

# ESA HISTORICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE

(ESTABLISHED 1944)

## NEWSLETTER

*Resources for the history of the Ecological Society of America  
and the history of ecology and allied sciences*

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### ***Focus on Ecologists: A Snapshot of ESA in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

Doug Sprugel reports on an ongoing project to recover profiles of ecologists from an “Ecologist Directory” maintained by the ESA Education Office in 2004-2005. In 2009-2010 more stories were recorded and the name was changed to “Focus on Ecologists.” Doug has retrieved these stories from archive sites, and he and Sally White have posted them, along with background on the project’s history, on the HRC website under “Personal Accounts” at:

<http://esa.org/history/biographies/ecologist-directory/>.

Several ESA award winners were profiled, but the project was also meant to capture the career paths of a wide diversity of people. Participants discuss how they got started in ecology, who influenced them, what they were currently doing, what advice they had for students, and what advice they had about communicating to the public. Current students, active scientists, and retirees were included. Various academic fields were represented, as well as state and federal agency employees, consultants, and ESA staff. American as well as international scientists were profiled. Over 120 personal accounts were available from this project.

Doug believes that almost anyone contemplating ecology as a career should be able to find someone

in this group with similar goals and interests. New profiles will be added occasionally.

The entries provide insight into the early experiences that led people into ecology, with childhood outdoor experiences being high on the list. Charles Nilon (University of Missouri, Columbia MO) recalled that his father took him to the natural history exhibit at the University of Colorado Museum every Saturday for about four years. That plus various outdoor activities prepared him to recognize, later in college, that a career in wildlife ecology was what he wanted.

Several ecologists emphasized the importance of communicating to the public. Rodolfo Dirzo (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) commented that dissemination of information to the public “is a crucial responsibility that we as ecologists have. Sometimes ecologists do not have the time or talent to do this, but it is a major need for the future.” Margaret Palmer (University of Maryland) cautioned that ecologists should think about communicating in a positive way, suggesting alternatives and not only offering critiques. She advised that it was vital to pay attention to the audience, giving people time to absorb and understand the science, while teaching them the distinction between ecological *science* and environmental policy.

Together, these profiles provide a snapshot of ESA and ecology in the period 2004-2010. Engagement with natural history during childhood stands out as crucial to the formation of an ecologist. But another

er is the willingness to be broadly educated, or as William Reiners put it, “never stop growing.”

### ***The Archive Trail: Exploring ArchiveGrid***

Conversations held in Ft. Lauderdale after our Organized Oral Session on “The Importance of History and Historical Records as Ecologists Confront the Anthropocene” raised a number of questions about identifying archival sources, including ecologists’ papers and historical photographs.

Recent library initiatives are making it increasingly easy for those interested in the history of ecology to find archival materials. An impressive, relatively new union catalog of archival sources is called **ArchiveGrid**, which currently has more than four million archival records from over one thousand archival institutions.

ArchiveGrid is a research project of the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). This is a global library cooperative that supports libraries in making information accessible and useful to people around the world. ArchiveGrid started in the late-1990s and was at first intended for faculty, college students, and genealogists. A study done in 2012 showed that primary source research was important also for many other people. What began as a subscription-based service switched to a freely available service in January 2013. For information about ArchiveGrid consult the FAQ page at: <https://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/about/>

Before ArchiveGrid, we would have consulted the online union catalog **WorldCat** to find archives. WorldCat is the world’s most comprehensive database for library collections of all kinds, including published, archival, and audiovisual materials. Faculty and students can access WorldCat from their institution’s library, but free access to WorldCat is also available at: [www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org). ArchiveGrid harvests this source to obtain about 90 percent of its records.

One of the great features of ArchiveGrid is its ability to pull up multiple sources that might be of interest to researchers. To get started on a search, go to ArchiveGrid’s homepage:

<https://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/> where a search can be done by geographic region or by keyword. If, for instance, we type “Victor Shelford” in the search box, we find 29 archival records, including Shelford’s papers at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, but also other records that contain correspondence or other material related to Shelford, such as the papers of Wilbur M. Luce at the Library of Congress, and the papers of George Fell at the University of Illinois. ArchiveGrid also provides links to online finding aids, as well as contact information for the libraries. With ArchiveGrid one can locate collections more efficiently than by doing a search on WorldCat.

