

AMERICAN  
PHILOSOPHICAL  
SOCIETY

Library  
& Museum

# Mendel+



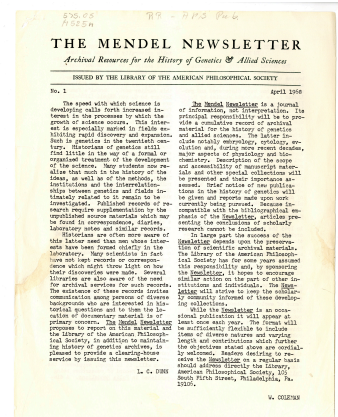
Newsletter  
of the  
Center for  
the History  
of Science

In case you missed it, July 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and here at APS we've been planning for this event for quite some time. The [Center for the History of Science](#) (CHS) is no exception. Since our launch, we've been working on ["America's Scientific Revolutionaries,"](#) a two-year initiative funded by the Richard Lounsbery Foundation exploring the contributions of scientific thought during the Age of Revolutions. We're excited to highlight the latest updates from this project in this special issue of *Mendel+*.

But as subscribers to this Newsletter know, the scope of the APS's collections and history extend well beyond the 18th century. From AI to obstetrics, *Arabidopsis thaliana* to horned lizards, read on to learn more about the latest additions to our holdings, upcoming programs and events, and other "revolutionary" endeavors.

## What's in this Newsletter:

- Project Spotlight:  
America's Scientific Revolutionaries
- Collection Updates
- Programs & Events
- CHS Blog Highlights



## Project Highlights

### "America's Scientific Revolutionaries" (Jeffery Appelhans, Lounsbery Postdoctoral Fellow and Vincent Femia, Lounsbery Research Assistant)

The Lounsbery team continues to develop strategies for sharing stories about early American science and the resonances of that work in the present. Following the completion of the [Makematic videos](#) in July 2025, our focus has shifted to the preparation of educational materials to accompany them and to the development of a series of public programs hosted at institutions across the country.

Working in collaboration with the APS's Education team, we have completed two resource packets exploring the lives of [James Madison](#) and [Catharine Haines](#). These packets include

short historical contexts and learning activities created in accordance with PA Educational Standards, and explore themes that speak to both science and humanities curricula.

Another major focus over the past few months has been on programming. On September 25-26, 2025 the APS co-hosted a conference with the Science History Institute and the College of Physicians on “[Science & Society in the Age of Revolutions.](#)” The conference featured six panels and over twenty papers exploring this topic, and proceedings from the event will be published as part of a special issue of the *Transactions*. The keynote discussion from the September conference also served as the inspiration for the opening plenary session, “Science in American Life: Reflecting on the Public History of Science at the U.S. 250th,” held at the 2025 meeting of the History of Science Society Meeting in New Orleans.



(Above) Full-house in-person at Philadelphia for the September conference.

(Below) HSS President Evelyn Hammonds introduces the Opening Plenary on “Science in American Life: Reflecting on the Public History of Science at the U.S. 250th,” featuring Jesse Smith and Judy Kaplan from the Science History Institute, Flori Pierri from MIT, Peter Sachs Collopy from Caltech, Erin McLeary from The College of Physicians, and Adrianna Link from APS. Photo credit: Ben Gross, 2025.



More recently, our attention has turned towards planning a series of public programs hosted around the country exploring the legacies of our six scientific revolutionaries and how they relate to the work of contemporary scientists. The first program will focus on the work of John and William Bartram, and will be held on March 7, 2026 at Mission Garden in Tucson, Arizona. The conversation will explore the histories and legacies of botanical gardens throughout the Americas, including Bartram's Garden in Philadelphia, the Jardín Etnobiológico in Oaxaca, and Mission Garden's importance to the greater Tucson region.

