



ANNUAL REPORT

2022

**Smithsonian Institution
Office of International
Relations**

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Although we are still navigating the “new normal” of a post-pandemic world, 2022 was a very busy year for the Smithsonian as in-person events, exhibition openings, new research and collaborations resumed in earnest. It was an equally exciting year for the Office of International Relations (OIR) as diplomatic delegations, international exchanges, and global convenings ramped back up toward pre-pandemic levels. We eagerly continued activating the Smithsonian’s priorities around the world and leveraging those activations for ever-greater reach, relevance, and impact.

In late 2022, the Secretary of the Smithsonian launched *Our Shared Future*, a new strategic plan outlining key priorities and initiatives the Smithsonian will collectively focus on achieving over the next several years. One of those keystone initiatives is Our Shared Future: Life on a Sustainable Planet, a truly global effort to focus on the environmental crises threatening our world and contribute to scalable solutions. A highlight of OIR’s year was the launch of *Life on a Sustainable Planet* at the 27th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, to an audience of leaders across government, business, and the non-profit sector. This initiative will focus our global science efforts around climate change, oceans, biodiversity, and science education.

The Smithsonian’s presence at major global thought leadership events and convenings will continue to be a focus of our support to leverage SI’s impact across science, culture, and education. In 2022, OIR coordinated Smithsonian participation at the annual meeting of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the UN Ocean Conference, and the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15). Planning has already begun to integrate Smithsonian expertise into similar transformational meetings in 2023.

As in-person engagement is on the rise, so too are new forms of international and diplomatic collaboration, including object-based cultural diplomacy. OIR supports the implementation of the Smithsonian’s new *Ethical Returns and Shared Stewardship* policy. The restitution of the Benin Bronzes from the collection of the National Museum of African Art heralded a new era for the Smithsonian and its ability to build lasting partnerships and relationships in and with communities.

Finally, you’ll read about the varied exchanges, delegations, and high-level visitors we hosted last year and the impactful programs that our team led and facilitated. As we cultivate new global partnerships and deepen existing ones, our collective engagement will only continue to grow: do visit our [Smithsonian Global](#) website throughout the year for updates on our global impact, including a new *Smithsonian x Ukraine Hub* which showcases the rich diversity of Ukrainian heritage in our collections and shines a light on the work taking place at the Institution to support our Ukrainian colleagues across science, culture, and education. Here’s to a meaningful and peaceful 2023 and beyond.

Warmly,

Aviva Rosenthal

Director, Office of International Relations



Smithsonian Office of International Relations Director Aviva Rosenthal visits Richard Serra’s *East-West/West-East* installation in Doha, Qatar. Photo: OIR.

OUR MISSION + VISION

Greater Reach. Greater Relevance. Profound Impact.

These ideas guide the Smithsonian in its ambitious mission to pursue “the increase and diffusion of knowledge” for all people. Working on all seven continents and in more than 100 countries, we are a truly global organization uniquely positioned to harness the collective power of the world’s knowledge, creativity, and innovation.

The Office of International Relations works to support the Institution’s mandate by linking the deep expertise of the Smithsonian’s body of researchers, curators, educators, and professionals with partners and colleagues around the planet. It is through our collections, research, and strategic partnerships that the Smithsonian can most effectively address our world’s increasingly complex challenges—and also stimulate meaningful, lasting impact both at home and across the globe.

OIR works to fulfill its mission in four priority areas:

- ✿ Optimizing Smithsonian Global Engagement
- ✿ Promoting Smithsonian Global Thought Leadership
- ✿ Supporting Smithsonian Global Programs
- ✿ Coordinating Smithsonian Global Operations



View of the Smithsonian Castle through the Earth Optimism x Folklife honeycomb installation at the 2022 Smithsonian Folklife Festival. Photo: Craig Fergus, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives.

OPTIMIZING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

“As the world’s largest museum, research, and education complex, we have a responsibility to engage on the pressing global challenges of our time – from climate change and public health, to economic disparities and issues of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion – the solutions to which require an international vision and perspective.”