A broader keyword search with a regional focus -- forestry North Carolina -- generated 500 records, including some rich photograph and slide collections at the Forest History Society in Durham, NC. A couple of these collections drew our attention. Clarence F. Korstian, former president of ESA and first Dean of Duke University’s School of Forestry, left an impressive glass slide collection at Duke University, containing over 900 images dating from the 1910s to the 1960s, which depict forestry practices throughout the United States. [For information:

<https://fhsarchives.wordpress.com/tag/clarence-f-korstian/> ]

The Society also has the Alvin J. Huss archives, a collection of photographs, slides, negatives, plates, and films documenting human interactions with the environment, mostly from the 1920s to 1960s in the United States. Part of this collection is being digitized. Information is available on the Forest History Society’s website:

<http://www.foresthistory.org/research/photos.htm>  
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Whether you have a specific person in mind or are searching more broadly for an ecological or environmental subject, **ArchiveGrid** is a great place to

start your search, but it does not contain everything. Sometimes a little detective work is needed to locate a collection, as we found with Robert Burgess's map collection, profiled below.

***Spotlight on Collections: The Burgess Map Collection, University of Syracuse***

Robert Lewis Burgess (1931-2002) (right), a former member of the Historical Records Committee, had keen interest in the history of ecology and of ESA. He was also an inveterate collector of historical and recent maps and atlases from around the world. From Orié Loucks' obituary in the *ESA Bulletin* (April 2007), we learned that his map collection is housed at the University of Syracuse's Bird Library. Searching for a "Robert Lewis Burgess" collection on ArchiveGrid and elsewhere led nowhere, so we contacted the library directly. John Olsen, Librarian for Government and Geo-Information, sent instructions to go to their "Classic Catalog" and do an advanced search with "Burgess" as keyword, while selecting "local note" from the drop down menu at this site:

<http://summit.syr.edu/vwebv/searchAdvanced>

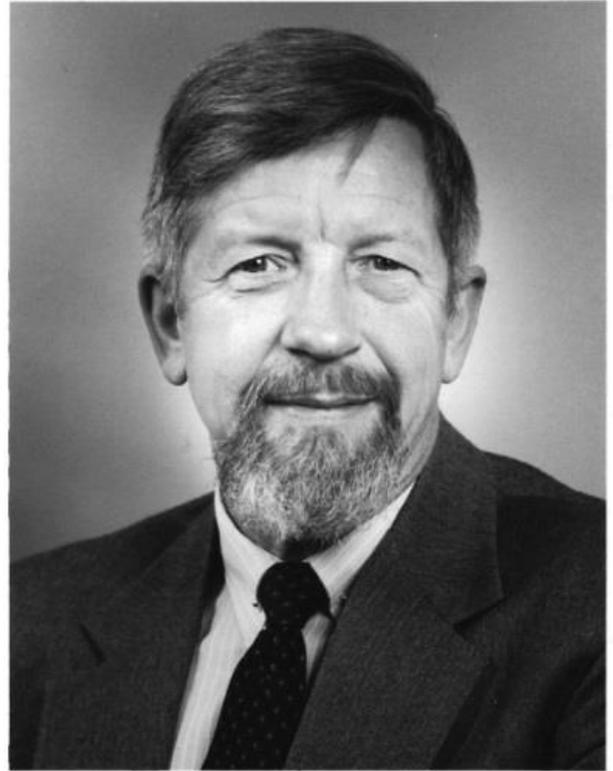
This search generated over 500 catalog entries, the bulk of which are from the Robert Burgess Global Vegetation Map Collection. The collection is extraordinarily diverse and includes maps on marine resources, the impact of human activities, and environmental conditions around the world.

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***Donating your Records to a Repository:  
Tips from the Experts***

Orié Loucks noted that Robert Burgess "constantly reminded ESA's leaders of the need to preserve the records of early ecologists and their working environment." But ecologists today should also be thinking about preserving their records and donating them to a repository. It can be daunting to approach this task. There are helpful websites created by archivists that provide advice on where to

start. One is this site from the Society of American Archivists, called "Donating Your Personal or Family Records to a Repository" at:

<http://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/donating-familyrecs>



Robert Lewis Burgess

The HRC newsletter is a quarterly and welcomes contributions from HRC members and friends. Please send Newsletter items to Sharon Kingsland at [sharon@jhu.edu](mailto:sharon@jhu.edu)