Exploring Human Origins host site summaries*

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Andover Public Library Exhibit Summary

Holding the exhibit in our Veterans Memorial Performing Arts Center gave us a much enhanced space in which to attract our community. The venue is on the grounds of our Pymatuning Valley Local Schools and that fact, even though school was not in session in June, seemed to give the Exhibit a special importance and civility that permeated the entire month. Partnership with the school was a huge asset for open-mindedness in viewing the Exhibit.

Our Exhibit Programs experienced tremendous attendance and the audiences were very vocal and eager for dialog with our speakers. Attendees who were constrained at the meetings by religious beliefs did speak quietly to our 26 volunteers who welcomed people to the Exhibit every day, and they did fill in the sticky notes and evaluation forms as requested. Anger or loud rejection of science was not experienced at the exhibit, but one reporter wrote an editorial in her history column that seemed angry that we would bring the exhibit into our County. I have the article if it would be of interest.

The community at large was thrilled by the scale of the exhibit and the initial presence of the speakers from the Smithsonian. Due to the exhibit I forged a partnership with Patricia Princehouse, Outreach Coordinator and Physics Prof. at CWRU’s Institute for the Science of Origins. My Committee and I had a speaker repertoire which attracted continuous positive comments. We had many visitors from quite far away since we were the only Ohio instance of the Exhibit. Patricia Princehouse and I conducted a second community conversation with a large audience of many difference religious denominations, and we had a vigorous give and take with over 100 people from our area.

Exhibit visitors spent amazing amounts of time studying the various exhibit parts, and many returned several times. Our volunteers made sure everyone took the time to express their feelings about the Exhibit. One poignant moment was Betty Holley, Broader Social Impact Committee member and Presiding Elder of the Ohio Conference in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a professor of religious studies at Payne Theological Seminary in Cincinnati. Our Clergy event was just after the shooting of 9 in the church in Charleston, and she had to drive down that night. Yet, she still drove from Cincinnati and she said to me “I said I would attend and I would never go back on my word.” THAT was the defining moment of the exhibit for me. What a fantastic thing to have her follow through in Andover when she had to turn around and drive so far the other way. I was so touched that she still came to us.

Ongoing impact? Astounding benefit to the Library:

1) Continuing partnership with our school
2) Continuing impact from the volunteers in other efforts
3) Partnership and speaker ideas from CWRU (50 miles away)
4) Chamber of Commerce and Community appreciate and mention the Smithsonian visitors
Exploring Human Origins at Bangor Public Library - Summary Document

• Receptiveness of your visitors to the exhibit and associated programs.

About a quarter of all library visitors or approximately 4200 people came to see the exhibit. We estimated 957 adults, teens and children attended programs. Many visitors told us that they visited the library just to see the exhibit and some drove hours to see it. Docents volunteered at least 200 hours. Quite a few community members commented how proud they were that the Smithsonian was in Bangor. We expected to see more school groups, but the timing was difficult in part because the exhibit coincided with spring vacation and with preparation for AP exams.

• Concise overview of the mood or discussions in your community toward the subject of human evolution.

Discussions and comments about the exhibit were overwhelmingly positive. Visitors especially enjoyed Dr. Potts’ presentation and the attractiveness of the exhibit itself. It looked brand new, even though Bangor was the last of the nineteen libraries. Many patrons stayed for extended periods, there were lots of repeat visitors, and the exhibit was rarely empty. Based on comments, surveys, post-it notes and patron-created art, we suspect that pro-evolution patrons were more likely to visit or attend programs than more conservative patrons. For members of our community that have more conservative religious or philosophical views, we heard that the subject matter, specifically human evolution was a challenge. Several people voiced the opinion at programs that the conservative viewpoint needed more representation. One lady who visited the exhibit several times told the Library Director that although she does not believe in evolution, that she appreciated that the exhibit did not dictate evolution as an absolute but left open the possibility of a different scenario. We did see some post-it notes that expressed anti-evolution thoughts. We had hoped for representation from conservative churches at the panel discussion that the library ran featuring local clergy members, but did not have a clergy member from a conservative denomination accept the invitation to participate.

Representatives of organizations, local clergy members invited to the clergy discussion and tour and to present at a panel, and attendees at programs were impressed that engaging in civil conversation about a controversial topic was clearly important to both the originators of the exhibit and the library. Librarians jokingly tell people that we are not doing our job, if we don’t have something in the library to offend everyone. But the reality of making a large effort to support a range of voices and opinions was appreciated.

• One or two examples that illustrate how the exhibit was perceived by library visitors and/or the community at large.

Paraphrase of comments to a staff member from a mother handing in an essay written by her 9-year-old daughter: My daughter visited the exhibit 6 times and spent a lot of time thinking about and asking family members "What It Means to be Human". We are very pleased that the exhibit came to Bangor and created this opportunity for her.

From a visitor comment form: This is all brainwashing society we all know that apes aren't our ancestors this should be outlawed.

• Any examples of an ongoing impact of the tour in your community?

Several partners approached us to work together on summer, fall and winter programs. Books on evolution circulated well during the exhibit and continue to go out.
Exploring Human Origins at FFL: A Summary

The Fletcher Free Library in Burlington, Vermont hosted the Smithsonian Institution’s Exploring Human Origins exhibit February 17, 2017 to March 18, 2017. The exhibit arrived not long after a divisive Presidential election which precipitated Vermont’s largest public protest in recent history. In Burlington, contentious contract negotiations nearly led to a teacher strike in the district. Exploring Human Origins: What Does It Mean To Be Human could not have come at a better time for Burlington. An exhibit and community conversation centering on our shared humanity was a welcome counter-balance to a national discourse highlighting our differences and disparaging whole groups of Americans. Standing together in the midst of this exhibit, people of all ages, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds learned about the evolutionary journey of our species. Panel by panel, we traced our genetic connection to each other and to the wider natural world. We stood next to Lucy and walked in her footsteps; we held in our hands the skulls of our forbearers; learned how important cooperation was to our survival and that art was an indication we could thrive despite the challenges.

