

August 24, 2020

Job Description: Paleobotany Post – Doc
Post - Doctoral position for paleobotanist
Perot Museum of Nature and Science, Dallas TX

About the job

We seek a post-doctoral scholar to work on a newly awarded National Science Foundation (NSF) project that aims to make paleobotanical data more accessible and widely available by creating the integrative Paleobotany Database (PBOT), an online public database of fossil plant descriptions for both informally and formally-named fossils, work-bench software, and community discussion forums. This exciting new project will revolutionize our ability to coordinate descriptive work and taxonomy across workers, and will ultimately enable synthetic analyses of paleoclimate and plant macro-ecology and - evolution that have not been possible to date. As a part of this project, we will use PBOT to populate the Paleobiology Database with paleobotanical leaf fossil datasets from the Cretaceous through Eocene to analyze diversity and climate variation across the warmest intervals of the past 100 million years.

This project is funded through the EarthCube Program and is titled “EarthCube Data Capabilities: Solutions for Paleobotany: a web client hosting novel content and its integration with existing databases”. The project is led by a collaborative team of paleobotanists and database developers (also paleontologists) across five institutions. Additionally, the team will host workshops with the broader paleobotany community throughout the course of development to solicit feedback and expertise. A project summary can be found here: https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=2026961

Working closely with the project team, the postdoc’s role in the project will include:

- Helping to organize and run workshops, communicating with the broader paleobotany community to solicit and synthesize community feedback and expertise
- Working on the development of the initial descriptive standards (character schemas) for foliage that will be used in the PBOT database
- Contributing to the conceptual development of the user interface and PBOT content
- Working on transcribing and/or re-describing historical material (e.g., Cretaceous and Paleogene monographs) for use and entry in the database, leading to the publication of meta-analyses of vegetation during this interval
- Attending all project team meetings (virtual and in-person), community workshops, and at least one professional conference.

The Research & Collections Division of the Perot Museum of Nature and Science is an active, field and collections – based research team of scientists, preparators, and collections professionals. Although we

are an “at will” employment state and reserve the right to end employment at any time/for any reason, this postdoctoral position is funded by NSF for 18 months from the time of appointment, with support for a longer appointment dependent on the availability of additional funding. The stipend is \$60,000.00 per year with Museum benefits and funds for attending a conference and meetings with the project team. The position will report to and be supervised by Curator of Paleobotany, Dr. Dori Contreras. We anticipate a start date between Oct. 1st 2020 and January 1st 2021.

Qualifications

You must have a PhD in relevant field (e.g., paleontology, geosciences, biology). The work requires and an ability to work in a positive and collaborative manner with a team, as well as completely work efficiently and independently. A strong background in plant anatomy and morphology is expected, with expertise in describing fossil plants. We are looking specifically for someone with experience working with foliage across the diversity of fossil plant groups (not just dicots).

Essential Physical Requirements

Many of the postdoc’s duties will entail extended periods of sitting, performing typical scholarly research, writing, and specimen handling. Must be capable of safely handling fragile specimens ranging from a few ounces to 50 lbs, and occasionally greater. The postdoc may engage in fieldwork, which may include working in remote outdoor areas, walking and/or hiking in difficult terrain and carrying heavy loads, with the potential for encountering weather extremes.

How to apply

Individuals who are interested and qualified must apply through the Perot Museum’s Career website: <https://www.paycomonline.net/v4/ats/web.php/jobs/ViewJobDetails?job=16434&clientkey=91E1BDB80B66FBEC795359D3736E84F6>

When applying, please be sure to send a cover letter expressing interest in the position, a succinct statement of research interests and experience (no more than one page), curriculum vitae (including publication list), an abstract of doctoral dissertation (one-page max), and names and email addresses of three references. For questions about the position, please contact dori.contreras@perotmuseum.org