ABOM: A Bigfoot Online Museum
Roger Knights

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Chris Murphy's book, *Meet the Sasquatch,* indicated how impressive an attractive package of visual evidence can be to the public. A Bigfoot Online Museum, containing more material like that in Murphy's book, would be similarly impressive and popular. (Assuming the owners of artifacts would agree to allow photos of them to be taken and used online by a non-profit organization.)

Popular books like Murphy's can't include a really large volume of evidence, since the ordinary reader isn't interested in more than a dozen or so casts, hair samples, tree twists, dermal patterns, etc. Even books and articles aimed at specialists are subject to size constraints and can't include the less impressive pieces of evidence. But those, viewed collectively, may actually be more authenticating than a few individually impressive artifacts.

ABOM Could Present:

- A large volume of evidence;
- In animated or slide-show format (e.g.; to illustrate foot flexion);
- With many options as to speed; repeats; breadth; depth; etc.;
- In multiple-angle views;
- In various magnifications;
- With superimposed measurement grids;
- In printable format, and in color;
- With spoken accompaniment;
- With appended text commentary by a multitude of experts.

Downsides of Physical Museums and Repositories—They Are:

- Hard to get to for those not nearby—i.e., 90% of the public;
- Awkward to get acquainted with, since familiarity cannot be obtained in convenient dribs and drabs of free time;
- "Unfriendly," in that it's hard get a close view of certain items (in light of the museums worry about the danger of their getting degraded, damaged, or stolen);
- Expensive to set up (materials must be acquired, not just photographed);
- Expensive to maintain (a clerk and office space is needed);
- Subject to space constraints—so most items must be "warehoused";
- Unable to offer a multitude of printable views;
- Unable to accept and display a constant stream of commentary on their items.

Because of these flaws, current meat-space evidence repositories are nearly useless. Meldrum has been quoted as saying that his "casts are [merely] taking up drawer space." "[Ron] Westrum thinks … evidence will continue to be ignored [because] as far as scientists are concerned, the evidence has never been recorded."

Meldrum has stated, however, that when colleagues DO visit his office, they are amazed and impressed at his large quantity of his evidence, which they'd been unaware of until then. ABOM would combat their unawareness by enabling scientists to make virtual office-visits—i.e., in cyberspace.

ABOM would also be more valuable than a sightings site like BFRO. Sightings don't impress scientists—they want something they can get their teeth into—evidence, in other words. As Dahinden said, stressing the importance of evidence over sightings, "I don't want to read another sighting report. Take a camera or a gun. You don't belong in the woods without them."

Suggested Categories of Evidence for ABOM

1. **Hair**. ABOM should borrow as many hair samples as possible from their custodians (starting perhaps with Dr. Fahrenbach), photograph them under various magnifications, and post the pictures so skeptics' experts can have a crack at matching them to known animals, and where all can have a gander at them. There'd be notes below each sample describing its characteristics. Following these, there'd be entries by hair experts giving their opinions on each sample, and exchanges of opinion among the experts.

   The repository could contain pictures of several hairs from all North American animals, and ultimately from all animals everywhere, shown in various magnifications, with notes on their salient characteristics attached.

   Hairs should be taken from every portion of their variegated pelts. Skeptics often assert that a hair expert who was unable to match a hair to anything had an incomplete collection, or didn't have hairs from enough body locations. Any skeptic who claimed ABOM was still incomplete could be challenged to solve the problem by submitting pictures of the missing items to it. Eventually the collection should become satisfactory to all.

   Bigfoot-skeptic Michael Dennett has said, "I suspect that a re-examination of all hair samples would show them to be identifiable material." (*Sasquatch Report* #10.) I hope on the contrary that a collective analysis of hair samples would considerably strengthen the case for Bigfoot.

   Dennett has also complained that believers haven't played fair when having hair evidence analyzed, but have either shopped around for a friendly analyst or have found someone with scientific credentials, but who isn't a hair expert. If we "played fair" this objection would no longer be raised. Therefore we should make our evidence accessible to all in an organized fashion, thereby putting our house in order and getting on the path to being scientifically respectable.