- *Lonnie G. Bunch III, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution*

When we at the Smithsonian Institution (SI) join together with our colleagues at home and abroad, we collectively transform big ideas into bold action and deeper impact. To advance our mission of forging and strengthening international partnerships, OIR serves as the central convener and coordinator of global activity at the Smithsonian, helping our global partners navigate the Institution and helping our own colleagues maximize their international networks and impact.

Historic Repatriation of Benin Bronzes

In April 2022, the Smithsonian adopted a new ethical returns and shared stewardship policy for which Smithsonian museums will each establish criteria and procedures for deaccessioning and returning collections for ethical, rather than purely legal, reasons.

“There is a growing understanding at the Smithsonian and in the world of museums generally that our possession of these collections carries with it certain ethical obligations to the places and people where the collections originated,” said **Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie Bunch** at the launch of the policy. “Among these obligations is to consider, using our contemporary moral norms, what should be in our collections and what should not. This new policy on ethical returns is an expression of our commitment to meet these obligations.”



Left: Eight of the 29 Benin Bronzes in the collection of the National Museum of African Art. Photo: AP/Smithsonian.
Right: Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III speaks during the repatriation ceremony. Photo: AP/Smithsonian.

The first return stemming from this new policy was that of 29 Benin Bronzes from the collection of the **National Museum of African Art** which were returned in a ceremony to the **National Commission for Museums and Monuments of Nigeria (NCMM)** in October 2022. The Benin Bronzes are a set of thousands of cultural and art objects that were violently looted from the Kingdom of Benin by British military forces as part of a punitive expedition in 1897; they were subsequently scattered throughout museums, galleries, and private collections across the world. As part of the Smithsonian return, the museum signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the NCMM to deepen ties in Nigeria, exchange knowledge, and collaborate on a new exhibition in Benin City entitled *Benin Today*.

Museums and Public Diplomacy: Engaging with the US Diplomatic Corps

Briefings for US Ambassadors

In August, representatives from the Office of the Under Secretary for Science and Research and OIR met with **Meg Whitman, US Ambassador to Kenya**. The group discussed SI's many engagements in the country, areas of mutual interest, and the potential for future collaboration and coordination. Ambassador Whitman expressed the importance of the US's relationship with Kenya and encouraged SI's continued partnerships and work in and with Kenya. OIR looks forward to strengthening our ongoing collaborative partnership with the Embassy and supporting mutual objectives with joint partners in the country and region.

In October, OIR and staff from the **National Museum of Asian Art (NMAA)** met virtually with **Jonathan Henick, outgoing US Ambassador-Designate to Uzbekistan**, to discuss opportunities for collaboration in research, exhibitions, and capacity building and exchange between the Smithsonian and museums in Uzbekistan. The SI team provided details on SI's previous cultural sector engagement with the **Ministry of Culture of Uzbekistan**, the **Arts and Culture Development Foundation**, and work in Khiva with the **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development**.

We were pleased to welcome **US Ambassador to Iraq Alina Romanowski** and **Public Affairs Officer Scott Bolz** to the Smithsonian in December. The Ambassador and Officer Bolz had an opportunity to meet with colleagues from OIR, NMAA, the **Museum Conservation Institute**, and the **Office of the Secretary** to discuss progress to date on our *Treasures of Mesopotamia* online exhibition project, as well as other Smithsonian projects taking place in Iraq.

Arranging such meetings between Smithsonian staff and US Ambassadors and diplomatic leadership ensures an alignment between the public diplomacy priorities of the US government with the expertise and interests of the Smithsonian community.



