

[Deirdre Madeleine Smith](#), University of Pittsburgh & Carnegie Museum of Natural History
“Whither ‘Papered Leps’: On Accidental Human Archives at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History”

Abstract:

This presentation explores the avenues of social and cultural history research offered by the accidental archives of “papered leps”—lepidoptera specimens folded in the field in scraps of paper. Although a moth or butterfly was the intended target, examining the papers leads to fascinating insights about the broader context of specimen collecting. Focusing on papers in the Invertebrate Zoology collection of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History (CMNH), I will share research on one particular collector’s specimens, and the many, often unexpected, links between natural history collecting and colonial and imperialist ventures that they expose. Albert Irwin Good (1882-1963) was a Presbyterian Reverend who spent long portions of his career stationed in Cameroon doing missionary work, when Cameroon was under first German and later French rule. Good sent thousands of insects wrapped in paper to CMNH, including in scraps of international publications, letters, and drafts of sermons. I will draw on materials from CMNH collections, as well as the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, to contextualize the daily life and attitudes of Good toward the people and nonhuman animals that he interacted with in Cameroon, and what his archives can reveal about both missionary work and natural history in Africa in the early twentieth century.

Bio:

Deirdre Madeleine Smith is a Teaching Assistant Professor in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh with a joint appointment as an Assistant Curator at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Her research concerns the ways that works of art, and other forms of visual culture, uniquely mediate philosophical and ethical discussions. Her writing appears in *Third Text*, *Art History*, and *Configurations*.