

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*

No. 10

July 2017

Historical Themes at ESA's Annual Meeting, Portland, August 6-11, 2017

The Historical Records Committee's Special Session, "Saving Historical Records: Challenges for Ecology and Its Historians in the 21st Century," will be on Monday from 8-10 p.m. in A106, Oregon Convention Center. Organized by Juliana Mulroy, with co-organizers Alan P. Covich, Charles H. Nilon, Frederick J. Swanson, Thomas W. Mulroy, and Sharon Kingsland.

The session invites meeting attendees to share ideas about the opportunities and challenges involved in documenting the history not only of ESA, but also of ecology in all its diverse aspects. Many kinds of records are needed for a full history of ecological disciplines, and the session casts a wide net.

What records should we focus on preserving, and with what priority? What are the key obstacles to preservation and how can they be overcome? We envision this session as an opportunity to brainstorm and develop ideas about the future of the history of ecological science. We hope that ideas generated will engage with scientists and historians of science in equal measure, and prepare us for the challenges of 21st-century historical record-keeping. We invite participants to contribute ideas that will help ensure that future historians will be able to understand the range of practices and perspectives that make up the ecological sciences.

These Symposia also include historical themes:

- Symposium 16: International Collaboration in Ecology: Common Keys to Success (Thursday, 9-11:30 a.m.)
- Symposium 19: 20 Years of Insights into Social-Ecological Research from the Two Urban LTER Sites (Thursday, 1:30-5:00 p.m.)

Linking Ecology to the Arts and Humanities: A Challenge for Historical Preservation

Fred Swanson, one of our session co-organizers, raised important points about historical preservation in a recent article on the "Confluence of arts, humanities, and science at sites of long-term ecological inquiry" [*Ecosphere* 6 (8) (August 2015): 1-23.] His essay was commissioned as part of the celebration of ESA's Centennial in 2015, and was meant in part to suggest new roles ESA might have as it enters its second century. Swanson focused on links between ecology and the arts and humanities at various sites of long-

term, place-based ecological inquiry. In many locations, including several Long-Term Ecological Research sites, there are vibrant arts and humanities programs that have led to diverse forms of public engagement, with projects featuring creative writing, art exhibits, music, theater, and dance.

Swanson estimated that there were about 100 sites in the US that had some form of arts/humanities programs with commitment to environmental research and education. But he cautioned that “intensive ecology-arts-humanities collaborations face several immediate challenges.” One of these is the preservation of a historical record and archive of these activities and collaborations. Where scientific research has clear protocols for information management, including “secure archiving, high standards for quality control, clear cataloging and documentation, and public access,” Swanson noted that “no analogous system for archiving and access exists for arts and humanities works, which can be considered forms of ‘cultural data’ that form a growing record of artistic, contemplative, and scholarly reflections documenting society’s engagement with the natural world.” Because these arts-humanities-ecology collaborations are poorly documented, Swanson observed, they have been little studied.

(At the Portland meeting, IGN-7 explores “Ecological Art-Science Collaborations” on Tuesday, 10-11:30 a.m.)

Ecology and Art: Celebrating Eugene and Martha Odum’s Legacy at the University of Georgia

The University of Georgia, where ESA’s papers are located, is celebrating anniversaries of the establishment of the Institute of Ecology in 1967 and the Odum School of Ecology in 2007. As part of the celebration, the Hargrett Library is hosting a special exhibition, June to October 2017, of papers, journals, photographs and other memorabilia connected to Eugene Odum’s work. (Below, the John and Alice Tyler Ecology Award, which Odum received in 1977, on exhibit).



An exhibit at the Georgia Museum of Art, running from October to December, pays tribute to the artistic work of Gene Odum’s wife, Martha Odum, with selections of her watercolor landscapes and works in silver that were inspired by plant and animal forms. The Georgia Museum of Art published Martha and Eugene Odum’s book, *The Essence of Place*, in 2000. Gene’s commentary linked Martha’s watercolors to an ecological understanding of the world. “Martha Odum: Art Intersects Ecology” at: <https://georgiamuseum.org/art/exhibitions/upcoming/martha-odum-art-intersects-ecology>

Please send news items or suggestions at any time to Sharon Kingsland (sharon@jhu.edu).