The library held lectures, workshops, teacher trainings, school tours, scavenger hunts, music concerts and film screenings on topics associated with exhibit. We painted one of our meeting rooms to look like a Lascaux cave mash-up and used it as a teaching space for kids and a backdrop for storytimes.

We received feedback about the exhibit from a variety of people. It was overwhelmingly positive from the Mayor’s office to pre-schoolers. EHO and its associated programming provided residents of this region an opportunity to engage with a Smithsonian exhibition without the cost of travel. Housing the exhibit in our library opened access to many who will never visit a Smithsonian museum. For some, the library is a more welcoming atmosphere than a museum. The exhibit’s month-long tenure allowed people to interact with the information repeatedly - discovering something new with each visit. It gave strangers license to talk with each other. It reminded people that libraries are not just hushed repositories of books. We are asked – ‘What’s the next exhibit? Do you think the Smithsonian will do something like that again?’ ‘What are you doing for the solar eclipse?’ More is expected of us, we expect more of ourselves.

The Gallup poll lists Vermont as the least religious state in the union. Misleading perhaps, as there are plenty of cars parked in front of churches in Burlington on Sunday morning, but it may account for the distinct lack of controversy from the religious community. We contacted every church, synagogue and mosque in our area with information about the exhibit and the Faith Leaders Exhibit tour. No one came forward with concerns or objections about the subject matter. The Right Reverend of the Episcopal church joined the Consultation panel in the first year, the Unitarian Universalist church and the synagogue also expressed interest, but ultimately no one took part in any of the public programs.

Hosting this exhibit was a stretch for us. Like many libraries, we have been underfunded and understaffed for many years. EHO provided a catalyst for investment in our library. The Smithsonian made it easier for us to build partnerships and raise funds to support this exhibit and now other library initiatives. We learned a great deal about hosting an exhibit (this was our first) and producing higher caliber programming. Our contacts at ALA and the Smithsonian were wonderfully helpful every step of the way. Libraries are evolving to best serve our communities. Exhibitions such as Exploring Human Origins aid us in that journey.
The traveling exhibit *Exploring Human Origins: What does it mean to be human?* was hosted by the Cedar City Library in the Park from October 16, 2015 to November 12, 2015. In preparation for this traveling exhibit, the Cedar City Library made a concerted effort to bring in as many pastors or clergymen from different local religions and spiritual beliefs on the planning committee and into the programming. As a result, in addition to the meeting with clergy men that was provided by the Smithsonian representatives, the Cedar City Library held a few more programs highlighting local religious beliefs. There was a program featuring a local Native American tribe member, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Hinduist, a representative from the Polynesian Islands, and more. Additionally, a Q & A was held featuring local Christian denominations such as LDS, Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and a Non-Denominational Christian minister. Finally, there was an event held featuring a local group who discussed their beliefs in extraterrestrials. Throughout the whole process the library strived to promote a positive atmosphere where different perspectives could be discussed, learned, and most of all, respected.

As a result of this effort to involve as many religion representatives as possible, the anticipated contention that arises from the topic of Evolution and religion was diminished although there were still some objections from the community. Overall, the library did not experience many conflicts while hosting the exhibit. In fact, there were many comments from patrons which expressed enthusiasm, excitement, and gratitude for bringing the traveling exhibit to the community. Located next to the exhibit was a guestbook where guest could leave feedback about the exhibit and or topic. Among the comments received were “Beautiful Exhibit;” “Wonderful, we are so lucky to have this in Cedar;” “Traveling exhibits are such a great idea and I hope to see more in the future;” and “Informative, makes me want to be an archeologist and read more National Geographic magazines.”

The resulting impact on the community in regards to the city library was huge. For the first time in many years, there was community involvement across the board with the library. Local university professors, elected officials, local educators, library board members, and the art community have been key partners in subsequent projects and programs. Conversations about Evolution were occurring inside and outside of the library. A billboard utilized by a local religious group near a local highway was changed to discuss the topic and a religious conference was held in town that discussed religion vs evolution shortly after the exhibit left.

Additionally, this exhibit has allowed the city library to take on a more prominent role within the community by helping the library learn how to create a conversational atmosphere among its patrons. Since the *Human Origins Exhibit*, the library has hosted similar exhibits featuring the Holocaust and WWII, the Civil War, as well as strive to create its own exhibit in relation to the celebration of the US entering WWI. Library also has been invited to join many community events, such as a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Festival with the local orchestra and university, thereby creating and solidifying new partnerships with mutual benefits for each party involved. Hosting the *Human Origins Exhibit* has been very beneficial to the Cedar City community.
Exploring Human Origins: What Does It Mean To Be Human?
Debrief Workshop, October 6, 2017
Cottage Grove Public Library Summary

During February and March of 2016, the Cottage Grove Public Library was truly honored to host The Smithsonian Institution national traveling exhibit, “Exploring Human Origins: What Does It Mean To Be Human”? Cottage Grove is a small town in rural Western Oregon, located in the upper Willamette Valley where the foothills of the Cascade Mountains reach out to meet the Coast Range Mountains. Cottage Grove is a fairly typical western small town, comprised of farmers, loggers, ranchers, as well as a new generation of residents who commute to work in the Eugene and Springfield Metro Area 20 miles north.

