

Exhibit Curator Biography

Dr. Rick Potts

Director of the Smithsonian's Human Origins Program



Dr. Rick Potts is a paleoanthropologist who directs the Human Origins Program at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, where he also holds the Peter Buck Chair in Human Origins. Since joining the Smithsonian in 1985, Rick has dedicated his research to piecing together the record of Earth's environmental change and human adaptation. His ideas on how human evolution responded to environmental instability have stimulated wide attention and new research in several scientific fields.

Bridging across many research disciplines, Rick's field projects are located in the East African Rift and in southern and northern China. His latest work in the Rift Valley of Kenya has gained international attention as the first project to obtain a long drill core from an early human site in Africa, which will provide a detailed climate record spanning the past 500,000 years. Rick received his Ph.D. in biological anthropology from Harvard University in 1982, after which he taught anthropology at Yale University and served as curator of physical anthropology at the Yale Peabody Museum. Rick is curator of both The David H. Koch Hall of Human Origins at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and a new, accompanying traveling exhibition called "Exploring Human Origins: What Does It Mean To Be Human?" He is also the author of the companion book, "*What Does It Mean To Be Human?*"