2. **Casts**. Photos of footprint and handprint casts (and the Skookum Cast), eventually in rotatable 3-D views, with grid-lines. (The *Skeptic's Dictionary* complains that "few footprints [are] available for examination in plaster casts.")

3. **Dermal ridges.** These should show the uniqueness and consistency of the Bigfoot pattern, as shown on p. 142 of *Meet the Sasquatch*.

4. **Twists, etc**. Similarly, site-post photos of twisted-off tree limbs (high up in trees) & twisted trunks, so arborists and other experts can comment on what might have made them. Also post photos of other items Bigfoot has supposedly twisted or crushed, like camp equipment, gate-posts, etc.

5. **Nests.** Similar to those shown on pp. 156-59 of *Meet the Sasquatch*.

6. **Poop**. Its gigantic size would be impressive, as would its non-resemblance to the poop of other animals. (I hope its photographer laid a dollar bill alongside the poop to provide a "yardstick" (6 1/8 inches), but I doubt it.)

7. **Witness testimony**. Videotapes (or audiotapes with still photos) of credible witnesses would effectively counter the scoftics' charge that they are blood brothers of Elvis-sighters. For instance, Robert Guennette, in *The Mysterious Monsters,* pp. 1–2, tells how the impressive low-key testimony of sheriff Oliver Potter made him a believer. A dozen such witnesses, ideally including several cops, would be a good start.

    If there were a good online micro-payments system, this could be conveniently and painlessly charged for, to reimburse the cost of transmitting lots of video-bits to visitors. If and when Bigfoot is confirmed, these video clips will be in high demand by TV stations, which would pay six-figure amounts for a month's worth of broadcast rights. (To preserve the market value of these clips, they should be removed from the ABOM site right after B-Day.)

8. **Expert testimony.** Videotapes (or audiotapes with still photos) of scientists like Swindler, Goodall, Meldrum, Shaller, Fahrenbach, etc. (And also of topic-area non-credentialed specialists Ted Seth Jacobs, expert on the structure of organic beings, who wrote a letter endorsing Patty's reality that was published in the Nov. 2003 issue of *Fate.*)

9. **Official reports**. Photocopies of police-file sighting reports by officers. Skeptics will give most credence to images of the original documents. (Alas, records-retention policies now ensure that most minor records are purged within a few years.)

10. **Text**. I.e., text related to evidence that can't be shown on screen. E.g., a description of cases where potential BF bones have been found, but have gone astray. Also copies of evidence-analysis documents that haven't been printed "in the literature" (peer-reviewed journals), like the Glickman report, the Grieve report, the Donskoy report, etc.

11. **Sound files**. Purported BF vocalizations.

12. **Native artwork.** As shown on pp. 10–23 of *Meet the Sasquatch.*

13. **Photos of Bigfoot himself**. E.g., get permission to post an online copy of Mike Quast's book, "Big Footage," which contains Quast's drawings of purported Bigfoot photos, to avoid copyright/permission problems. Other visuals could be photos of "the usual suspects" that Bigfoot is supposedly confused with, from p. 123 of *Meet the Sasquatch*.

14. Patterson-Gimlin Film, containing items such as the following:

A. **Stabilized and clarified versions** like those of M.K. Davis & Jim Zenor, which bring out more clearly than prior versions many realistic details, and make it easier to notice certain of the intangibles described in Donskoy's report.

B. **Re-creation attempts,** shown for comparison in a split screen, such as:

  • The BBC's,
  • Heironimus's (if it's ever released),
  • Jeff Meldrum's students' hilariously inept efforts, and,
  • Daegling and Schmitt's compliant-gait walker.

C. **Computerized animations of "Patty."** E.g., those done by the Hajicek crew, as described on pages 90–93 of *Meet the Sasquatch.*

D. **Murphy's filmsite model** (or a digitized version thereof, extended to cover the whole film site) of the PGF site. (See pp. 58–63 of *Meet the Sasquatch.)* It should be viewable from many angles, rotatable, and also could include a second-by-second sequence of where the creatures involved were during and after the encounter.

