



AMERICAN MUSEUM
OF NATURAL HISTORY



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NEW SCENT-BASED MESSAGING PLATFORM, OSNAP, DEMONSTRATED AT AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

MUSEUM WILL HOST HOTSPOT FOR VISITORS TO TRY NEW TECHNOLOGY, EXPLORE THE EVOLUTION OF SCENT IN HUMANS

The first international scent messages were exchanged today between the American Museum of Natural History and the Le Laboratoire Paris in France using a new iPhone application called oSnap. The new technology, invented by Harvard professor David Edwards, allows users to tag photographs with more than 300,000 unique scents and send and receive an oNote via email, Facebook, and Twitter in select hotspots that have an oPhone, the hardware that disperses the scent. The Museum will host the first oPhone hotspot in the United States during three weekends in July along with hands-on activities exploring the evolution of the sense of smell in humans.

“oPhone introduces a new kind of sensory experience into mobile messaging—a form of communication that until now has remained consigned to our immediate local experience of the world,” Edwards said. “With the oPhone, people will be able to share with anyone, anywhere, not just words, images, and sounds, but sensory experience itself.”

Within the next few months, in select hotspots around the world, oPhones will be available in freely accessible public settings. The first hotspots will be located in Paris, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and in New York City at the Museum, with more to come.

“The sense of smell is driven by a powerful and intricate biological system that has evolved over millions of years. And in humans the olfactory bulb is part of the brain’s limbic system, an area closely associated with memory and feeling, and thus aroma and scent can be especially powerful for us. Scientists around the world continue to explore the

complex ways in which the brain interacts with and ultimately regulates the senses," said Michael Novacek, the Museum's Senior Vice President and Provost for Science. "The Museum is always excited to investigate new technologies, and explore their potential as tools for enhancing the visitor experience."

Humans are able to discriminate between millions of different olfactory stimuli, though our sense of smell is less acute than that of other closely related species. Throughout the last 55 million years of primate evolution, primates have ceded olfactory sensing for better vision—a trade-off initiated by a behavioral shift from a nocturnal to a diurnal lifestyle. Many olfactory receptor genes in humans are pseudogenes, which do not functionally express proteins as they do in other primates. The Museum most recently examined how humans process the sense of smell as part of its 2010 special exhibition *Brain: The Inside Story*.

For three consecutive weekends starting on July 12, the Museum will feature an oPhone in its Sackler Educational Laboratory for Comparative Genomics and Human Origins, where visitors can try the technology and learn about how smell is processed in humans compared to our primate and hominid relatives.

The scent-based messaging platform onotoes.com is led by Harvard University & Wyss Institute Professor and inventor David Edwards, with co-inventor and former Harvard University student, Rachel Field.

About David Edwards David Edwards is Harvard Professor of Idea Translation in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Wyss Institute Faculty Member, founder of Le Laboratoire Paris, and Le Laboratoire Cambridge, and the inventor of food and sensorial innovations, including WikiFoods, and drug and vaccine technologies related to the delivery of drugs and vaccines to the lungs to eliminate injections. He also is one of the founders of Vapor Communications, which intends to bring scent messaging to mobile phone users wherever aroma matters, for health and memory, self-expression and entertainment, travel and the marketing of aromatic content online. He is a member of the National Academies of Engineering in USA and France, a member of the National Academy of Inventors (USA), and a Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres of the French Ministry of Culture. He is the author of many articles, patents, and books of fiction and nonfiction.

About Michael Novacek Michael Novacek is Senior Vice President, Provost of Science, and a curator in the Division of Paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History, which is one of the world's preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. Novacek has conducted extensive research on the evolutionary relationships of extinct and living mammals, and his examination of broad-based problems in systematics and evolution draws upon evidence from the fossil record and molecular biology. Founded in 1869, the Museum encompasses 45 permanent exhibition halls, including the Rose Center for Earth and Space and the Hayden Planetarium, as well as galleries for temporary exhibitions. The Museum's five active research divisions and three cross-disciplinary centers support 200 scientists, whose work draws on a world-class permanent collection of more than 32 million specimens and artifacts, as well as specialized collections for frozen tissue and genomic and astrophysical data, and one of the largest natural history libraries in the world. Approximately 5 million visitors from around the world came to the Museum last year, and its exhibitions and Space Shows can be seen in venues on five continents. The Museum's website and collection of apps for mobile devices extend its collections, exhibitions, and educational programs to millions more beyond its walls.

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