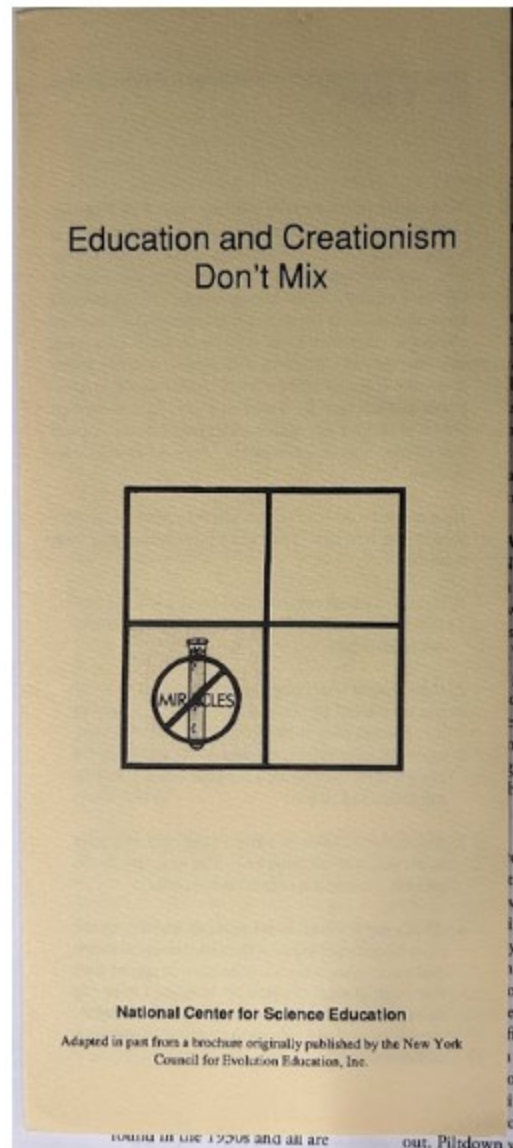
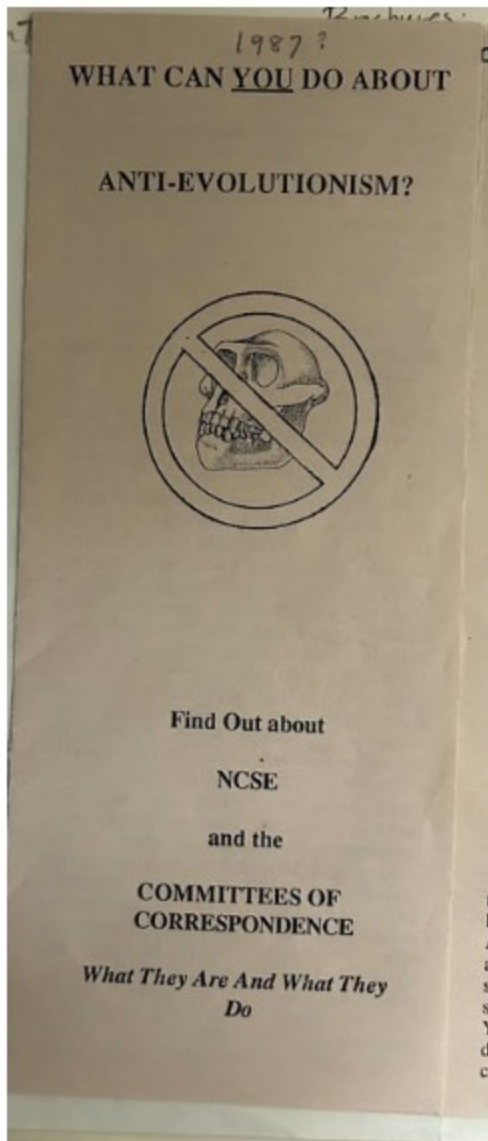
The panelists will discuss the impact of colonialism on plant cultivation and exchange, the relationship between botanical gardens and Indigenous food sovereignty, and the material challenges and practical considerations involved with stewarding gardens as sites for scientific and public engagement. Other programs planned for this series include conversations with Sara Seager (MIT) reflecting on David Rittenhouse's contributions to the 1769 Transit of Venus and its impact on her studies of exoplanets, and Paul Offit (Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania/University of Pennsylvania Medicine) discussing Benjamin Rush and histories of American public health. Check back soon for more details about these and other upcoming programs in this series.