Representatives from the Smithsonian's Office of International Relations, National Museum of Asian Art, Museum Conservation Institute, and Office of the Secretary greet Ambassador Romanowski and Officer Bolz.
Photo: Lauren Appelbaum

Science Diplomacy in Action: Meeting Science Officers Where They Are

In September, OIR coordinated a briefing for outgoing **Environment, Science, Technology, and Health Officers** with the Department of State's **Foreign Service Institute** on SI's global science work. Experts from the Smithsonian's **National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute** and the **Smithsonian Science Education Center** presented on both unit-led and pan-Institutional science initiatives of interest to the group, which represented staff from over 20 posts around the world. As the front line of the United States' science diplomacy efforts, the group was eager to learn about the innovative work being done by both science researchers and science educators at SI and how we might effectively collaborate in the future to address our most pressing scientific issues globally.

PROMOTING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

With thousands of scientists, curators, researchers, historians, and scholars, the Smithsonian is a deep repository and generator of knowledge. Our world-class professionals are a trusted source of expertise, inspiration, and innovation.

That reputation enables us, as an institution, to stimulate discussions around the big questions that affect us all. Working closely with Smithsonian leadership, OIR facilitates conversations on these critical issues between our experts and partners around the globe, with the aim of multiplying success, enacting sustainable change, and turning ideas into reality.

OIR brings Smithsonian expertise to critical platforms and global stages where we can move the needle on issues as diverse as climate change, accessibility, biodiversity conservation, and cultural heritage protection.

The SI Global website interactive map highlights projects by location. Photo: Smithsonian Global



Smithsonian Delegation to the International Council of Museums

The Smithsonian was represented by a large delegation at the 26th **International Council of Museums (ICOM) General Conference** which took place in Prague in August 2022 to re-engage with colleagues and partners from around the world on museum topics facing the museum sector in a post-Covid world. Secretary Bunch serves as the co-chair of ICOM-US and delivered the keynote address to the in-person and virtual audiences around his vision for museums and leadership. OIR Director Aviva Rosenthal joined the delegation with colleagues from the **Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative**, the **National Museum of American History**, the **Anacostia Community Museum**, the **Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition Service**, and the **Office of the Under Secretary for Museums and Culture**.

Latin America Anti-Trafficking Workshop

In 2022, OIR supported the development and delivery of workshops focused on Central Asia and Latin America with the *Cultural Property Anti-Trafficking Workshop Series* organized by the **Museum Conservation Institute**. The workshops, funded by the **US Department of State** in collaboration with the **Department of Homeland Security** and the **Department of Justice**, demonstrate the US government's commitment to preventing trafficking of cultural heritage. The trainings brought together US law enforcement participants from the US and overseas posts to hear from Smithsonian experts from the **National Museum of Asian Art** and the **National Museum of the American Indian**; regional experts from the Department of State's **Cultural Heritage Center**; cultural heritage specialists from countries in the regions of focus; and specialists from museums, research centers, and universities throughout the US, as well as participating federal law enforcement agencies.

Earth Optimism x Folklife Festival

As part of the Earth Optimism (EO) team, OIR supported SI experts and partners from across the Institution in creating and deploying programming for *Earth Optimism x Folklife Festival*. In presenting innovative solutions to the climate crisis, the event spotlighted relevant Smithsonian research and partnerships. This included, among many others, SI mangrove research, Bird-Friendly Coffee, Agua Salud and sustainable forestry in Panama, and peer-to-peer partnership in the Maasai Mara. The EO team also coordinated the [EO x Folklife Studio](#), sixteen discussions among conservation and environmental leaders that were livestreamed from the National Mall. The Studio stage hosted more than 80 artists, entrepreneurs, business leaders, community organizers, and agriculture experts from around the world.

Elevating and Activating Smithsonian Science: Thought Leadership on the Global Stage

In 2022, OIR, in close consultation with the Office of the Under Secretary for Science and Research, developed a coordinated engagement and event strategy to further cement the Smithsonian's position on the global stage as a trusted, forward-thinking, and powerful knowledge institution. Recognizing that the Smithsonian's participation in global events has the potential to impact the scale, scope, and speed at which the world addresses existential challenges, this new strategy promotes a One Smithsonian approach to planning and resourcing the Institution's role as a contributor to key multilateral frameworks and its presence at major global events. To pilot this new strategy, OIR arranged internal discussions on SI's strategic goals and objectives to facilitate institution-wide preparation in advance of the **United Nations Ocean Conference** in Lisbon in June 2022. OIR also liaised with the US Department of State and coordinated the Smithsonian's technical input to [US government concept papers](#).

