors from **15** countries with **14** Smithsonian museums and units. We look forward to welcoming in-person groups to the Smithsonian again soon.



Christine Kreamer, Deputy Director and Chief Curator at the National Museum of African Art (*center*), hosts an in-gallery meeting with a group of museum and cultural sector professionals from Oman through the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). Photo: Lauren Appelbaum

J-1 Exchange Visitor Program

OIR manages the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, a **visa program** that enables foreign researchers to travel to the Smithsonian to collaborate with our curators, scholars, scientists, and practitioners. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, **160** J-1 Scholars representing over **40** countries participated in programs sponsored by the Smithsonian, with **55** new programs begun. The Smithsonian also sponsored other visa types in 2019, with the most sizable population represented by H-1B visa holders. More than **30** individuals holding H-1B status were working at Smithsonian in FY2020.

Like many other SI initiatives, our ability to

invite foreign national fellows, interns, and staff was adversely affected by COVID-19. Depending on the metric used, we saw about 20-33% of our normal volume of exchange visitors.

The reduced volume has given OIR an opportunity to assess how we track important information and allowed OIR to streamline communications moving forward. In 2021, SI colleagues will see an improved Prism intranet site for internal knowledge sharing, improved pre-arrival communication for our scholars, and, hopefully, a return to a diverse onsite community.