

## Gangbusters

Two years ago, Vanderbilt University archaeologist Arthur Demarest and his Guatemalan graduate student Tomás Barrientos started a **sustainable tourism** and development project in Cancuén, Guatemala, to help local villagers preserve their Mayan heritage. Their efforts yielded an unexpected and rich payoff last month when informants from the village, working with Demarest and Barrientos, helped Guatemalan authorities recover a rare 8th century stone altar looted from the site of a Mayan palace.

"Four village elders came to me in the middle of the night," says Demarest, a researcher at the Nashville, Tennessee, school, "and told me that a woman had been beaten by men in ski masks who were searching for an altar." He tipped off Guatemalan authorities, who launched a 6-month undercover operation leading to the arrest of the looters. The monument will be displayed at Guatemala's National Museum of Archaeology after its restoration.



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Arthur Demarest and Tomás Barrientos (*inset*) helped recover a stolen Mayan altar (*left*).

"The local Mayans are usually very suspicious of government authority," says Barrientos. "But they increasingly see archaeological sites as a potential resource to improve their lives."

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## AWARDS

**Euro excellence.** Four Europeans and one Argentinian are the first winners of the Marie Curie Excellence Awards from the European Union (E.U.). The \$50,000 research awards are part of a broader initiative to retain scientific talent.

The prizes, open to any scientist who has received at least 1 year of E.U. training and mobility support, honor British biophysicist Paola Arimondo, 33; Dutch physicist Daniel Bonn, 36; Italian elec-

tronics engineer Marco Dorigo, 42; Spanish biochemist Luis Pubull, 44; and Argentinian physicist Fernanda Cugliandolo, 38.

## IN THE NEWS

- State geological surveys and research centers are inhospitable places for women entering the profession. A new analysis shows that women earned 25% of U.S. geoscience Ph.D.s awarded in the past decade but captured only 8% and 17%, respectively, of new

jobs at state surveys and research centers. Academic institutions offering tenure-track positions were gender-neutral, however.

- The National Audubon Society has established the Kalpana Chawla Fund for Environmental Stewardship in memory of the Indian-born Columbia astronaut. The \$300,000 fund will be available for conservation projects around the world.

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## NONPROFIT WORLD

**A richer blend.** The new head of the Gordon Research Conferences (GRC) has big plans to grow the enterprise both scientifically and geographically.

Nancy Gray, a fuel chemist, takes over the West Kingston, Rhode Island-based nonprofit that sponsors the meetings after serving as membership director for the American Chemical Society. Gray says she expects to add over 15 new sessions to the organization's current list of 173 annual meetings by expanding beyond classical biology, chemistry, and physics. "Now we are getting proposals involving a mix of scientists with very different backgrounds," she says, from pharmacology and plant physiology to metallic chemistry and chemical engineering.

Gray also hopes to hold meetings in Central America and elsewhere. Since its first overseas conference in Italy in 1990, GRC has conducted meetings in Hong Kong, Japan, France, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.



# RANDOM SAMPLES

PEOPLE

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## COLLECTIONS

**Extended shelf life.** For 22 years Pam Alderson ran the medical library at Mount Sinai Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. And when the 97-year-old teaching hospital closed unexpectedly in 2000, she helped pack up the collection—which took up 400 square meters and filled 1100 boxes—and reassemble it 10 minutes down the road at a nonprofit she and two colleagues created to preserve the hospital's educational legacy ([www.mtsinai.org/ccit](http://www.mtsinai.org/ccit)).

But without a school or hospital affiliation, the collection draws few customers. So Alderson is putting it up for sale, hoping to catch the eye of a new research institution—or a wealthy benefactor. "I'd love for somebody to buy it and digitize the entire contents," she says about the collection, which includes 250 journal titles and books going back to 1960.

The cost could be prohibitive, says Mary Case of the Association of Research Libraries in Washington, D.C., not to mention the effort required to get the necessary permissions. "I can't imagine somebody doing that," she says.

But Alderson, who has already benefited from one selfless act—the hospital's doctors bought the collection at a fire-sale price to keep it intact—is optimistic about another. And she's got a personal stake in the sale: "We'd like to use the proceeds as an endowment for our organization."