Our library hosted over 15 special events during the exhibit period. We started the exhibit tour with 5 special events during the first two days of the exhibit. These featured members of the Smithsonian team who had traveled to Cottage Grove, including Dr. Rick Potts, Dr. Brianna Pobiner, and Drs. Connie Bertka and Jim Miller. Cottage Grove community members were amazed and inspired by the fact that the Smithsonian would actually send some of the world’s top Anthropology Professionals to our little town, to share with us historic and contemporary science and understanding of discoveries related to Human Origins. Thank you Smithsonian!

The Smithsonian Human Origins Exhibit was a major event for the small town of Cottage Grove. Most local folks had heard of the Smithsonian, but most have never had the opportunity to travel east to Washington D.C. to visit the inspiring museums that comprise the Smithsonian Institution. The Cottage Grove community was receptive to the exhibit in a very positive manner, and truly embraced the Human Origins Exhibit and associated programming. All programs were well attended, with all major programs attracting between 100 and 160 people each. One local mother and her young children would visit the exhibit weekly, and would spend over an hour on each visit just “hanging out” within the exhibit enjoying the diversity of images and information that it offered; her children were especially attracted to the mother and child sculpture within the exhibit.

The Human Origins Exhibit and associated special events helped to inspire the Cottage Grove Public Library to reach out to a true diversity of patrons, organizations, and individuals within and beyond our community. We cultivated a connection and partnership with the University of Oregon Anthropology Department and Museum of Natural History that continues to live on long after the exhibit has moved on. Graduate students from U of O helped with programming and events at the local high school and at the library during the exhibit. The connection with U of O continues today as we continually look for collaborative ways to bring STEAM inspired programs and workshops into the library and into the classrooms of our local schools. We partnered with the U of O Natural History Museum Education Team this summer on programming as part of our Summer Reading Program, and we have made numerous field trips with local youth to the museum to explore the wonders of Natural History with these young patrons.

The Clergy Tour and Discussion, led by Smithsonian personnel, helped us connect with a segment of our community who previously had had little formal relationship with the library. Many members of the faith community visited the exhibit numerous times during the exhibit period, engaging in respectful and positive conversations about human evolution and how it relates to various religions. These folks continue to visit the library, and often truly respectful conversation ensues related to science and religion and the world around us.

The ongoing impact of the Human Origins Exhibit is evident here in Cottage Grove. Each week a library patron or someone on the street stops me and mentions how inspiring the exhibit was, and how lucky we were to have the opportunity to host such an important exhibit. High School teachers continue to contact me to borrow the skull collection for use in their classrooms. Most importantly, members of our community continue to visit the library as patrons and to attend events and programs; many of these are people who previously had little connection to the library. The exhibit helped us to connect to our community in a unique and powerful way, it helped us to forge collaborative partnerships with organizations and individuals that previously did not exist, but that now carry on to this day.

Overall, the mood of discussions in our community related to human evolution and to the exhibit was, and continues to be, very positive, inquisitive, respectful and inspired. With global climate change, local people are noticing changes to the ecology of our local environment, new species are arriving, some indigenous species are suffering and disappearing. There seems to be a visible evolution or change in the makeup of the natural world around us, and many members of our community seem eager to engage in discussion and action related to this and how it may affect human evolution.

Thank you Smithsonian Institution for sharing the Human Origin exhibit and team with our community!
-Pete Barrell, Cottage Grove Public Library
Ephrata Public Library

Receptiveness of your visitors to the exhibit and associated programs.

The large majority of our community was very receptive to the exhibition and embraced the opportunity to spend time among the panels, attend the programs and contribute to the dialogue. However, support was not as public as is typical for our community with our traveling exhibits. Sponsors voiced their concern about public backlash if their corporate name was to be associated with evolution. Clergy who assisted in the promotion of accompanying programs had negative feedback from multiple parishioners and members of our Advisory Board got enough public pressure that they resigned from their role.

Some saw the exhibition as a threat to their belief system. Surprisingly, this pushback did not come from the large Anabaptist population of Amish and Mennonites, but rather from the evangelical community. For them, the mere fact that the Library would host the exhibit was outrageous. This ultimately resulted in a boycott of the Library during the entirety of the exhibit’s time in our Library, as well as other incidents, some of which are mentioned below.

Despite the negative responses, the number of visitors suggest that the controversy may have prompted people to visit who otherwise wouldn’t have.

• Concise overview of the mood or discussions in your community toward the subject of human evolution.

The exhibit was receiving much discussion before it ever even arrived at our Library. From the moment the press release was sent, we began receiving letters of complaint, angry phone calls and public pressure to withdraw from the exhibit tour. Others within the community were surprised that the subject of human evolution was causing such public outcry.

Enough of our community members shared positive feedback to encourage us that we had made the correct decision to pursue hosting the exhibit. “This exhibit was needed,” said one long-time supporter.

• One or two examples that illustrate how the exhibit was perceived by library visitors and/or the community at large.

A website was created, warning in its headline, “For 6,000 years the devil has been questioning God's Holy Word. Now his deception Has come to Ephrata.” The site gave visitors suggestions for filling out the sticky notes associated with the exhibit and encouraged entries to the Library’s essay contest. We also had some residents who took issue with the Neanderthal statue, tweeting “Apparently what it means to be human to @ephratapubliclibrary is to show little children statues of naked people. Or subhuman?” Another tweet complained to the local municipality, followed by #obscene.