Beyond programming, Vincent Femia has continued writing and research for the ongoing blog series, "[Science at the Roots](#)," which highlights the lives and work of lesser-known figures in early American science. Recent blogs have explored the stories of [healer Elizabeth Paschall](#) and [surveyors and astronomers Andrew Ellicott and Benjamin Banneker](#). Additional blogs that have been written and are awaiting publication examine John and Nathan Sellers, Charles Willson Peale, and Francis Hopkinson. These forthcoming blogs highlight science's intimate relationships with both art and industry.

Work is also underway on a digital history project called "The Scientific City." The project creates an interactive digital map of Philadelphia and the wider region circa 1800, populated with individuals, institutions, and events connected to the city's scientific history. Data points on the map share previous Lounsbury work, such as Makematic videos and blogs, as well as archival material held at APS and primary sources that bring the stories of individuals, institutions, and events to life. This digital history project will continue to grow and develop throughout the spring and summer, offering an additional educational resource connected to Lounsbury research.

# Collection Updates

## Recently-Processed Materials National Center for Science Education (NCSE) Collection (Gina Pungello, History of Science Project Specialist)

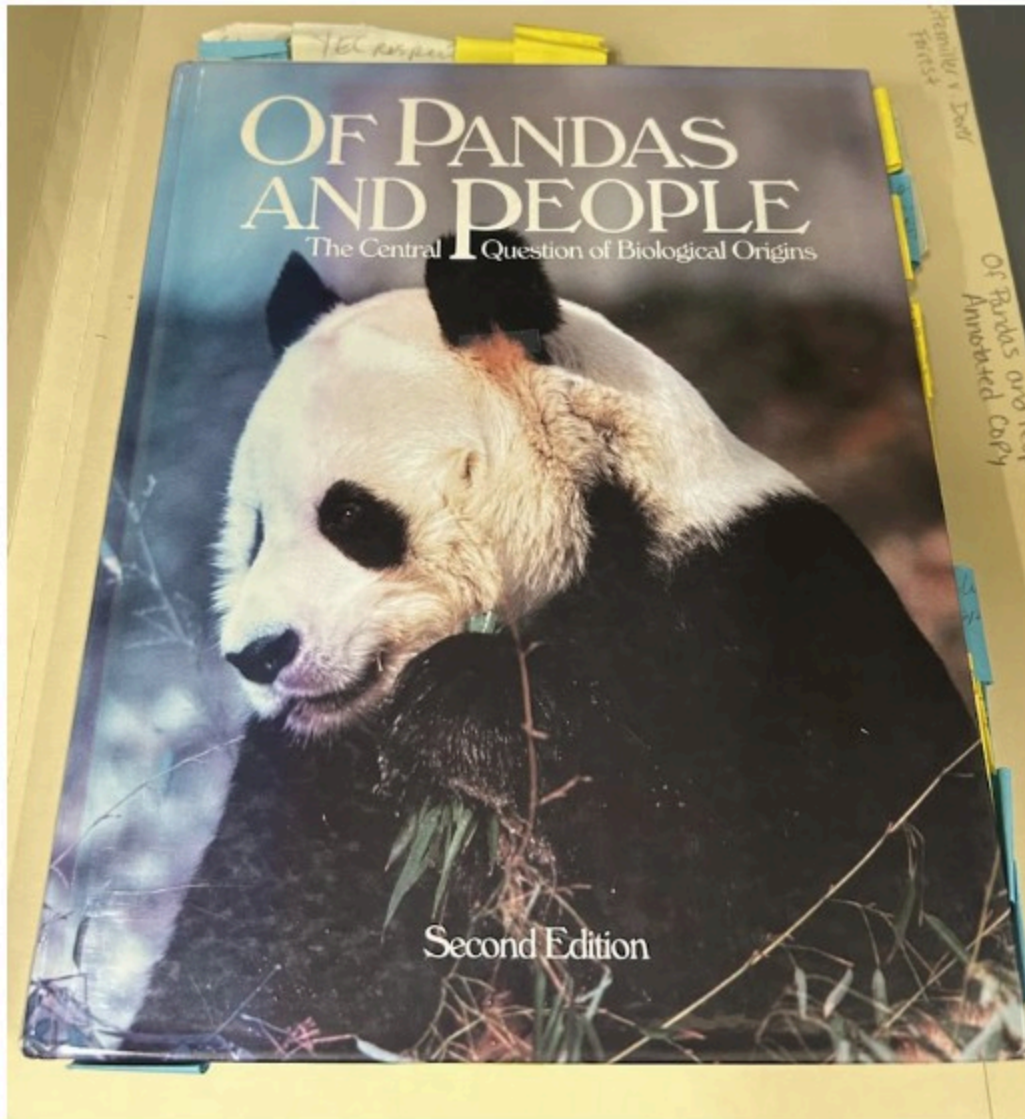


(From left to right) Series 72. NCSE Collateral, 1987-2003. Brochures: About NCSE, undated.; Series 72. NCSE Collateral, 1987-2003. Brochures: Evolution and Creationism, undated.

After more than a year of collaborative planning, strategizing, and effort, we are pleased to announce that the unification of the [National Center for Science Education \(NCSE\) Collection](#) is now complete! Consisting of 118 individual series and totaling just under 200 linear feet, this collection of materials can be accessed by interested researchers in the APS Reading Room, and lists and descriptions of its contents can be viewed in the corresponding finding aid (now published online).

The NCSE Collection holds documents that shed light on key organizations, figures,