During several months, OIR led cross-unit preparations and programming to launch the Smithsonian's new initiative "Life on a Sustainable Planet" at the **UN Conference on Climate Change** in Egypt (COP27). The Smithsonian delegation, led by Under Secretary Ellen Stofan and including directors and representatives from six different units, served on over 13 panels to share expertise on climate change related issues including ocean and forest conservation and other nature-based solutions; ecosystem resilience and adaptation; the role of science research

and museum collections; environmental education, public engagement and youth empowerment; and community engagement and capacity exchange. The Smithsonian delegation also participated in more than 14 strategic and bilateral meetings to strengthen relationships with partners and donors.

In 2022, OIR continued to serve as Co-Chair of the **Consortium of Scientific Partners on Biodiversity** and coordinated the Smithsonian's input and contributions to the Convention on Biological Diversity. In June, SI convened experts from leading scientific agencies and natural history museums around the world for a virtual session of the Fifth Science-Policy Forum for Biodiversity titled "The Critical Role of Citizen Science in the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity." This session highlighted the strong potential of citizen science to support the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity as well as the need for open data and capacity building and the opportunities for increasing technical and scientific cooperation and resource mobilization.

At the **15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity** (CBD COP15) in Montreal in December 2022, the Smithsonian collaborated with members of the Consortium of Scientific Partners, the Secretariat of the CBD and other like-minded institutions to co-lead the in-person sessions of the two-day [Fifth Science-Policy Forum for Biodiversity](#). This event provided space for scientists, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders to discuss and make recommendations on how science, technology, and innovation can contribute to the effective implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Director of the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute Dr. Brandie Smith delivered opening remarks, Dr. Steve Canty of the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center gave a presentation on monitoring tools, and Under Secretary Ellen Stofan was invited by the COP Presidency to share the event's key messages during the High-Level Segment of the COP15 plenary. Additionally, the Smithsonian delegation was active on the sidelines at COP15 to expand partnerships and offer support to Parties and other stakeholders in designing and implementing their National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plans.

Representatives from across the Smithsonian participate in UNFCCC COP27. Photos: OIR.



Afghan School Group Visit to *Girlhood: It's Complicated*

National Museum of American History (NMAH) curators Cathy Franz and Nancy Bercaw, in coordination with OIR, welcomed a group of 41 girls and their chaperones from the **School of Leadership Afghanistan** for a special guided tour of NMAH's *Girlhood (It's complicated)*. These students and their families were forced to flee their homes in Afghanistan when the Taliban gained control in August 2021, and the group was in Washington for a summer program with National Geographic. Through the exhibition and special tour, this incredible group of young women learned more about girls and women who have sparked change by speaking up and challenging expectations – connecting us across generations and around the world -- while sharing their own experiences of being a girl today.

Hidden No More at the Air and Space Museum

In October, *Hidden No More: Empowering Women Leaders in STEM* visited the **Udvar-Hazy Center of the National Museum of Air and Space** for a guided tour focused on the role of women in aviation and space history. Udvar-Hazy has hosted this recurring program for several years in a row, providing tours and space for a speaker program. The program is part of the US Department of State's **International Visitor Leadership Program** and brings together over 40 women leaders in STEM fields from around the world annually.



“I loved just having great and engaging conversations with all the students. They seemed very curious and interested and I haven’t had an entire group of students so invested in the work that I do for a long time. It really was inspiring and encouraging to me to talk with them!”

“The extreme level of curiosity from the girls was incredible.”

“One TechGirl asked a particularly insightful question. My activity was about the process of building evolutionary trees based on traits, using elephant teeth as an example. The participant asked what would happen if a tree generated using data from a different body part produced a result that conflicted with the first one. This is a fantastic, insightful question that researchers grapple with all of the time, and I was so impressed that it occurred to her!”