• Any examples of an ongoing impact of the tour in your community?

The Library has always been a place for dialogue and education, but the exhibit reinforced that fact to an even wider group of community members. As a result of the exhibit, patrons became more empowered to communicate with Library leadership. In addition, our community has learned that public libraries are the ideal places for these types of conversations. The experience has made it easier to have the difficult discussions for subsequent initiatives.
Exploring Human Origins at Tompkins County Public Library

TCPL was very pleased to be selected as one of the Libraries to host this wonderful exhibit. We had the exhibit during November and December 2016 but because of local interest and support continued our own exhibit and programming in conjunction with the Paleontological Research Institution (PRI) through the end of February. Undoubtedly the prestige of the Smithsonian made an enormous difference. Many patrons commented on how wonderful it was for the Smithsonian to make this exhibit available.

As soon as we reached out to the community for support for our application we found all segments of the community were receptive to the subject matter and interested in both presenting and attending programs. We were prepared for negative responses and possible public demonstrations but received none.

Anecdotally we learned there were people in the community who support the teaching of Creation Science and Intelligent Design and not just within the religious community. We did not hear from them during the exhibit. We did meet a member of the Cornell Religious community who felt the presentation was one sided and did not include alternative theories. We also had opposition from some scientists to the presentation of Creation Stories during our programming. The programs offered by Eric Clay of Shared Journeys invited different opinions but TCPL has not been asked to present more similar programs or expand on them. Eric Clay did interview Rick Potts and Connie Bertka on his radio program following the Community Conversation.

Visitors to the community and our regular patrons appreciated the exhibit and many came to all programs both during the time of the exhibit and our follow-up exhibit in January and February. Several were disappointed that holiday commitments prevented them attending all programs.

Education Director at Temple Beth-El, Rabbi Suzanne Brody said “The exhibit and the related program that I did here at Temple Beth El were both very well received. I heard our community members talking about the exhibit while it was in residence, but have not heard much follow up since then. I did not hear changes in attitudes, but certainly all that I did hear was positive. Also, the adults in our community appreciated being able to discuss this with our teens through the session that I ran.”

All members of the Discovery Trail in Ithaca held related programs and their Director reported “I heard from many different community partners (teachers, members of the KDT Advisory Committee, BOCES staff) that they were excited about the different events offered and wanted to attend different venues. The History Centers map lecture was very successful and they planned a follow-up event. I think the event was overall really appreciated by the Ithaca community.”

Youth Services reported that several adult patrons stopped by their desk around the opening of EHO to express their support for it and how pleased and excited they were with the exhibit and its contents. Our Teen Librarian also observed many families making their way through the exhibit and chatting about different aspects of it. Many young patrons enjoyed playing with and examining the set of skulls.

It is difficult to assess the long term impact of the exhibit in our community. However, the books and “Great Courses” DVDs that were added to the collection and displayed near the exhibit were very popular while the exhibit was at the Library. They are continuing to circulate well now indicating the community continues to be interested in this subject.
Orion Township Library Summary

- Our community was very receptive to both the exhibit and the programs. Many patrons thanked us for hosting the exhibit, and were especially happy with the programs put on by the Smithsonian scientists. We hosted an afterhours reception in conjunction with the Official Exhibit Opening: An Evening of Science, and over 75 patrons mingled with the scientists and viewed the exhibit. Our local school system, however, was not willing to help with marketing because they were afraid the topic was too controversial for more conservative parents.

- Overall it seemed that most of our community believed in the science of evolution, and could resolve their religions’ teachings and scientific evidence. They enjoyed learning more about the topic through the exhibit and the programs. There was a small segment of our community that expressed creationism views. The exhibit certainly sparked conversations between patrons at the programs, and also between visitors and staff. I personally can recall several conversations I had with patrons sparked by the exhibit. Our audiences were very engaged during all of our programs, according to the Drs. Potts and Pobinar.

- Examples of how the exhibit was perceived in our community:
  - A women came to the library from a suburb an hour’s drive from Orion Township specifically to see the exhibit and raved to one of our librarians about how wonderful it was.
  - A Patron stated on a Visitor Comment Card: “Wow!!! What a wonderful program. The concept of bringing the Smithsonian to the community is terrific.... Please do more”!
  - Although the vast majority of our patron and community comments were positive, we did receive a complaint about the nudity on one of the panels, and the placement of the exhibit in the lobby “we were upset that we had no other route into the library except through pictures and a statue of naked women”.

- Examples of ongoing community impact:
  - We still have patrons mentioning the exhibit; one patron stopped to talk to me just this month and told me how much she enjoyed the exhibit and the programs, and thanked us for hosting science related informational programs and hoped we would have more.

  - As a result of attending the exhibit and the Clergy Tour and Discussion, Lake Orion United Methodist Church asked us this year to partner with them in their successful monthly Community Conversations which meet at a local restaurant, and involve speakers covering a different social justice topic each month.

  - The skulls are housed for the Oakland County Schools Learning Center which services all the schools in Oakland County, and the Media Consultant commented: “I talked to our science consultant, and he had heard about the exhibit from a teacher in your area. Yes, we are interested... our plan is going to be for me to catalog the kit and for our science consultant to help me publicize it with science/biology teachers.”
Patron Receptiveness

Clearly our community enjoyed having the exhibit here in the library. We are asked quite often if/when we will be hosting another exhibit. We’ve been keeping an eye on Smithsonian/ALA exhibits, but haven’t seen a whole lot of programs; finally, we just decided to pay for an exhibit (coincidentally, we will be hosting an exhibit in October– and it’s going to be paid for by City of Milpitas!)