E. **Stop-action animation of a costumed mannequin.** John Green has made a most remarkable observation about Patty's IM Index being clearly non-human and being impossible to fake (given its elbow bend and finger flexion). I agree with him that analysis of the film aimed at proving these points would be very strong evidence. So there should be room for material on this aspect of the PGF, using sophisticated photo analysis. E.g., it could contain thousands photos of an adjustable Bigfoot-costumed mannequin, not necessarily life-sized, shot with:

  • Its four adjustable limb-segments, its shoulder breadth, and its torso height variously set;
  • Its joints set at a variety of angles;
  • Its overall "heading" set at various angles;
  • Each walking sequence shot from various elevations;
  • Each successive step in a walking sequence shot from greater distances,
  • The camera set at various distances from the start of each walking sequence.

  These sequences would be used to test online whether estimators could come close to properly evaluating the figure's IM Index and height (assuming a foot of whose length relative to other body segments is in proportion to Patty's). If they could, it would debunk Daegling's claim that the proportions in such pictures can't be estimated with sufficient accuracy. (It's an empty statement to simply say that estimates would be "inaccurate" if that means only "imprecise.")

15. Feedback forums where high-level critiques and counter-critiques can be made. Some of these would be open only to scientists and a few qualified laymen, by invitation only**.**

16. **Cream of the commentary.** Selected posts from websites like bigfootforums.com (with the permission of sites' webmasters, natch).

Some Desiderata for ABOM

1. Directors should recognize at the start that they can't pre-plan how ABOM will develop very exactly, so they should avoid committing themselves to any Mission Statements or the like that could paint them into a corner. They might have to change their minds on many things, so they should be fairly tentative about ABOM's grand architecture, overall vision, etc.

2. Here nevertheless are my views on certain directions the site should ultimately take. I hope the site's initial architecture will be flexible enough to eventually permit relatively painless incorporation of these features:

   A. A large volume of evidence should be allowed for, possibly including video feeds. ABOM shouldn't be thought of as beginning and ending with an online presentation of the material in *Meet the Sasquatch*. It should be envisaged as growing to ten times that book's size—maybe to 100 times.

   B. ABOM should be fairly "structured" (e.g., into the categories in the Categories-of-Evidence section above).

   C. Textual material also should be sought out, starting with obscurities like defunct Bigfoot newsletters and out-of-print or privately printed books, like Wasson's *Sasquatch Apparitions.*

   D. There are two audiences to be aimed at—the general public and mainstream scientists—and their requirements are very different. Hence, there should be alternative ways to traverse the museum. The public should be given the option to take Guided Tours in which they would punch a button on the home page and then be shown a slide show of a portion of the evidence, selected by them from a menu, along with a spoken commentary. The quantity of the evidence should allow several such Tours to be offered, each presenting a different slice of the museum's contents. During such shows, viewers would be able to hit buttons to speed up the presentation, replay the last episode, or skip ahead to the next topic.

   E. The two audiences should be catered to in another way: certain visual evidence, like pictures of casts and pictures of hair samples, should be kept in two image formats, JPG and some higher-density format that retains more detail and accuracy. Scientists would have the option to download the latter for their studies, even though it might take twice as long to transmit and occupy twice the space on their disks.

F. Registered and officially OK'd users should be allowed to post comments on the evidence presented. Ideally, there would be several levels of expertise and "responsibility" that could be certified (including a special Room for Skeptics perhaps), and each level of certification might apply to only a specific category of evidence. There should also be a Bozo Filter so individuals can block out comments from persons who get on their nerves. This is to avoid driving away mainstream scientists with jeers from the peanut gallery, and to allow them to talk freely to one another.

(There might be other features that would enhance such frank interchanges, such as various privacy shields so that only selected persons could read a post, and so that text posted is protected from being easily forwarded to outsiders by being "uncopy-able" and unprintable, in the way that Amazon has made the text presented with its Search Inside the Book feature.)

Funding

ABOM is a realistic prospect because only a little funding is required. I hope there's a potential sugar-daddy lurking out there reading this, because ABOM would provide lots of bang for the buck. And it would be a sure thing, unlike "swinging for the seats" by Seeking Confirmation.

Might the NSF (or some other gov't. agency) fund ABOM? Surely not, but it would be worth asking, to position ourselves to mock them, after B-Day, for their refusal.