

Curriculum Vitae

F. Robert van der Linden

Aeronautics Department
National Air and Space Museum
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20013-7012

vanderlindenb@si.edu
202-633-2647 (Office)

Education

Ph.D. (Modern American, Business and Military History) The George Washington University.
1997.

M.A. (American and Russian History) The George Washington University. 1981.

B.A. (History) University of Denver, 1977.

Member Phi Beta Kappa

Present Position

Chair and Curator of Air Transportation and Special Purpose Aircraft, Aeronautics Division,
National Air and Space Museum (NASM), Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Primary Responsibilities

Research and Writing

Currently at work on "*The Struggle for the Long-Range Heavy Bomber: The United States Army air Corps, 1934-1939*". This book examines the fight between the Army Air Corps, the Army, and the Navy over the introduction of a new generation of long-range heavy bombers during the interwar period. Questions of cost, of departmental responsibility, and of the relationship between business and industry, all play key roles in the search for this elusive aircraft and ultimately which military branch controls the air. Underlying all of these issues is the question of whether or not the United States needs a separate, independent air force.

Also researching a book on the creation of Transcontinental & Western Air (TWA). This business history will trace the story of this important airline from its creation in 1930 from the ambitious but unprofitable Transcontinental Air Transport, formed by Clement Keys with technical assistance from Charles Lindbergh, and parts for the successful Western Air Express of Harris Hanshue through World War II and its reorganization as Trans World Airlines under Howard Hughes. The merger was orchestrated by the U.S. Postmaster General to save TAT and help rationalize the incoherent airline and air mail policy of the federal government. The merger created a national airline to compete with United Air Lines and American Airways presaging the era of formal federal aviation regulation, and led to the development of the Douglas DC-2, the

Boeing 307, and the Lockheed Constellation, three milestone airliner designs that transformed U.S. and international civil aviation.

Collections, Exhibitions, Public Service

Currently at work on various projects, including the redo of the Pioneers of Flight Gallery particularly the Charles Lindbergh section. Work monthly updating the America by Air Gallery. Serve as a member of the fellowship committee for the Aeronautics Division as well as serving as a member of the Museum's Public Program Committee and Collections Committee. Actively collecting artifacts for the commercial aviation and special purpose aircraft collection including Pan American president Juan T. Trippe's famous globe and the Stanley King collection of Charles Lindbergh popular culture artifacts, among others. Was the curator responsible for the acquisition of the Concorde, SST, and supervised the restoration and delivery of the Boeing 307 and 367-80 aircraft to the Udvar-Hazy Center. Also collected the AeroVironment Pathfinder II solar powered high altitude unmanned research aircraft, and Steve Fossett's Virgin Atlantic Global Flyer which set several around the world speed and time records for non-refueled aircraft.

Background and Accomplishments

Administration

From 2007 to the present, chaired the Aeronautics Division, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Managing the day-to-day activities of one of the major curatorial divisions at the museum. Responsible for overall planning and management of the division, especially in the areas of museum programs, budget, personnel, and recruitment. At the request of the Associate Director for Collections and Curatorial Affairs, I am serving a second term as chair.

Recent Research and Writing

In 2011 authored the *The Nation's Hangar: Aircraft Treasures of the Smithsonian* (Smithsonian Press) which examines the aircraft on display at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center and on loan throughout the world and where they fit in the history of aviation and why. It is a significantly updated and revised version of the original 2004 edition entitled *The Nation's Hangar: The Aircraft Collection of the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center*.

In 2010 wrote Chapter 2 "Building a Collection," *Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum: An Autobiography* (National Geographic).

In 2006 editor of *Best of the National Air and Space Museum* (Smithsonian Books).

In 2006 coauthored a book (with Dominick A. Pisano and Frank Winter) titled *Breaking the Sound Barrier: Chuck Yeager and the Bell X-1* (Harry N. Abrams).

In 2004 wrote *The Nation's Hangar: The Aircraft Collection of the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center* (Howell Press).

In 2004 coauthored a book with Frank H. Winter titled *100 Years of Flight: A Chronicle of Aerospace History, 1903-2003* (American Institute of Astronautics and Aeronautics).

Exhibitions

From 1996 to 2007, served as lead curator on a three-person departmental team responsible for an exhibition titled *America by Air*, which opened in November 2007. Created the concept for the gallery, conducted most of the research and label writing, made all of the artifact selections, and worked closely with the lead designer, graphics designer, and layout designer. Used original research based on my dissertation and subsequent book *Airlines and Air Mail* as well as my book *The Boeing 247: The First Modern Airliner* and significant works from other aviation scholars for important portions of this ground-breaking exhibition. The exhibition won the Dibner Award for Excellence in Museum Exhibits on the History of Technology and Culture in 2009 from the Society for the History of Technology. This was the first time that NASM has won the award and only the third time that a Smithsonian museum has been selected for this prize.

Recent Lectures and Papers Presented

Oct. 2011 T2M International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility Conference, Berlin. “*America by Air: A Study in Scholarship in Exhibits.*”

Sept. 2011 AIAA Centennial of Naval Aviation Forum, Virginia Beach, VA. “Fleet Problem IX and the Rise of U.S. Naval Aviation.”

Nov. 2010 Southern Mississippi University/Gulfport Aviation Museum, Gulfport, MS. “Black Wings in the Golden Age of Flight.”

Nov. 2010 NOVA Community College, Annandale, VA, Galileo Colloquium. “Aviation and the Contraction of Time and Space.”

June 2010 Stanford University, Stanford Case Studies in Aircraft Design seminar series., Palo Alto, CA. “The Boeing 247 and the Airliner Design Revolution of the 1930s.”

April 2009 Bald Eagles Society, NAA Los Angeles. “An Early History of North American Aviation.”

Nov. 2008 “La Culture Aerienne” Conference, Paris. “Charles Lindbergh and the Spirit of St. Louis.”

May 2008 International Community of Flight Conference, Wright State University, Dayton, Fairborn, OH. “Charles Lindbergh and Transcontinental Air Transport.”

Oct. 2008 SHOT Conference, Washington, DC: “Charles Lindbergh and T.A.T.”

Oct. 2007 American Philatelic Society/ National Postal Museum Symposium, Bellefonte, PA: “Walter F. Brown and the Creation of the Modern Airliner.”

Oct. 2006 Mid Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, NJ. “Confronting Insider Theft.” about the problem of the stealing of artifacts within the museum world in general and NASM’s unfortunately experience in particular.

March 2005 Mutual Concerns, AAM/NASM, Seattle. Chaired two sessions “Ivory Tower Meets the Shop Floor: Roles of Curatorial Restoration Personnel in Aerospace Artifact Restoration Projects” and “Going Commercial: Increases in Museum Focus on Air Transport History.”