Patron turnout for most of the programs was excellent. We had over 120 attend the opening event with Dr. Potts. We had a bit more difficulty with the Conversations. We had about 20 for Community Conversation and four for the Religious Conversation. Other events independently arranged were averaging about 60 per program, except for 3 documentaries that saw over 100 for each showing.

Overview of mood or discussions in the community

The overall mood was positive. The only negatives I can recall were some of the post-it notes which rejected the exhibit for religious reasons and a reply to an online events post that criticized the exhibit for the same reason. Our elected officials were extremely enthusiastic and attended many of the events we held. Teachers were excited to bring students and we hosted several hundred children on the tours that we held. We submitted hundreds of pictures and probably thousands of post-it notes.

Examples: Perception by library visitors and ongoing impact

Following is what her father wrote about his daughter’s experience after visiting the exhibit:

“While libraries do entertain and educate, much more importantly, libraries can ignite the imagination and the passion that burns long past the last chapter of the book or the final scene of the video. It is exciting to witness the spark of adventure light in a young child’s mind just because of a visit to the library. Last year (2016), a young student from the San Ramon Valley Unified School District came to the Milpitas library as part of a school outing, to see the Smithsonian’s travelling exhibit, Human Origins. “I don’t know what it was”, says her teacher, “but she couldn’t watch enough videos or read enough books on the subject ... She went on to write her own Human Origins presentation for competition, earned gold medals at county and regional events, and will shortly be competing at the state level. What has made it all the more special is that [the Milpitas Library] has gone out of [its] way to facilitate use of the Smithsonian’s replica skulls in her presentation”.

We have also had success loaning out the skull kits. Since the traveling exhibit left we have loaned out the skulls about 16-18 times, not only to public school teachers, which account for most of the checkouts, but also to parents of children who are home-schooled.
Exploring Human Origins: What Does It Mean To Be Human?
Otis Library, Norwich, CT
January 7 – February 3, 2017

Receptiveness of your visitors to the exhibit and associated programs:
Attendees expressed their excitement in having an opportunity to view a world-class exhibit in their hometown. This, along with the programming provided by the Smithsonian Team, was appreciated by regular library patrons as well as first-time visitors to Otis Library. The programming opportunities that were presented through the exhibit were numerous; art, music, dance, literature, and science programs all tied into the theme of “What Does It Mean To Be Human?” The programs were all well attended and received rave reviews!

Concise overview of the mood or discussions in your community toward the subject of human evolution:
We did not know what type of reception the exhibit would receive, so we began promoting the exhibit in June 2016 through our Summer Reading Program for children and teens and through various programs for adults. The schools were enthusiastic about the subject matter, with over 42 classes studying the theme of human evolution and touring the exhibit.

The exhibit received quite a bit of local press coverage before it arrived and during the time it was at Otis Library, which was all positive. This helped tremendously in creating a real “buzz” about the exhibit and the subject, which resulted in over 10,000 visits from people all over the state of Connecticut, plus Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

One or two examples that illustrate how the exhibit was perceived by library visitors and/or the community at large:
The exhibit seemed to leave the community wanting to know more about the subject of human evolution. Otis Library's Executive Director, Robert Farwell, was invited to speak at the Norwich Historical Society's Annual Meeting on Sunday, April 2, 2017. He was asked to give the talk "Perfecting Humanity: The Norwich State Hospital and the Science of Racial Purity," which was first presented at Otis Library as part of the programs offered during the "Exploring Human Origins" exhibit in January 2017.

Any examples of an ongoing impact of the tour in your community:
The local middle and high schools have expressed an interest in borrowing the skulls as a study aid for their classrooms. We now have them catalogued and have begun lending them to teachers. Our Youth Services Librarian also takes the skulls with her when she visits the schools. The books and videos we purchased for our collection pertaining to Human Origins are also a great resource to the schools.

The feedback we received from our community shows the need for educational opportunities for all ages, beyond that of normal library programming.
Exploring Human Origins in Oelwein, Iowa
Susan Macken

“A small piece of the Smithsonian has arrived in Fayette County”, reads the opening sentence of an article in the Cedar Rapids Gazette. Note that this is something special. A city newspaper writes an article about our town sixty miles to the north. What an honor to have an exhibit from the Smithsonian Institution visit a community library in small-town Iowa. As one visitor stated, “Thank you for bringing this exhibit to Northeast Iowa. This may be the only time our children see a Smithsonian exhibit.” Residents recognized that this was a unique opportunity to learn about human origins from a respected source. Every day, library customers, as well as people who were not regular library users, would come and carefully read each panel. Schoolchildren would bring their parents to the library to see the exhibit after they had toured the exhibit with their school class. One student remarked, “This is awesome! Can you do one for Under the Sea?”

Some residents with strong creationist beliefs struggled to meld the Biblical timeline with the exhibit’s evolutionary timeline. Even though some people left comments with Biblical passages supporting their beliefs highlighting this discrepancy, or chose not to view the exhibit, there was never any confrontation. Perhaps no confrontation arose because all of our presenters were well versed in their area of expertise and merely presented information based on supporting documents or observations. In addition, none of the presenters came with the intent of converting beliefs. Most importantly, there was plenty of opportunity during all the variety of programs for people to voice their concerns or ask questions. One program attendee recounted, “Great discussion! Enjoyed the speakers and wish they could be here longer. What an exciting topic for thought and discussion! Thanks to all who made this possible!” The scope of the exhibition, which was set up in the library proper, was impressive. One three-year-old stepping into the library to attend Story Time proclaimed, “What happened to my library!”