publications, and legal battles that have historically been part of clashes between versions of creationism and intelligent design on the one hand and Darwinian evolution on the other. Much of the material present in this newly integrated collection focuses on the late twentieth century and on events/cases in the United States, though some developments localized to other countries are documented in a more limited fashion. Born-digital materials associated with the collection will be processed at a later date.



(Above) Series 44. Forrest, Barbara, 1981-2007. Sub-Series 44.E: Kitzmiller v. Dover Deposition Appendices. "Of Pandas and People - Annotated Copy."



MacArthur served as professor from 1965-1972. A student of limnologist and ecologist G. Evelyn Hutchinson, MacArthur is widely considered to be one of the key figures in American ecology, known for his contributions to both population and community ecology and his collaboration with E.O. Wilson on the theory of island biogeography. MacArthur's work in population ecology likewise influenced the work of several other ecologists and evolutionary biologists whose papers are at APS, including Henry Horn, Eric Pianka, and Rosemary and Peter Grant. The extensive set of materials includes correspondence, research notes, lectures, publications, and more.

### **Joanne Chory Papers, 7.5 linear feet**

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At the start of 2026, APS received two small accessions of materials documenting the work of plant biologist and geneticist Joanne Chory. Chory, who passed away in 2024 after a long battle with Parkinson's, was a long-time employee at the Salk Institute, where she applied molecular genetics to study how plants adapted their shape and size in order to optimize photosynthesis. Her papers include important lab data and publications related to her studies of the model organism *Arabidopsis thaliana*, as well as numerous awards and honors for her contributions to climate research and mentorship opportunities for women in STEM fields. The collection also includes a rich set of slides and photographs from her work in Japan, including her participation in a traditional Taiko drumming performance.

(Below) Sample materials from Joanne Chory's papers.