- Staff from the National Museum of Natural History, on participating in the TechGirls visit

Facing page: The TechGirls pose for the camera after their afternoon visiting the Q?rius lab at the National Museum of Natural History. Photo: OIR.

TechGirls Visit to Q?rius

SI was thrilled to welcome **TechGirls**, a US Department of State initiative administered by Legacy International, on July 27 for a personalized hands-on program at the **Q?rius** lab at the **National Museum of Natural History (NMNH)**. TechGirls connects and supports the next generation of women leaders in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics by providing them access to opportunities to follow their dreams. The 2022 cohort consisted of a group of 136 young women, aged 15-17, representing 36 countries from six regions around the world. OIR and the Q?rius team developed a full afternoon program that brought together NMNH scientists, researchers, educators, and more to showcase their work at hands-on stations through conversations with the TechGirls.

SUPPORTING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL PROGRAMS

Through understanding the priorities of our museums and research centers, OIR aims to expand institutional opportunities and engagement in relevant regions and countries.

OIR partners with units across the Institution to craft successful strategies and proposals for new initiatives and programs, and to secure new opportunities to amplify our impact in the world. We cultivate new ideas and ways of working and engage across the SI community to address the most pressing challenges of our time.

Biodiversity and Balance for Our Shared Future

Working with the **Smithsonian Science Education Center (SSEC)** for the second year, OIR supported an exchange program with French and American classrooms funded by the **US Embassy Paris** utilizing SSEC’s *Biodiversity!* research and curriculum guide. Working with 19 French classes and 12 US classes, this year’s exchange reached 23 teachers and 1,099 students, centering on the question: “How can we balance the needs of people with the needs of other living things?” Through investigations of the biodiversity of their communities and engaging with subject matter experts in the US and France, and importantly with one another, students developed ideas for how to solve conflicts in their community and contribute to a more sustainable planet.

In 2022, the US-France Focus Forum exchange project connected:

- 19 French classrooms
- 12 American classrooms
- 23 teachers
- 1,099 students



Aviva Rosenthal (OIR, second from left), Rachel Goslins (AIB, third from right), and Allison Peck (AIB, second from right) celebrate the launch of the “*Hi, How R U?*” portal project in Doha, Qatar. Photo: Aviva Rosenthal.

Meet Me in the *FUTURES*: Cross-Cultural Dialogue for a Brighter Future

As part of Smithsonian’s innovative *FUTURES* exhibition, which was mounted building-wide in the historic **Arts and Industries Building (AIB)** from November 2021 to June 2022, the **Embassy of Qatar in the United States** helped to collaborate on “*Hi, How R U?*,” a portal that proposes a futuristic form of communication, enabling spontaneous connection across huge distances and languages to bridge cultural differences. A second portal was paired in Doha, Qatar, in the bustling **Msheireb Downtown** district, to connect Qatari visitors to share a message for the future—of hope, wisdom, love, remembrance, or even advice or warning— and leave a holo-recording behind as a form of time capsule. In May 2022, Rachel Goslins and Allison Peck of AIB and Aviva Rosenthal of OIR traveled to Doha to officially launch the portal exhibit to the public. The group held a meeting to discuss cultural ties with the Minister of Culture of Qatar, H.E. Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad Al Thani, and delivered remarks to the public at the Qatar National Library on the Smithsonian and *FUTURES* in celebration of the US-Qatar Year of Culture.

