



Call for Proposals

American Women's History Initiative's First Five Years: A Scholarly Symposia Series

Year Two:

American Women of Science: Recovering History, Defining the Future ***Sponsored by the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative***

October–November 2020
A Virtual Symposium

Women have always been active contributors in the sciences—despite facing significant obstacles. As at other science institutions, this is evident in Smithsonian history. Carcinologist Mary Jane Rathbun became the first female curator in Smithsonian history in 1894, and Sophie Lutterlough was the first African American woman to work in the sciences at the Smithsonian as an insect preparator in 1957. These accomplishments—and many others—were achieved despite pay inequality, exclusion from professional societies, and oftentimes shouldering the majority of familial responsibilities. Too often, these stories are not told, and they are particularly relevant given the limitations faced by women in the sciences today. In a [2019 report](#), the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics showed that women, especially women of color, are underrepresented in the sciences, in terms of both science education and employment.

The **American Women of Science: Recovering History, Defining the Future** symposium aims to 1) recover lesser-known histories of women in science, 2) share current research and programming breakthroughs, and 3) discuss opportunities to define a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive future. We hope this symposium will inspire and educate scientists and museum professionals, regardless of gender or race, and support women on the ground. Given the Smithsonian's lengthy history and growth across the twentieth century—into nineteen museums and nine research centers—the Smithsonian's past and present provide a unique opportunity for internal reflection and external comparisons regarding the history of women in science.

Details

This will be a virtual symposium taking place across the span of a few weeks in October and November. Sessions will include a mix of keynotes, panels, and lightning talks. We will be working with a virtual event team who can help presenters with digital logistics and strategy.

We intend for this symposium to be inclusive, highlighting the stories of those who identify as women and those who were designated female but self-identify differently across all races and ethnicities. Additionally, the symposium aims to highlight all "women in science" who work in any STEM field in any capacity.

We support collaboration across units at the Smithsonian, particularly collaborations across disciplines (e.g., anthropology, history, biology, art). Participation of scientists, science educators, and historians of science who work outside the Smithsonian is also encouraged.

Virtual Format ideas include, but are not limited to:

1. Assembled panels or roundtables to be delivered as webinars
2. Fireside chats structured as interviews between two individuals
3. Individual presentations or papers to be presented as lightning talks or included in panels
4. Short videos or experimental digital presentations

Topic areas for proposals include:

1. **Illuminating innovative research and programming about women in science**
Examples include: projects that explore women's contributions in environmental justice and community-based conservation movements; techniques and methods from experts across fields (e.g., historians, science writers, data scientists) to uncover lesser-known stories of women in science; successful storytelling strategies to describe the significance of historical or contemporary women in science in exhibitions and beyond
2. **Creating systemic change in the sciences to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion**
Examples include: research on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the sciences; tools and strategies (e.g., mentorship) that have assisted women in science; barriers that exist for women in science historically and today; tools and methods used by educators and science writers to reach new audiences and inspire the next generation
3. **Shining light on the scientific research and achievements of women**
Examples include: scientists spotlighting women's current research and impact in their disciplines; lesser-known stories of women in science in the past and present; digital history and computational techniques for increasing access to information about women in science

Submission Instructions

Submit proposals to BecauseOfHerStory@si.edu by Friday, July 17. Proposals should be no more than one-page and include a title, a session proposal, information about the format you envision for your session, and a one-page CV or resume for each presenter. **All proposers will be notified about their status by Friday, August 21.**

The Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative seeks to deepen our knowledge and appreciation of women's contributions in American society in the contemporary moment and the historical past, to stimulate conversation about the ways in which they have changed, and to understand their continuing influence in American and global contexts. The Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative is inclusive, highlighting the stories of those who identify as women and those who were designated female but self-identify differently.