

Special Collections & University Archives



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The unique and historically valuable collections in SCUA are the product of countless acts of generosity over decades of support. With the help of our friends and partners, SCUA has assembled a rich record of social change and cultural achievement that has fueled research and enriched the lives of students, scholars, and community members alike.

SCUA welcomes gifts of materials or financial support relating to our collecting interests and public programming, particularly in social change, agriculture, labor, the arts, and the history and cultures of New England. All donations are fully tax deductible.

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Protistology

Special Collections
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“The province of protozoa, reminiscent of the fertile crescent in the Middle East, straddles the highways of thought that run between the major continents of biology. Down these roads come caravans of concepts and analogies: ideas about hierarchies and taxonomies from one direction, convictions about the basic structures and functions of life from another, opinions about reproduction and development from a third, and theories of the origin and evolution of life’s forms from still another quarter. It is uncanny how these separate trains of thought intersect one another in the land of the single-celled organisms. There they interact, exchange views, and rearrange their loads before they disperse again to inform other regions of biology of their contents and conclusions. A complete history of protozoology must recognize the centrality of this terrain.”

Frederick B. Churchill

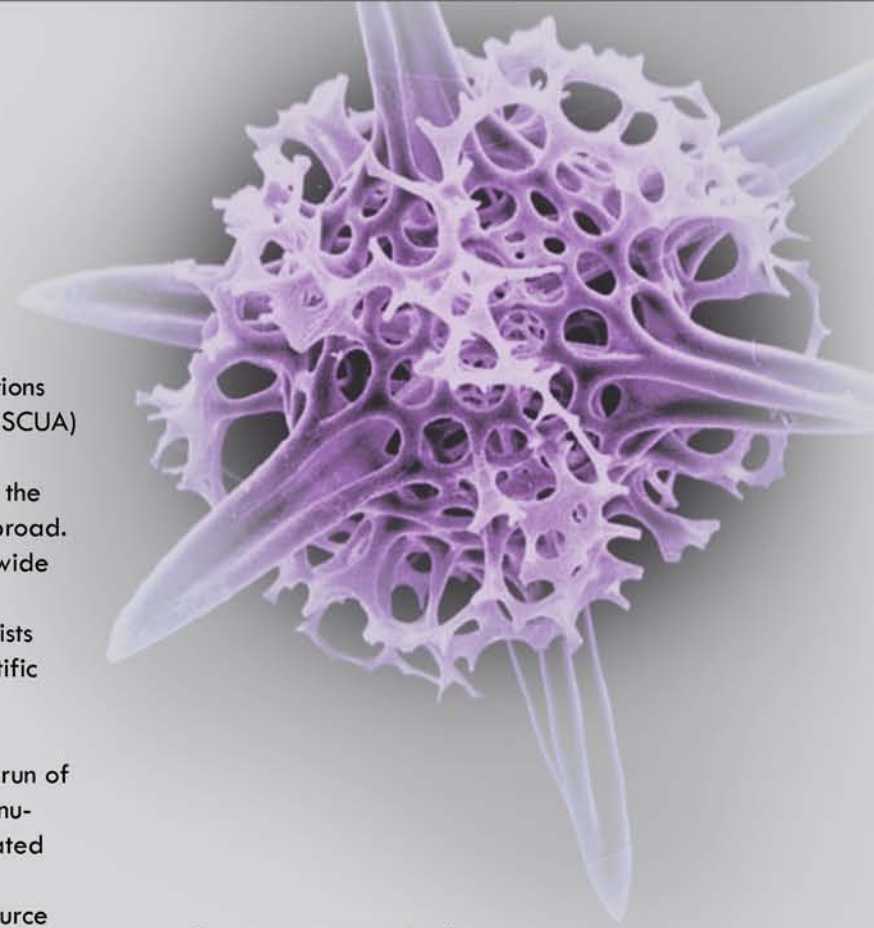
Despite their microscopic stature, protists have played an outsized role in the growth of scientific knowledge. Since Antony van Leeuwenhoek first trained a primitive microscope on the world of “animalcules,” this exceptionally diverse, paraphyletic assemblage of basal eukaryotes has become a staple in laboratory and field studies of the natural world. With taxa that display varied types of motility (flagellates, amoebae, and ciliates), photosynthetic plastids (*Euglena*, diatoms, dinoflagellates), and fungus-like forms (water molds), protists have become model organisms for research in disciplines ranging from evolutionary biology to ecology, physiology, molecular biology, biochemistry, genetics, and medicine, and they are critical to our current understanding of the origins and early history of life.

In 2008, the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at UMass Amherst (SCUA) established the Archive for the History of Protistology to preserve a robust record of the leading protistologists from the U.S. and abroad. The goal of our project is to document the wide range of theoretical interests and applied concerns encompassed by the study of protists and to create a permanent record of scientific endeavor.

The collections in this archive contain a rich run of correspondence, laboratory notebooks, manuscripts, electron micrographs, films, and related materials documenting the evolution of the discipline in the 20th century. A major resource for biologists and historians of science alike, the collection reflects the breadth of activities inspired by a diverse set of taxa.

Representative collections

Greg Antipa (ciliate development)
William Balamuth (ciliate biology)
Henry James Clark (flagellates)
Lea Bleyman (ciliate genetics)
Bron Honigberg (parasitic trichomonads)
Seymour Hutner (protist nutrition)
John Kloetzel (ciliate cytoskeleton micrographs)
Paul Kugrens (cryptophytes)
David L. Nanney (genetics and evolution)
Hope T. Ritter (flagellate endosymbionts)
Eugene B. Small (ciliophoran systematics and evolution)
F.J.R. Taylor (evolution)



How you can help

SCUA actively seeks donations of the professional and personal papers of scientists who study protists or make use of them in the course of their research. Our goal is to document the whole lives and careers of scientists -- not merely their work with protists -- and as much as possible, we seek to document the broad intellectual communities in which they operate.

Among many other topics, we are interested in the study of evolutionary theory, the origins of life, the development and impact of electron microscopy, the sociology of the laboratory and field, and the biomedical implications of protists.