Library staff gave several tours of the exhibit to school classes, various clubs and organizations, and residents from a number of care facilities. The panel that was the most thought provoking for all ages was the panel referring to the percentage of DNA various living organisms share with humans. It was almost more intriguing to discover how human DNA compared with the DNA of a banana rather than the chimpanzee! One visitor shared, “My friends and I have exchanged ideas over evolution and creationism, and this exhibit provides interesting facts to contribute to our discussions. I learned so much!” Fortuitously, the news on the discovery of a new human species was released during the time the exhibit was at our library. How exciting to feel the connection our library had to the people discovering these scientific developments as this news explodes over the internet and news programs, and appears on the cover of National Geographic Magazine. “Walking into a library in such a small community and seeing this exhibit truly delighted me!” said a visitor. They continued to say, “Seeing higher learning reaching the small town fills my heart with joy!” As for our library as a host site, the lasting impact of the Exploring Human Origins exhibit is not something that can be tracked or documented by statistics. Exploring Human Origins influenced thoughts, tested beliefs, and unlocked minds to new concepts. To the people exposed to the lessons, and stories, and pictures, and artifacts of evolution, their lives have been enriched with knowledge and, now, they have a better understanding of what it means to be human.
Summary - Peoria Public Library, Peoria, Illinois

• **Receptiveness of your visitors to the exhibit and associated programs.**

Most visitors were very receptive to the main exhibit, our auxiliary exhibits and the programs. Attendance continued to build at each program by word of mouth. Dr. Fred Smith did a tour for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, followed by a luncheon during which he spoke. That event was very well received and that group reached out and brought many more people. It was summer and over the 4th of July holiday, so we did not have outreach to local schools and many people were traveling. We linked the program in to our annual Summer Reading program with the theme *We Dig Summer Reading* and many activities focusing on archaeology and other sciences. Some parents brought children downtown to Main Library to see the exhibit because of Summer Reading. We also had the Dream Center, a church center that provides housing for the homeless and summer programs for disadvantaged children, take a tour and do activities. It was obvious that the children were fascinated and came without preformed ideas.

• **Concise overview of the mood or discussions in your community toward the subject of human evolution.**

While the exhibit and programs tried to move people out of embedded thinking into “What does it mean to be human” those with strong opinions quickly revert to their standard position and outwardly appeared to be immovable. The discussions were civil, and people were interested in examining the evidence from a different point of view.

• **One or two examples that illustrate how the exhibit was perceived by library visitors and/or the community at large.**

I was still setting up the last of the exhibit when a man came through. Looked at many things and then told me, “This isn’t right, it isn’t in the Bible. You can’t go against your church.” I tried to engage him in a discussion about what it means to be human but even after that he reverted to his stance. Some comments illustrate how others perceived the exhibit. Program participant: "What a wonderful opportunity to listen to the interactional scientist and the community. Thank you for not shying away from the tough questions of faith and science. For the record - I am a Christian, and I have no problem accepting scientific ideas. The Bible is a book of faith, not a book of science."

Program participant: "Excellent exhibit. Programs helped make the exhibit make more sense."

We had a Secular Humanist who came to every single program and presented his views and we had many believers in evolution who were somewhat impatient with those who were not like-minded. There was no open protest to the exhibit, but I think attendance from those who hold a Creationist view was minimal, including at programs for the clergy and teachers.

• **Any examples of an ongoing impact of the tour in your community?**

Many of those in attendance agreed they would like to see more exhibits about science. There was bus tour locally to the Creationist Museum but it was cancelled and rescheduled for low numbers. The Creationist tour went the week of September 25, 2017, more than a year after the exhibit was here.
Receptiveness of your visitors to the exhibit and associated programs.
PCCLD started promoting the exhibit in advance of receiving the exhibit. The programs that took place prior to the exhibit were focused on religious and spiritual aspects of “Human Origins.” This helped to garner interest in the exhibit. With almost 3,000 attending programs and close to 8,000 visitors to the exhibit, the Pueblo community was extremely receptive of the exhibit.

Concise overview of the mood or discussions in your community toward the subject of human evolution.

There was a spirit of curiosity and respect throughout. The mood of the discussions and programs was one of respect. Most people feel that the Library is a place where discussions can be open and take place in a safe environment that is focused on life-long learning and also the Smithsonian as a respected organization helped to foster an environment where the public could learn more in a respectful and engaging way. By providing the opportunity to hear from and provide multiple perspectives, it allowed people to not only engage in a conversation but to feel as if they were a welcome part of the conversation. Even if they did not agree with the subject matter of the exhibit they engaged in a very respectful and meaningful conversation. The clergy event was a significant program and really helped to engage with the community. We had one Christian church that promoted their own events in contradiction to the exhibit but they did it in a way that was respectful and not combative. Pueblo has large Hispanic and Catholic populations. I think it was important to hear from the Catholic leadership that the ideas portrayed in the exhibit were not in contradiction with the Catholic doctrine and beliefs. A local priest even wrote an op-ed piece discussing the views of the church concerning evolution. The students who were able to visit the exhibit were very interested and engaged. We engaged students in fun activities like leaving a handprint and participating in a race between a biped and a quadruped, even the high school students had fun learning about prehistory.

One or two examples that illustrate how the exhibit was perceived by library visitors and/or the community at large.

