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NEW CURATORS STRENGTHEN MUSEUM'S COMMITMENT TO SCIENCE, HISTORY

Since 1968, the Museum's name has said "science" and "history" – and this year, the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History strengthened its focus in each area by expanding its curatorial staff.

Dr. Gene Allen Smith, a professor of early American history at Texas Christian University, has joined the Museum's staff as its Curator of History. Dr. Aaron D. Pan, a doctoral graduate of Southern Methodist University's Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences, is the Museum's new Curator of Science. Both curators were named following national searches.

The addition of two doctoral-level curators is a first for the Museum, says President Van A. Romans. "Dr. Smith's work will greatly expand our attention to Western culture and our renewed commitment to history," says Romans, "while Dr. Pan will help further solidify and advance the Museum's national reputation as a leader in informal science education as we prepare for a new era in a new facility."

The two curators are charged with developing programs for the Museum's public and school audiences and managing the care of the Museum's extensive collections, which include more than 150,000 scientific specimens and cultural artifacts. Drs. Smith and Pan will also work extensively with community stakeholders – including educators, historians and researchers – to further develop collaborations on joint programming, says Charlie Walter, the Museum's chief operating officer.

"We're excited to have two experienced curators who will deepen our connection to the community with public programs," says Walter. "And at the same time, their work with their respective universities offers the Museum a tremendous opportunity to further enhance our academic collaborations with both."

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Smith, who received both his undergraduate, Masters and Ph.D. degrees at Auburn University, comes to the Museum through a joint appointment that will allow him to continue his professorial duties at TCU, where he teaches U.S. survey history and courses on early American history, and focuses on Texas history as director of the Center for Texas Studies.

With a focus on Jeffersonian politics and military policy, the Alabama native has authored six books and several smaller projects – and has received internal research awards from Montana State University-Billings and TCU, as well as fellowships from the Henry E. Huntington Library, the Virginia Historical Society, the U.S. Department of the Navy, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Pan, an Amarillo native, completed his undergraduate work in biology at the University of California Santa Barbara and received his doctorate in Geology at SMU, where he served most recently as Postdoctoral Fellow.

“Aaron brings a strong background and interest in a broad array of sciences as well as experience managing collections,” Walter says. That experience includes curatorial work at SMU, and at the Natural History Museum in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. His lab and field work includes the collection of plant fossils from North America and Ethiopia.

The two curators join a curatorial staff that includes Bill Voss, Curator Emeritus. Voss retired in 2002 after 35 years of Museum service, but continues to support the Museum’s efforts as an advisor on its exhibits and programs.

About the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History

Dedicated to life-long learning and anchored by its rich collections, the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History engages its diverse community through creative, vibrant programs and exhibits interpreting science and the history of Texas and the Southwest. Since the mid-1980s, the Museum has annually welcomed nearly a million visitors annually, making it one of the most popular cultural attractions in North Texas.

The Museum is currently in the process of building a new facility in the heart of Fort Worth’s Cultural District. The world-class facility, designed by internationally renowned architects, Legorreta+Legorreta, will open in the Fall of 2009 and feature a collection of new exhibits and programs developed by the Museum’s staff and a team of nationally recognized designers.

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