### **Obstetrical records and case notes of Dr. Henry H. Lowrie (1863-1883), 5 items**

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This set of obstetrical records and case notes was kept by Dr. Henry H. Lowrie, who graduated from Georgetown University Medical School in 1863 and who practiced throughout Washington D.C. until 1867 before moving to Plainfield, New Jersey. His obstetrical records include details of over 375 deliveries from both rural and urban

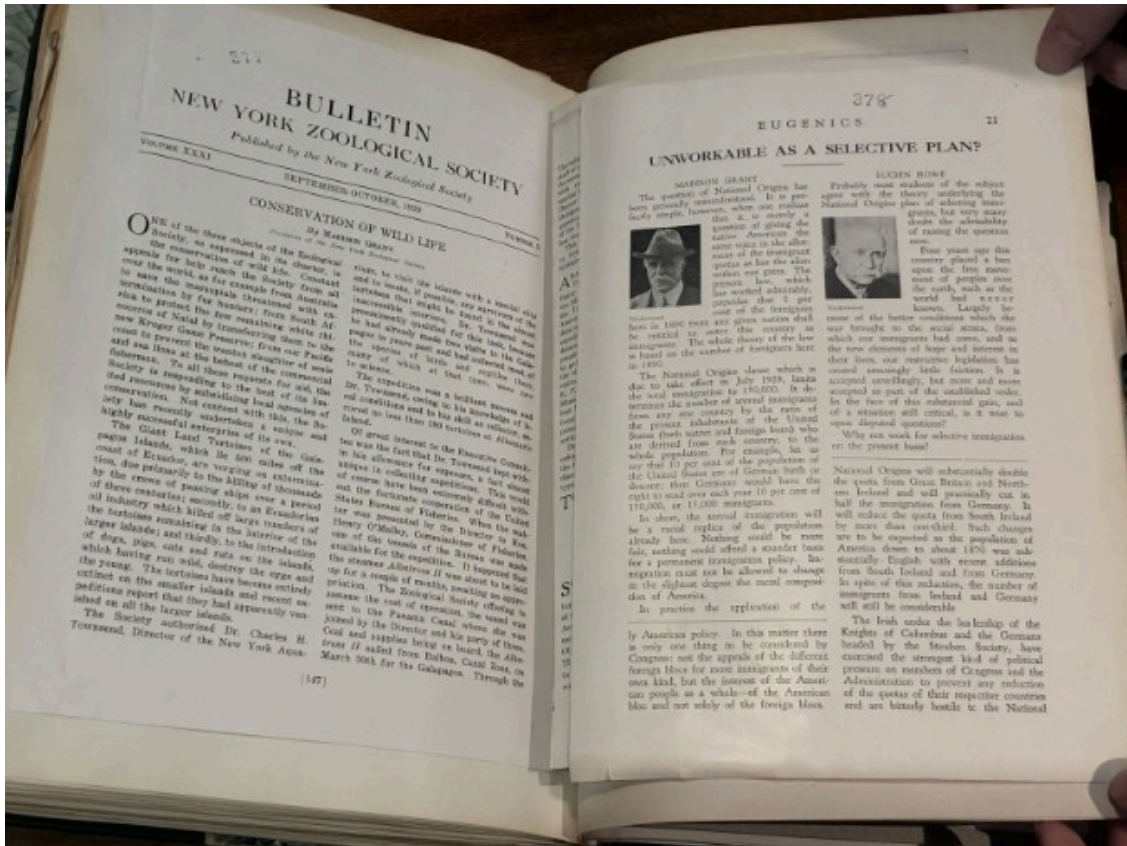
communities across Washington D.C. and New Jersey, and offer broad insights on 19th century experiences of childbirth, mortality, and medical practice more generally.

## Dwight Connelly Papers (1960s-1970s), 2 linear feet

This collection, from the archives of Dwight Connelly, former editor of Skylook (the official publication of MUFON), documents two decades of American and International UFO research, journalism, and correspondence from the 1960s through the late 1970s. The collection reflects Connelly's position within the network of independent investigators and formal UFO study groups that shaped both public and scientific discussion of unexplained aerial phenomena.