I had such a wonderful community planning committee. The committee discussed with staff and volunteers, how we would handle complaints and any type of protests that might arise from the exhibit. On one of the first days after the exhibit opened, I had an experience that is memorable. An older Hispanic gentleman, who reminded me of my uncle or grandfather, came up to the desk with a look on his face that he was upset. He said “I want to tell you something!” I thought, “oh no here it is—the first complaint!” “He stated that “he felt very strongly that we needed more publicity for the exhibit.” This was one example to show that there was a generous interest in those curious in learning more about the subject matter. This exhibit brought people from around the region that had never been to the library before and many I have not seen since the exhibit. People specifically came to view the exhibit and attend the programs.

Any examples of an ongoing impact of the tour in your community?

I still receive comments from patrons such as this: “It is really hard to beat the exhibit you had on origins of man.” This exhibit really helped PCCLD to think about news ways to engage the
community in conversations that could be perceived as sensitive or viewed through multiple lenses. The success of this exhibit really exposed how interested our community is in learning about new and diverse subjects. We now know that there is a genuine interest in subjects related to anthropology, religion, science and culture. We would like to begin an annual program that continues to focus on the questions that were raised as part of the exhibit and to explore these kinds of topics. I am also working with our local archaeological society to promote the skull resources and visit schools to provide the training that we learned through the educational workshop.
At Skokie Public Library, we saw a need for this type of programming — and to help adults and youth recognize that STEAM learning is for all ages!

Volunteers:
- For this exhibit, we created a “docent” program for volunteers, training them to be community experts sharing their knowledge.
- 14 docent volunteers dedicated 240 hours of their time to guiding and surveying patrons
- “I gained an immense joy and confidence in knowing people walked away with a little more clarity.” – Eric Rodriguez, docent volunteer

Exhibit visits and programs:
- Between September 9 and October 3, 2016, 14,367 patrons of all ages stopped by the library to check out Exploring Human Origins.
- The Opening exhibit reception, with members of the Blackfoot Performance Group and a community art installation, drew 85 attendees.
- The 2 Smithsonian-led public programs – the evening science lecture and the community conversation – drew 114 and 53 attendees, respectively.
- We hosted a spoken-word workshop with Young Chicago Authors, at which 16 young adults explored what it means to be human.
- We hosted 2 community-collaborated events on faith-based origin theories and morality, with respective attendance of 101 and 56.
- We hosted a “Be the Scientist” workshop and drop-in activities in BOOMbox for young audiences.
- We hosted 2 sessions of “I Am a Scientist,” giving patrons hands-on opportunities to explore their “inner space.”

“What Does It Mean to be Human?”
- Continuing the conversation was the key to the exhibit’s success.
- Some of the patron responses to this question (on the post-it panel): “To have powers and have lots of parts in your body;” “... empathy, compassion, community...” “To eat pizza!” “To make mistakes over & over, yet resolve to do better next time...”

Partnerships
- Community partners played a major role in helping us shape the ALA proposal, reaching special audiences in the community, and providing us with unique insight into program development
- We partnered with: Lincoln Junior High School, Northwestern University, Oakton Community College, Oliver McCracken Middle School, Temple Judea Mizpah, and the Village of Skokie
EHO 1 Page Summary  Vanessa Strange,  Spokane, WA North Spokane Library

Exploring Human Origins (EHO) was a tremendous opportunity for people in our community who otherwise would not be able to see a high quality exhibit like this. We had quite a range of responses to the exhibit and associated programs, from enthusiastic positivity to disapproval. We anticipated controversy, but when the time came, there were few verbal confrontations. Those who expressed dismay did so through comment cards or the sticky note wall. I prepared a guide for staff with talking points on how to simply answer the most common questions. So for example, when the “did you spend my tax dollars on this?” question came up, staff was able to turn it into a positive conversation by explaining that we were chosen through a competitive grant process and the exhibit came at no cost to us.

We all braced ourselves, but most of the response was positive. We had unprecedented media coverage locally, all of it positive. We had overwhelmingly high program attendance, and many verbal and written compliments. It’s no small point that the these were some of the highest attended programs for adults that our library district has ever had. It not only speaks to the quality of this exhibit, but also our community's desire for engagement with science.

During the exhibit and after, while minds may or not have been changed, discussions were civil and respectful in tone. It can be said that before this program, human evolution was not discussed in the community at all. The conservative environment in our area is not receptive to the science of human evolution, so a month long event really is a significant step. I think folks from all perspectives were heartened by the content of the project and the positive tone.

A local group of secular humanists came out in force to the programs and shared out the information through their channels to encourage more local people to come. There are not very many opportunities around here to be “out” as a supporter of the science of evolution. It became a source of validation for this minority in our region.

Nearly everyone perceived the exhibit positively, in particular it did not alienate those who wanted to find fault. We received adamant thanks for bringing it here and appreciation for “having the guts to apply for this.” A local Methodist minister discussed it with her congregation and had studied anthropology herself. This is one example of the many conversations that otherwise wouldn't have happened in the library.

EHO has an ongoing impact in several ways. It has affirmed our findings that adults in our area are craving science and other lifelong learning opportunities. It's always great to get thank you notes from kids, and it gives me hope for the future that a seed was planted for a love of science. This project raised our profile in the community, highlights the library as a resource and helps us encourage lifelong learning.
The Springfield-Greene County Library District hosted the *Exploring Human Origins: what does it mean to be human?* Exhibit from May 7 through June 3 of 2016 at the district’s flagship branch, the Library Center. Anticipating pushback from people in our traditionally evangelical and conservative area, Library Administration took great care to prepare our community for this exhibit by putting out a message that this was a *conversation*, not a debate. The Library Director wrote an op-ed piece in our local newspaper, talking points were distributed to all staff and consultation panel members and volunteers, and each interview done with the media focused heavily on that message. However, some people in our community still expressed anger that the library was hosting an exhibit containing content they found to be offensive. Sadly, many of the complaints we received confirmed the fact that they truly hadn’t taken the time to look at the content of the display. Several of the sticky notes and patron comment forms made statements that we (humans) did not come from monkeys, that humans were created on the 6th day in God’s image, that evolution is just a theory and not fact, and asked when we would do an exhibit on God and Creationism. However, despite numerous threats to do so, no groups showed up to formally protest the exhibit or program events.

