

Giving Wallace His Due

Tiny Ternate, Indonesia, hopes to spotlight its role in the history of evolutionary theory by memorializing the site where Alfred Russel Wallace penned *On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from the Original Type*. The paper, read at a meeting of the Linnean Society in London in July 1858 while Wallace was still abroad, described concepts such as survival of the fittest and natural selection. At the same meeting, Charles Darwin presented his hastily assembled notes on evolution, published 16 months later in *On the Origin of Species*.

Last year, the 150th anniversary of the meeting, Wallace boosters located the site of the long-vanished house where the naturalist lived for 3 of the 8 years he spent collecting specimens in Southeast Asia, says Sangkot Marzuki, director of the Eijkman Institute for Molecular Biology in Jakarta. Among other things, the observations defined the “Wallace Line”—the boundary between Asian and Australian fauna.

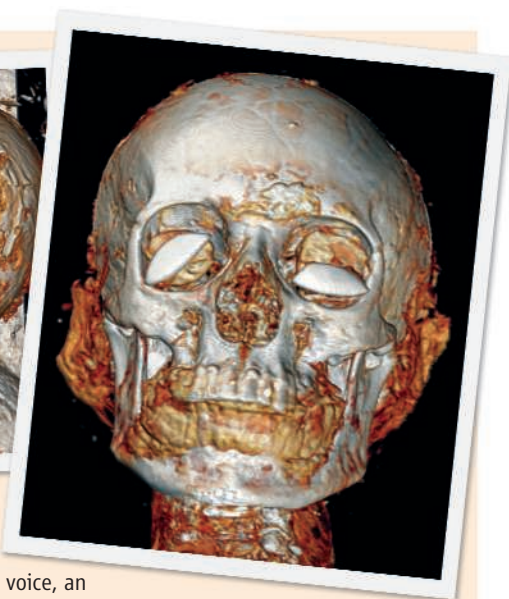
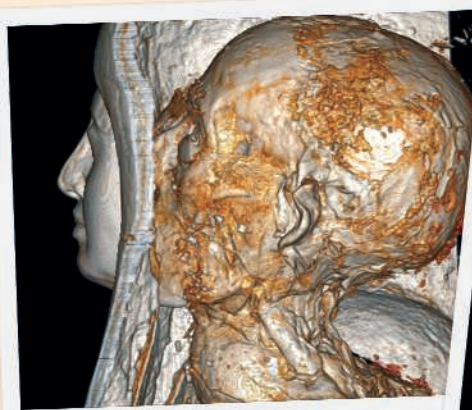


Ternate plans to erect a monument, rebuild the house following a floor plan outlined in Wallace’s writings, and rename the street for Wallace. Endang Sukara, an official at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, says it’s hoped that publicizing the area’s role in understanding evolution will spur efforts to preserve the region’s biodiversity.

Science and the City

Teachers complain of trouble getting their students interested in science. Try getting a whole city pumped on the subject.

That’s the goal of Science Chicago, a year-long series of events launched in September 2008 to increase kids’ interest in science, math, and technology.



THE PRIESTESS’S TALE

More than 4800 years since death stilled her voice, an Egyptian singer-priestess named Meresamun stars in a new exhibit at the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute. The detailed view of her life and times boasts the most technically advanced mummy reconstruction ever achieved, based on scans by a 256-channel “Intelligent CT” (above) conducted at the University of Chicago Medical Center.

In life, Meresamun would have accompanied a High Priest as he performed rituals before the god Amun, says curator Emily Teeter. At 168 centimeters, she was tall for her time. She had wide-set eyes and an overbite; her bones and teeth were in good shape. She died around the age of 30 and was mummified and buried in Luxor. The institute’s founder, James Henry Breasted, bought her coffin in Egypt in 1920.

The exhibit, which opens 10 February, recreates Meresamun’s life on the basis of scenes from tombs and temple walls and from ancient texts. It includes musical instruments, ritual objects, pottery, jewelry, and documents, including a marriage contract.

At Mayor Richard Daley’s 9th Annual Holiday Sports Fest last month, about 80,000 people got a science lesson along with their sports fix. Teachers from the University of Illinois set up workstations next to basketball courts, indoor biking tracks, golf links, and other sports arenas, where visitors could study questions such as how geometry affects a billiard ball’s trajectory or how the heart reacts to running a 50-yard dash.

“We’re using sports and everyday activities to show that everything we do has scientific underpinnings,” says former National Science Foundation Director Walter Massey. Massey co-chairs the initiative, driven by the MacArthur Foundation and Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry, with Foundation Vice President Arthur Sussman.

The Sports Fest was the biggest event so far for the program, which features smaller, weekly events such as nature walks and demonstrations at local universities and research sites such as Fermilab.

Go, Yankee Physics

Pacific Rim countries now produce almost as many scientific papers, but the United States still holds an across-the-board edge in relative citation impact, according to the latest tally of 21 scientific fields by the ScienceWatch tracking service (www.sciencewatch.com). U.S. physics papers lead the field with an average of 6.15 cites each, compared with the world average of 3.96.

TOP 10 FIELDS IN RELATIVE CITATION IMPACT, 2003–07

	U.S. world share (%)	U.S. citation impact	Relative impact v. world (%)
Physics	23.26	6.15	+55
Chemistry	20.70	7.33	+52
Materials science	18.10	4.23	+47
Geosciences	34.62	5.40	+42
Computer science	35.27	2.10	+40
Microbiology	34.01	9.90	+39
Clinical medicine	36.92	7.84	+36
Biology/biochemistry	37.10	10.33	+35
Space science	49.17	10.48	+34
Pharmacology	30.84	7.23	+34

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