## Bound volume of publications by Madison Grant gifted to his brother, DeForest Grant

Recently, APS received a bound volume containing newspaper clippings, reprints, and other publications authored by Madison Grant. Consisting primarily of materials published during the early 20th century, the assemblage of documents, some with annotations, offer a fascinating look at his intersecting interests in eugenics, conservation, big game hunting, and white supremacy.



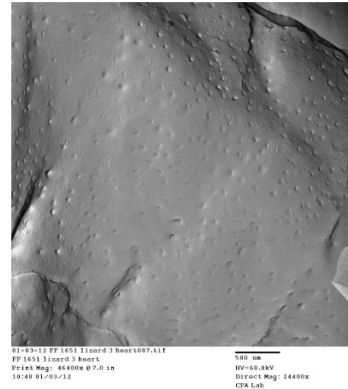
## Born-Digital Updates (Elias Larralde, MarBina Rothblatt Assistant Digital Archivist)

The born-digital team in the Center for Digital Scholarship is working on the early stages of three new acquisitions at the APS regarding the history of science, including:

**Eric R. Pianka:** an evolutionary ecologist and herpetologist who specialized in desert lizards, including *Phrynosoma platyrhinos*, or the desert horned lizard. We found this image on a CD labeled “Lizard photos.”



**Clara Franzini-Armstrong:** a Professor of Cell and Developmental Biology who specializes in electron microscopy to study skeletal and cardiac muscle, Dr. Franzini-Armstrong shared a large electronic deposit of these photos with her collection. A photo of a lizard’s heart muscle can be seen to the right.



We are also working with born-digital items created by her husband, **Clay Armstrong**, a Professor of Physiology who works on understanding the ionic channels and movement within cells.

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## New Learning Activity: Barbara McClintock (Ali Rospond, Education Programs Manager)

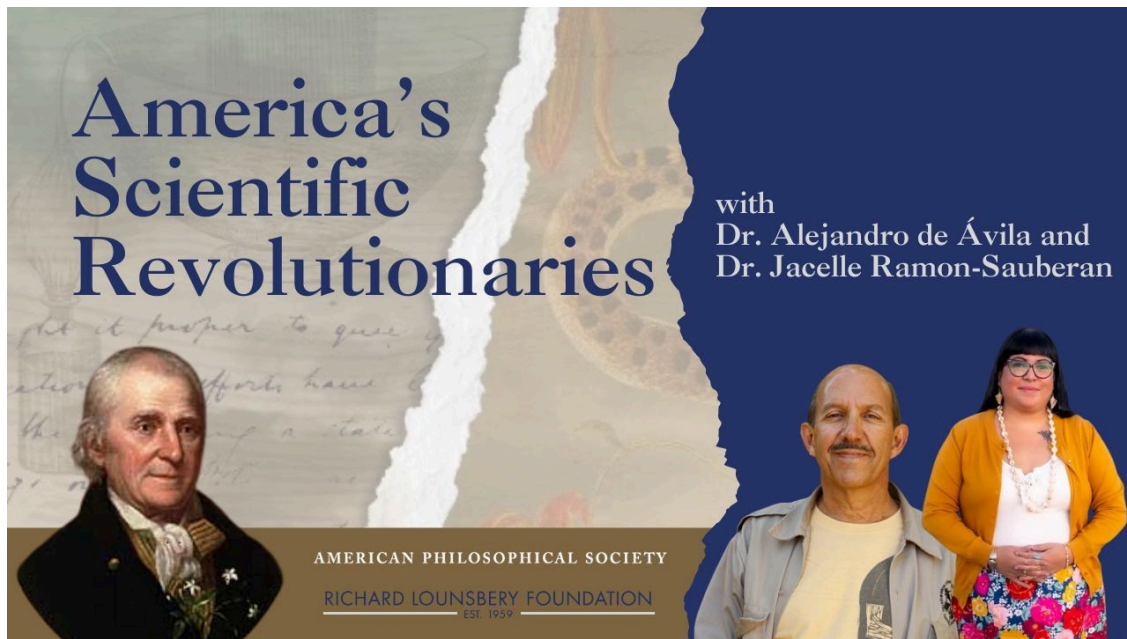
Corn! It's not just delicious. Believe it or not, it helped unlock secrets about life itself! This education resource was created by the APS to illustrate the life and work of geneticist and APS Member **Barbara McClintock**. Pair this learning activity with the film, "[Barbara McClintock: Scientific Persistence Pays Off](#)" to explore primary sources from Dr. McClintock's research and to consider what can be gained by looking at the whole picture of something rather than just one part.

