Postdoctoral Fellowship in Anthropological Archives

The National Anthropological Archives (NAA) at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), Department of Anthropology is offering a 3-year postdoctoral fellowship that focuses on research within the NAA to establish methods, standards, and criteria for enhancing the discoverability of cultural anthropology data and materials within its holdings.

The NAA is the nation's largest archival repository dedicated exclusively to collecting and preserving records documenting the history of anthropology and cultures of the world. These collections represent a major investment of private and public scholarship relevant to ongoing scientific interests in anthropology and related fields. NAA materials are used by a wide variety of academic, citizen, and source community researchers to help answer questions that range from the communal (i.e., human-environmental relations) to the global (i.e., language endangerment). Despite their cultural and historical importance, these materials are not being used to their fullest potential. Discoverability and optimal use of the collections is hindered by archival descriptive practices that do not align well with current interests of anthropological scholars and other researchers. Recognizing this problem, the research carried out during this postdoctoral fellowship will help establish a better understanding of anthropological user needs and data-gathering practices that will inform improvements in the representation of archival materials. The postdoctoral fellow will help identify the needs and requirements of both archival custodians and researchers in an effort to improve archival descriptive practice and researcher success in discovery. Through user surveys and other means, research will consider the nature of contemporary anthropological inquiry and its archival legacy, the historical and current use of anthropological archives, and the analysis of how established archival practice may impede or enable discovery of these resources.

Roles and Responsibilities: This postdoctoral fellowship will be treated as a research position, with an expectation of productive research activity that will result in publications, conference and symposium presentations, and intellectual exchange with Smithsonian staff. During this three year project, the Fellow will initiate and develop research involving (1) past and present use and methods of discovery by researchers in the NAA; (2) past and present archival descriptive practice in the NAA and its impacts on discovery and use; and (3) current trends in the management of and access to digital anthropological research data. Results from these inquiries will inform revised and improved archival best practices for the description of anthropological archival material as well as create a forum for sustained conversation between archival researchers and custodians.

 As part of NMNH's Anthropology Department, the postdoctoral fellow will work with anthropologists and archivists to conduct research and develop policies that will improve discovery and use of anthropological archives. An interdisciplinary advisory team is being formed to help further guide this project. The postdoctoral fellow will have ample opportunity to interact with archivists and archival collections, anthropologists in all four fields, and hundreds of researchers from around the world in

numerous disciplines, as well as for active collaboration appropriate to the fellow's individual research interests. Research conducted by the fellow should engage the following questions:

- What are the roadblocks experienced by anthropological researchers in searching for information in the archives?
- How can archival descriptive practices better represent elements of the collection to increase discoverability by anthropological researchers?
- How can archivists more effectively involve anthropologists and source communities in the archival processes of collection representation?
- How can "traditional" archives such as the NAA better engage with emerging digital data repositories such as tDAR, AILLA, OLAC, and DELAMAN, and how can we best develop shared understandings of "archives," and "digital data"?

Location and supervision: The individual selected for this postdoctoral fellowship will be based at the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Museum Support Center, Suitland, Maryland. The fellow will conduct his/her work under the guidance of Dr. Gabriela Pérez Báez, NMNH Curator of Linguistics, Dr. Joshua A. Bell, Curator of Globalization, and Gina Rappaport, NAA's Head Archivist.

Qualifications: Candidates should hold (or have plans to defend) a Ph.D. in anthropology, information or archival studies, or other relevant field. Candidate must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. The successful candidate will have a strong research background, proven information and project management skills, demonstrated excellence in communication skills, a record of publication and public presentation, and a strong interest in advancing archival practice and research through education, engagement, and collaboration. The successful candidate will have an understanding and demonstrated competency in any of the following areas of research in anthropological archives: ethnographic research methods, the history of anthropology, visual anthropology, archival theory and practice, historical and ethno-historical research methods. The candidate must also have prior experience in conducting research using qualitative and quantitative social science methods. Demonstrated record of the ability to work in a multidisciplinary and collaborative environment is also desirable.

To Apply: Interested candidates should send a CV, a statement (2 pages maximum) of interest in this position and how it relates to their personal goals, and a list of 3 references and their contact information to the project PI, **Gabriela Pérez Báez** at perezbaezg@si.edu, and CC Joshua A Bell bellja@sil.edu and Gina Rappaport rappaportg@si.edu. Review of applications will begin on October 17, 2016. Selected applicant will be notified no later than November 7, 2017.