# AMERICAN MUSEUM ᴼꜰ NATURAL HISTORY

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## AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY'S
## ONLINE RESOURCES FOR LEARNING
## HONORED WITH PRESTIGIOUS *SCIENCE* AWARD

Resources for Learning (RFL), an innovative online catalog of educational content for teachers and students developed by the American Museum of Natural History, has received the *Science* Prize for Online Resources in Education (SPORE) – the first time a natural history museum has won this coveted honor. The award, sponsored by the journal *Science*, recognizes outstanding, free online educational materials that enrich science learning.

The Museum is a long-time leader in science education, and has pioneered a number of programs that leverage the unparalleled quality and depth of the institution's scientific resources: a faculty of more than 200 active scientists, one of the world's most extensive physical collections, and innovative exhibitions that make science a meaningful and transformative experience for schoolchildren and the broader public alike.

Resources for Learning brings these robust scientific resources to a much broader audience beyond the walls of the Museum by aggregating more than 1,200 distinct digital resources – from articles and activities to media-rich content like videos and exhibition interactives – into a single, easily accessible and free online compendium for science educators and students. The RFL catalog includes content developed specifically for the Museum's permanent halls and temporary exhibitions, as well as content from two of the Museum's flagship online programs, Science Bulletins and Ology.

Science Bulletins is an innovative multi-media program that highlights the latest discoveries in astrophysics, Earth sciences, biodiversity, and human biology and evolution with short, high-

definition video documentaries and cutting-edge data visualizations. Ology, the Museum's popular website and online portal for kids, contains hundreds of interactives, activities, and animations that are specifically designed for online use and that engage children in the content, concepts, and practice of science.

"The combination of high production values, unsurpassed resources, and expert scientists places Resources for Learning firmly in the forefront of educational materials for teachers and students," said Rosamond Kinzler, senior director of the National Center for Science Literacy, Education and Technology (NCSLET), the group within the Museum's education department responsible for creating Resources for Learning as well as Science Bulletings and Ology. NCSLET, founded in 1997, is dedicated to disseminating the Museum's educational content to the broadest possible global audience.

In their essay describing Resources for Learning published February 25, 2011 in *Science*, Kinzler and Steve Gano, the director for education in the Museum's Digital Media department, say that evidence shows "that when teachers bring museum resources into the classroom, students' engagement in both the content and practice of science increases." They firmly believe that "the future of science museums embraces both of these kinds of experiences: the irreplaceable impact of directly encountering physical evidence on site, and the ready access to an enormous library of authentic scientific content via many digital platforms."

Resources for Learning content is organized in discrete units that educators can use as individual, stand-alone lessons, or weave together into multi-day or even semester long courses. In their essay, Kinzler and Gano describe the research involved in making Resources for Learning as responsive as possible to the needs of individual teachers. Based on early feedback from educators, new search functions were added, as was a "Teachers' Tips" section offering advice on how to best adapt the digital material for use in the classroom.

In addition to Resources for Learning, the Museum supports professional development activities for teachers through the David S. and Ruth L. Gottesman Center for Science Teaching and Learning.  This past fiscal year, over 6,000 education professionals – teachers at all levels, science coordinators, and principals – benefited from the Museum's professional development programs for a total of over 24,000 contact hours.

The development of Resources for Learning was made possible by a grant from The Louis Calder Foundation. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration provided significant educational and programming support.

Other institutions honored with SPORE awards include Baylor College of Medicine, Carnegie Mellon University, Harvard, MIT, John Hopkins University, Rutgers University, and the University of California, Berkeley.

The Science Prize for Online Resources in Education (SPORE) was established to encourage innovation and excellence in education, as well as to encourage the use of high-quality on-line resources by students, teachers, and the public. In 2009, the prize recognized outstanding projects from all regions of the world that brought freely available online resources to bear on science education. Winners are selected by the editors with the assistance of a judging panel composed of outstanding teachers and researchers in the relevant fields, chaired by the Editor-in-Chief of Science. Individuals responsible for the creation of the winning resources are invited to write an essay that describes the resource for publication in Science in 2011.

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