



On behalf of all members of The Paleontological Society, we would like to express significant concern about the future of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia (ANSP), both the public-facing museum as well as the historical fossil collections. The Paleontological Society, founded in 1908, is an international nonprofit organization to advance knowledge of paleontology and understanding of the evolution of life through research, education, and public outreach.

ANSP is the oldest natural history museum in the United States, boasting some of the earliest fossil discoveries in North America and providing a home for many of our nation's most historic fossil specimens. These collections characterize our growing understanding of the natural world in the 19th century in a way no other museum can. For example, the Academy collections include those discovered by scientists that include Joseph Leidy and Edward Drinker Cope (of "Bone Wars" fame), and our third President Thomas Jefferson, all of whom helped initiate and build the scientific enterprise of the United States. Internationally recognized as a major scientific institution, researchers from around the world have visited the Academy to conduct groundbreaking research, from describing species new to science, to discovering key fossils that mark the transition of vertebrates from ocean to land 375 million years ago, to developing the geologic time scale and framework using fossils, which was required for the discovery of natural resources that fueled the industrial revolution in North America. The ANSP collections are unparalleled in not only scientific significance, but historical importance as well.

In addition to the world-class and irreplaceable collections cared for by the dedicated curatorial staff at the Academy, its history of public engagement and education is unmatched. Generations of families have passed through its exhibits, particularly the Dinosaur Hall, to view specimens such as the first mounted dinosaur skeleton in the world, among other natural wonders. Natural history museums are so incredibly important to communities, both large and small, and inspire visitors to celebrate their shared heritage and the stories that inspired them. Many of today's citizens had their first ever exposure to science through their local museums, expanding on what they knew to be possible as a career in paleontology or simply opening their eyes to Earth's incredible history. And while it is readily apparent that paleontological collections are vital to scientific research, they are equally essential to our future as a scientifically knowledgeable society.

We strongly encourage leadership at the Academy of Natural Sciences and Drexel University to find a solution for the future which ensures that not only the museum exhibits remain open to the public, but that the collections remain cared for by professional curatorial staff and are fully accessible to the scientific community. Since 1812, the Academy has dedicated itself to its mission, stated as, "understanding the natural world and inspiring everyone to care for it." We implore the Board to not abandon this mission and to retain its commitment to building knowledge and sparking curiosity for the next generation of paleontologists and people of all ages.

Sincerely,

Leadership of the Paleontological Society