



# MUSEUM NEWS

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## NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY NAMES NEW VICE PRESIDENT OF RESEARCH AND COLLECTIONS

*John Long Joins Team in Transforming the Museum Experience for Visitors, and  
Bringing Work of Researchers and Scientists to Life for the Public*



*Evolutionary paleontologist Dr. John Long has been named head of the Museum's Research and Collections*

**September 16, 2009**—The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County has named Australian paleontologist Dr. John Long as its new Vice President of Research and Collections. The Museum, which has one of the world's most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history with more than 35 million objects and specimens — some as old as 4.5 billion years old — is undergoing a complete transformation of its buildings, as well as its approach to activating its research and collections to enhance the visitor experience. Dr. Long, who begins his new appointment today, will be a key figure in this transformation. He previously served as Head of Sciences for the Museum Victoria in Melbourne, Australia, a position he held for five years.

“John Long comes to the Natural History Museum after an international search,” says Dr. Jane Pisano, the Museum's President and Director. “An eminent scholar, author of books for both popular audiences and children, and an experienced manager, Dr. Long is a superbly qualified leader. He is committed to engaging the broadest possible audience in scientific discoveries and stewardship of our living Earth.”

In his new position, Dr. Long will lead the curatorial staffs and collection stewardship at the Museum in Exposition Park, the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits, and the William S. Hart Park and Museum, engendering excitement and conveying the relevance of the staff's discoveries and scholarly work to the public. The Museum's Research and Collections Department conducts original scientific, anthropological, and historical research, and preserves and manages the Museum's extensive collections ranging from dinosaur and mammal fossils to gems and archaeological treasures from Latin America. Long is recognized for his acuity in integrating the scientific research of an institution into the visiting public's experience, making him a perfect fit for the Museum at this point in time.

The Museum is currently renovating existing facilities, opening new galleries and exhibition halls, and developing new interactive exhibits and educational programming. Supporting all of those is the curatorial staff, who will work increasingly to tell the “big picture” behind the objects and specimens on exhibit — how they were discovered and prepared, and how they play into complicated topics like climate change and evolution. Most immediately Long will play a key role in the completion of the new *Age of Mammals* exhibit set to open in July 2010, and *Dinosaur Mysteries* exhibit scheduled to open in July 2011.

“Every museum has its specialty. We want to be the museum that best communicates science to the public,” Long says. “It's about taking the research to different forums and platforms, to the general public, schools, and to the world.”

San Francisco-based m/Oppenheim Associates, specialists in non-profit job placement, conducted the job search.

### **Biographical Information**

Dr. Long was born in Melbourne, where he began collecting fossils at the age seven. He was a quick study in paleontology: In 1971 he won the Victorian Science Talent Search major junior division prize for his work on fossils. He graduated with Ph.D. from Melbourne's Monash University in 1984, and spent six years as a postdoctoral researcher in paleontology at universities in Canberra, Perth and Tasmania before being appointed at the Western Australian Museum (located in Perth) in 1989 as Curator of Vertebrate Paleontology. In 2004 John returned to Melbourne as the new Head of Sciences for Museum Victoria. The following year, he was appointed an Adjunct Professor of Earth and Marine Sciences at the Australian National University.

Dr. Long's research has focused on the early evolution of vertebrates (fishes) as well as dinosaurs and general evolutionary theory. He has collected fossils in Antarctica, Africa, throughout Asia, and has worked extensively in North America and Europe and in every part of Australia. His expeditions to Antarctica are documented in his book *Mountains of Madness — A Journey through Antarctica* (Joseph Henry Press 2003). He has published over 200 scientific papers and general science articles, some 28 books, and has named more than 50 new species of prehistoric creatures. His most recent major papers contributed to solving some of the biggest problems in paleontology — what killed the Australian megafauna, how fish contributed to the origins of the first land animals, and three papers on the origins of sex in vertebrates (all five were published 2006-09 in the journal *Nature*).

In 2001 John won the prestigious Eureka Prize for the Public Promotion of Science. In 2003 he was awarded the Riversleigh Society Medal for promoting understanding of Australia's prehistoric past. In 2008, Dr. Long won the Australasian Science Prize for outstanding scientific research for his discovery of the world's oldest vertebrate embryos. This summer, he had two new children's book published: *The Big Picture Book of Human Civilization* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney) and *The Short but Tragic Life of Leo the Marsupial Lion* (WA Museum Publications).

### **Research and Collections Department**

The Museum's Research and Collections Department has approximately 55 staff that conduct original scientific, anthropological, and historical research at all three members of the Natural History Family — the Natural History Museum, the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits, and the William S. Hart Park and Museum.

Research and Collections is organized into five groups: Cultural Studies, the Dinosaur Institute, Invertebrate Studies, Vertebrate Studies and Collections Support. Research and Collections is also home to the Museum Archives, the Research Library, and a Scholarly Publications office. Within this structure, research is conducted in the following disciplines: Annelida (sea worms), Archaeology, Ethnology, Crustacea, Echinoderms, Entomology, Herpetology, History, Ichthyology, and Invertebrate Paleontology, Malacology, Mammalogy, Mineral Science, Ornithology, and Vertebrate Paleontology.

Dr. Long will actively pursue a strategy of integrating the work of Research and Collections into the visiting public's experience of the Museum. For the Museum to embrace and promote research activity, the research must increase human understanding of the history of the world and life on it, and be compelling for both scholars and the general public.

### **About the Natural History Museum**

The Natural History Museum's Board of Trustees has initiated a dynamic, long-term transformation of the institution designed to better position the Museum to fulfill its mission *to inspire wonder, discovery and responsibility in our natural and cultural worlds*. The Museum was the first dedicated museum building in Los Angeles, opening its doors in 1913. It has amassed one of the world's most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history — with more than 35 million objects, some as old as 4.5 billion years. The Natural History Family of Museums includes the NHM, the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits (Hancock Park/Mid-Wilshire), and the William S. Hart Park and Museum

(Newhall, California). The Family of Museums serves more than one million families and visitors annually, and is a national leader in research, exhibitions and education.

**NHM Next**

This spring's completed renovation of the Beaux-Arts 1913 Building has set the stage for the Museum's rollout of new visitor experiences leading up to the Museum's centennial in 2013. The milestone re-opening of the 1913 Building will begin in Summer 2010 with new exhibitions inside its iconic Rotunda and the *Age of Mammals* galleries. In Summer 2011, the Museum will open *Dinosaur Mysteries*, the highly-anticipated return of a dedicated dinosaur hall. *Under the Sun*, an exhibition focusing on the Southern California environmental history will open in Spring 2012.