**Gould Burgess Shale Writing Assignment Four**

**Chapter IV. Walcott’s Vision and the Nature of History pp 240-292.**

This assignment consists of a take-home single spaced typed page (one inch margins, 12 point font; 500 words) based on information presented in Chapter IV of “Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History”.

In chapter four, Gould discusses the brilliance and some of the major problems that plagued Walcott from understanding the importance of the fossils he discovered. Most of this drama is played out in one of our most treasured museum collections in the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian. As we all know museum collections like the Burgess Shale are extremely important in terms of educating and engaging the general public, in terms of scientific discoveries, and the interactions between scientists and the general public. However, currently there is little support and/or interest from the general public and from government funding agencies for museum collections worldwide. As a result many museums are closing due to financial problems.

If you were in Walcott’s shoes and headed a major collection in a museum institution like the Smithsonian, and specifically in the division of fossil invertebrate zoology, how would you increase the interest in the Burgess Shale collection by (1) the general public and (2) the scientific community? In your discussion, please try to incorporate the types of resources it would take to do this (time, money, outreach etc.), where those resources would come from, and what the benefits of maintaining such a collection would be to (1) the general public and (2) the scientific community? AKA how do you make museum collections relevant and sexy?