



AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTS DIGITIZED MANUSCRIPTS OF CHARLES DARWIN

MAJOR ONLINE PROJECT IS NEXT STEP IN THE EVOLUTION OF DARWIN DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP

In celebration of Darwin Day, the American Museum of Natural History is officially unveiling the first phase of the [Darwin Manuscripts Project](#) – the most comprehensive catalog of Charles Darwin’s scientific manuscripts ever compiled. The project is an ambitious online tool that traces the intellectual development of the famed naturalist and his groundbreaking theory of evolution by natural selection. Darwin Day is commemorated annually around the world on February 12 – Darwin’s birthday.

The database at the project’s core – DARBASE (Darwin Union Manuscripts Catalogue) – includes some 45,000 Darwin documents, including writing from Darwin’s time aboard the *HMS Beagle*, early drafts of *On The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* and the *Descent of Man*, and *Selection in Relation to Sex*, as well as his notebooks and botanical books.

Developed in close collaboration with Cambridge University Library, whose physical collection is the foundation of the new database, and the Biodiversity Heritage Library, represented by the Natural History Museum in London, this new tool will also include holdings from all other library-based Darwin collections globally. Already, the database includes 15,125 high-resolution digital images of the original manuscript pages with annotated transcriptions. In addition, more than 7,400 manuscript pages have been transcribed and are presented in an accessible format.

“Darwin’s work, particularly his theory of evolution, is foundational for all of biology including work underway at the Museum today,” said Michael Novacek, senior vice president and provost for science at the American Museum of Natural History. “The digitization of his

manuscripts will provide invaluable insights into the intellectual process that produced such groundbreaking approaches to the natural world and the order of life on Earth.”

Particularly innovative are the notes featured on many of the manuscript pages, which make Darwin’s writing accessible to casual readers and scholars alike. For example, scholars can see a transcription of Darwin’s famous first attempt, in 1842, to sketch out an essay about evolution that eventually became *On The Origin of Species*. It is possible to follow every crossed-out line, every edited sentence, and every transposed block of text, in essence looking over Darwin’s shoulder as he composed his revolutionary first draft of evolutionary history. Alternatively, the site allows more casual readers to view the complete transcription without edits or annotations. This functionality offers clear, highly-readable manuscripts without sacrificing drafts that represent important stages in the preparation of published texts.

“This site presents the manuscripts that record Charles Darwin's work as a practicing scientist,” said David Kohn, a Darwin scholar and director of the Darwin Manuscripts Project. “Its goal is to offer digital access to the primary materials documenting the birth and maturation of Darwin’s attempts to explain and explore the natural world.”

In addition to drafts of his most important and well-known works, the Darwin Manuscripts Project goes beyond previous resources by including:

- Previously unpublished manuscripts, including an “Experiment Book” begun by Darwin in 1856 that details his original scholarship on plant breeding strategies; and
- Documents that served Darwin as reference tools for his science, such as his pocket diary, an invaluable source for dating Darwin’s intellectual development.

The Darwin Manuscripts Project organizes the naturalist’s writings into six thematic groupings that cover the full content of Darwin’s work as a creative experimenter in the sciences: The Beagle Record, Geological Papers, Creation of the Origin, Evolutionary Botany, Generation Papers, and Man & Emotion.

The Manuscripts Project is also fully integrated with Charles Darwin’s Library, a comprehensive and complementary initiative to present Darwin-as-reader and digitize all of the volumes in his personal scientific library. A collaborative effort with Cambridge University Library, the Natural History Museum of London, and the Biodiversity Heritage Library, the Charles Darwin Library already includes more than 80 percent of Darwin’s heavily annotated books, most of which

contain extensive marginalia and research notes and comprise the intellectual bedrock of his scientific work.

The Darwin Manuscripts Project is funded by two grants from the National Science Foundation, while the Darwin Library Project is jointly sponsored by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and National Endowment for the Humanities through a Transatlantic Digitization Collaboration Grant.

American Museum of Natural History (amnh.org)

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869, is one of the world's preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. The Museum encompasses 45 permanent exhibition halls and galleries for temporary exhibitions, the Rose Center for Earth and Space with the Hayden Planetarium, state-of-the-art research laboratories and five active research divisions that support more than 200 scientists in addition to one of the largest natural history libraries in the Western Hemisphere and a permanent collection of more than 32 million specimens and cultural artifacts. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, it is the first American museum authorized to grant the Ph.D. degree. In 2012, the Museum will begin offering a pilot Master of Arts in Teaching with a specialization in earth science. 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. Visit amnh.org for more information.

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