The timing of this activity is fortuitous, as over the next several months, Gina Pungello will be reprocessing "Series V. Research notes and card files" of the Barbara McClintock Papers. Previously only described at the series level, this material will become eminently more accessible to researchers in the near future.

## Upcoming Programs

### Cultivating Ethnobotanical Knowledge Across Time and Space: A Conversation with Alejandro de Ávila and Jacelle Ramon-Sauberan

March 7, 2026, 3:00-5:00pm Mountain Time at Mission Garden, Tucson AZ.

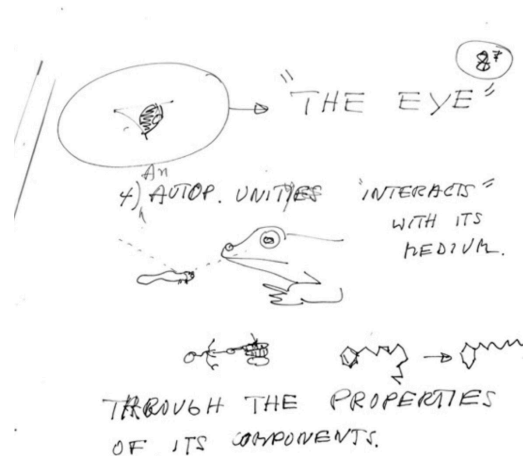


Join Mission Garden in collaboration with the American Philosophical Society for a conversation about the histories and legacies of botanical gardens throughout the Americas. The program brings together examples from the Bartram family's 18th-century garden in Philadelphia, the Jardín Etnobiológico in Oaxaca, and Mission Garden's connections to the greater Tucson region to consider the importance of ethnobotanical knowledge across time and space. Together, participants will reflect on topics including the impact of colonialism on plant cultivation and exchange, the relationship between botanical gardens and Indigenous food sovereignty, and the material challenges and practical considerations involved with stewarding gardens as sites for scientific and public engagement.

More details about the event and registration [can be found here](#).

Science on Tap:  
**What Frogs and Octopuses Know  
(That ChatGPT Doesn't)**  
**Featuring John C. Slater Predoctoral Fellow Won Jeon**  
March 9, 2026, 6:00-7:00pm ET at National Mechanics

What can a frog's eye and an octopus's color-changing skin reveal about the limits of artificial intelligence? In the early days of computing, scientists believed that the brain can be modeled as a logical machine. But experiments with animals complicated that vision. Studies of frog vision and octopus behavior showed that biological perception is not passive signal processing, but a selective and situational filtering process shaped by an organism's needs, environment, and patterns of interaction.



Returning to these animal experiments, Won Jeon will discuss why systems like ChatGPT can produce convincing language without access to the perceptual, social, or practical contexts that give words their meaning -- and why this structural limitation matters as AI becomes more embedded in education, work, and everyday life.

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**Curious to know more about the history of science at the APS? Learn more on the APS Blog:**

- [Jim Porter, Frederick Osborn: Reform Eugenics and Post-WWII Educational Policy](#)
- [Eric Ross, Choosing Genocide: Scientific Ethics, Agency, and Complicity in the Early Atomic Age, 1939-1957](#)
- [Mia Levenson, Playing Eugenics on Stage](#)
- [Al Coppola, Calamary and Coal-tar](#)
- [Taylor Dysart, The Psychedelic Century: The Amazonian Origins of the Global Science and Medicine of Hallucinogens in the Long-Twentieth Century](#)



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