Preserving American Historical Heritage in Morocco

2022 was an exciting year for SI's partnership with the [Tangier American Legation](#), a small US government-owned museum in Tangier, Morocco. Over the last year, a pan-Institutional team, led by Liz Tunick Cedar and Lauren Appelbaum of OIR, and including **Smithsonian Exhibits**, the **National Museum of Asian Art**, and **Smithsonian Enterprises**, has been working with the museum to collaborate with the Legation staff, board, and other stakeholders, including the **US Embassy in Rabat**, to conduct a strategic review and provide ideas for enhanced exhibition techniques, outreach (particularly digital) and overall sustainability, which includes both the general health of the museum operations as well as its collections. This project was many years in the making; several US ambassadors approached the Smithsonian about the opportunity, and the Legation's bicentennial in 2021 finally enabled the US Department of State to secure the funds to support a broad scope of cooperation. One deliverable, an Interpretive Master Plan, helped establish new exhibition goals, which came to life in the Legation's new permanent exhibition, *The Legation, Morocco, and World War II*. The opening of the exhibition celebrated the 80th anniversary of Operation Torch, the definitive Allied victory of the war in North Africa.



Handling Photographs

- Ensure workspace is clean, dry, and large enough for the photographs to be examined
- Handle photographs one at a time.
- Avoid touching the surface of the image.
- Handle indirectly using an auxiliary support such as a rigid board.
 - Cradle object evenly with hands in absence of auxiliary support
- Light table versus holding object up to window to see translucent details (such as watermarks)

Fragile work on paper handled using rigid auxiliary support



Mounted photograph and photographic negative handled by even cradling of outer edges.



Museums in the Forever Business with Bahraini Museum Colleagues

In September 2022, OIR launched a new virtual capacity building series entitled *Museums in the Forever Business: Collections Management and Preventive Conservation Exchange* in coordination with the **Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities** and with support from the **US Embassy in Bahrain**. This year-long virtual exchange program brings together eight colleagues from the **Bahrain National Museum** for conversations with Smithsonian colleagues across multiple units focused on topics including integrated pest management; the building environment; photo conservation; textile care, cleaning, and handling; and more. We look forward to continuing this series in 2023 and working with the Bahraini cohort on projects to apply learnings from this exchange.

Treasures of Mesopotamia at the Iraq Museum in Baghdad

The Smithsonian's first exhibition partnership with the **Iraq Museum**, the country's national museum in Baghdad, is progressing well. Following 28 virtual convenings in 2022, the transnational team, which included OIR, the **Museum Conservation Institute**, the **National Museum of Asian Art**, and **Smithsonian Exhibits**, drafted an Interpretive Master Plan to guide exhibition planning as well as a provisional checklist of objects for the virtual exhibition, provisionally called *Treasures of Mesopotamia*. The exhibition will be an exciting opportunity to engage audiences across Iraq, the US, and the world about the museum's unparalleled collection of Iraqi cultural heritage, including objects that have never before been available online.

Facing page: SI staff alongside colleagues from the Tangier American Legation met with participants from the Legation's Literacy and Skills Training Program. Photo: Tangier American Legation

This page: Shannon Brogdon-Grantham (MCI) leads a virtual session on the care and conservation of photographs as part of our Bahrain virtual capacity exchange series. Photo: Lauren Appelbaum.

COORDINATING SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL OPERATIONS

The Office of International Relations plays a critical role in safely sending our scholars and experts abroad while welcoming international colleagues and visitors to our Institution in order to foster the exchange of ideas, practice, and perspectives across disciplines.

In collaboration with operations teams all over the Smithsonian, we work to ensure a nimble and responsive infrastructure that allows our colleagues and partners to deliver impactful programming all over the world.

Global Operations Team Speaker Series

Building upon the goals outlined in the International Strategic Framework and the Global Activities Tracking Process, two internal strategic implementation resources related to the Smithsonian's global engagement, the **Global Operations Team** was created in 2021 to serve as a forum to advise the Smithsonian community on international operations, share ideas, voice concerns, and collectively address issues by pooling international expertise from across all areas of the Smithsonian. In line with this mission, the Global Operations Team developed a speaker series initiative in January 2022, in which notable professionals, both internal and external to the Institution, were invited to present to the team on a multitude of topics related to global operations. Over the course of the year, speaker sessions were held on a quarterly basis, with presentations including topics such as international hiring and travel, public diplomacy and international relations, IT security advice for traveling internationally, and how peer organizations such as Harvard University conduct global operations for activities abroad.