In fact, by the end of the first week, we found that the response from patrons was overwhelmingly positive and significantly more of the comments we received praised the Library for bringing the exhibit to Springfield.

“Thank you for this exhibit. I’m sure it wasn’t easy & offended a lot of people, but I’m proud of our library for being a center of science & learning. Thank you!”

“I am absolutely thrilled about his exhibit! Springfield has a phenomenal library system and this exhibit continues to proud tradition. The programming related to the exhibit is extensive and interesting. --Very happy taxpayer”

“My 6 yr. old girl and I were here & read every sign & studied the artifacts. We talked about the little boy mother sculpture all the way home. ‘It's like our 2 year old & you, mommy!' Tonight, our family is here & we walked in & said 'Daddy we have to show you this! Now, she's showing him the posters!’”

“WOW!!! Thank you so much for bringing this exhibit to Springfield! Bold & brave. We need this education. Know that so many of us support 100% Keep sharing history.”

A total of 48,911 visitors saw the exhibit and over 1,000 people attended the sixteen events. This showed us there is substantial hunger in our community for scientific programs and exhibits. At the end of each program, people did not want to leave; even after closing there were groups of people still engaging with each other in our parking lot. The comments that we heard most were “thank you” and “we want more!” And many patrons requested future traveling exhibits. Recently, we hosted a traveling exhibit from NASA which was very well received. Also in this year, inspired by the Smithsonian’s example, our Local History and Genealogy Department has created its own traveling exhibit, of the same exhibit frame-work, called “Over There: Missouri and the Great War.” This exhibit draws from the departments’ work creating a database of artifacts documenting the role of Missouri in World War I. The World War I exhibit spent a week at the Library Center and was viewed by 12,000 visitors, and then started its’ statewide, year-long tour at the Capitol Building in Jefferson City where it was viewed by 25,700 visitors.

On April 22, 2017, Springfield demonstrated its’ support of the Sciences and Scientific research by hosting a March for Science. Nearly 1,000 people joined the Springfield March on a cold and rainy day. And, for the third year in a row, the Library will partner with Missouri State University’s Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Drury University’s Biology Department to host hands-on family activities celebrating International Darwin Day; past events have seen upwards of 100 people in attendance. Hosting *Exploring Human Origins* helped the Library set a stage to further serve those in our community who support the Sciences and History with excellent programs, speakers, and a place to congregate in a respectful and peaceful manner.

Submitted by Jessie East
Library Center Branch Manager, Springfield-Greene County Library District
Exploring Human Origins at the Wyckoff Public Library

The exhibit and the associated programs were extremely well received. The exhibit itself was toured by 1,213 community members, and the 12 associated programs attracted 490 visitors. The two busiest days were Election Day and October 18 on which the Evening of Science was held, with 240 and 112 visitors respectively. Patron feedback was overwhelmingly positive! Many people attended multiple programs and returned with friends or family after their initial visit. People from neighboring towns also visited. The experience demonstrated to our staff that there is a strong desire for community programs related to science topics and presentations by experts in the field. We truly underestimated the level of interest in this topic. It also allowed the library to focus programming for all ages around a common theme which gave us a sense of unity.

Another highlight of the exhibit experience was how engaged participants were. The programs presented by the Smithsonian staff were highly interactive. The Q&A session held after the Evening of Science included very thoughtful questions touching on various aspects of the exhibit. Attendees at the Community Conversation were very open and respectful of each other’s beliefs. Visitors enjoyed the post-it activity. The ability to give feedback and share their perspective was highly valued.

Fortunately for our library, our school district focuses on human origins at two grade levels. In sixth grade the students learn about the topic of human origins in their Social Studies classes and in eighth grade students explore the topic in their Science class. As a result there was a great deal of support and cooperation between the library and the schools. Seventeen teachers from the middle school attended the Educator Training. The set of skulls has been borrowed by both 6th and 8th grade teachers in Wyckoff, as well as by a Wyckoff resident who teaches in another district. Sixth grade students were provided with a scavenger hunt (I modified one shared on the listserv) and awarded extra credit for visiting the exhibit and returning the completed form. Many students were accompanied by parents and siblings. I also created a "Look & Talk" handout for our younger visitors.

The exhibit was on the lower level of our library, which is generally closed when there is not a program being held. We had the exhibit monitored during 90% of the hours that the exhibit was open. This provided staff with an opportunity to engage community members. Library staff were seen as "experts" by patrons. Our staff very much enjoyed learning about the topic and having a change of pace from their regular duties.

Here is some of the written feedback we received:

Adult visitor, “This is an excellent and interesting exhibit. I appreciate the clarity of the display items and the way in which the information is presented. The information is extremely clear, and the entire exhibit offers a solid summary of the origins of humans. It made me think and reflect.”

Middle School educator, “One key bit of feedback from the students was that they were surprised how easy it was to relate to the different hominids. They talked about the size (especially how short Lucy was), the faces, and how they could really envision themselves holding and using some of the tools. From my perspective, enough students went that it provided plenty of experts to breathe a lot more life into our discussions of prehistoric ancestors than in other years.”