Curator of Globalization Joshua Bell (National Museum of Natural History) leads First Lady of the Marshall Islands Ginger Kabua on a tour of Marshallese artifacts, including this outrigger canoe, at the Smithsonian's Museum Support Center in Suitland, Maryland. Photo: Dan Rosenthal.

Official and Diplomatic International Visits

Despite continued limitations on travel and gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OIR continued to find ways to engage with international visitors and to connect them to various units across the Smithsonian. In 2022, OIR facilitated visits for more than 35 in-person international delegations. Over 383 visitors from 114 different countries participated in meetings and tours with 16 different Smithsonian museums and units. OIR continued its collaboration with the **Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program** by welcoming several delegations of current and future global leaders to engage with Smithsonian colleagues in a series of virtual panels and discussions. Topics ranged from conservation and biodiversity to civic engagement for youth and the preservation of cultural heritage.

This year saw a substantial number of VIP delegations and diplomatic visits to SI facilitated by OIR, including the **Minister of Culture of Argentina**, the **Nigerian Ambassador to the United States**, and the **First Ladies of France, Serbia, and the Marshall Islands**, among many more.

J-1 Exchange Visitor Program

OIR manages the Smithsonian's **J-1 Exchange Visitor Program**, a visa program that enables foreign researchers to travel to the Smithsonian to collaborate with our curators, scholars, scientists, and practitioners. In Fiscal Year 2022, **156** J-1 Scholars representing over **40** countries participated in programs sponsored by the Smithsonian. Smithsonian Exchange Visitors participated in many important programs and activities this year, both in-person and virtually. One scholar co-presented an invited virtual lecture "Proteomics Study of Byssus Fibre" at The School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, Paris (École des hautes études en sciences sociales; EHESS) as part of the "Seminaire 2021-2022, UE 645 - Les objets comme source: les textiles et leurs matériaux - II" on February 7, 2022. Another wrote a paper on his discovery of two new fish species in the Amazon and was [featured by CNN](#). Smithsonian also sponsored a cohort of J-1 specialists to participate in this year's **Smithsonian Folklife Festival**, including Mongolian felt artisans and Ugandan leather crafters who were able to share their art with visitors to the National Mall this summer.

This page: An artisan from Uganda demonstrates the process of making barkcloth as a sustainable resource. Photo: Josh Weilepp/Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives.
Cover photo: View of the northwest facade of the Smithsonian Castle. Photo: Samantha Peterson



Smithsonian staff pose with Ugandan participants in the *Uganda Biodiversity Action Plan* course at the National Zoo. Photo: Jessica Chacko.

Uganda Biodiversity Action Plan Course

In December 2022, OIR provided logistical support to the National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute's *Uganda Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)* course, hosted at the **National Zoo**. Over five days, seven Ugandan professionals from the energy sector participated in program lectures, discussions, and exercises related to BAP's biodiversity management practices in Uganda. In addition to providing immigration support to acquire J-1 visas for all travelers, OIR coordinated course logistics and participant experience in Washington.

Ukrainian Fulbright Cohort at Smithsonian

Immediately following the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the Smithsonian activated its long-developed networks to support museum and culture professionals to advise on the protection and preservation of Ukrainian cultural heritage threatened by military action and looting. At the same time, OIR reached out to the **Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the US Department of State** to offer support to any Ukrainian scholars in the US whose academic and professional plans had been disrupted by the war. By teaming up with our colleagues in the **Office of Academic Appointments and Internships** and the **Office of Advancement**, OIR coordinated placements for four Ukrainian Fulbright scholars in fully funded academic appointments at the Institution for the summer, hosted by the **Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative**, the **Office of Educational Technology**, the **Archives of American Art**, and the **Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum**.



7 continents

100+ countries

Programs as diverse as our planet

Learn more at:
global.si.edu

The Smithsonian Office of International Relations

**1100 Jefferson Drive SW
MRC 705
Washington, DC
20013-7012**