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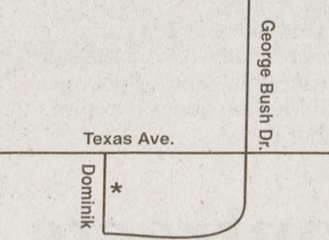


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Dinosaurs make a comeback

Smithsonian builds most realistic Triceratops skeleton

WASHINGTON (AP) — Using advanced computer technology and a laser scanner to document every dimple, bump and scratch, scientists at the Smithsonian Institution are building the most anatomically correct skeleton yet of a large dinosaur.

The scanner sent millions of signals to a computer, resulting in a series of measurements detailing the exact proportions "down to the millimeter" of the plant-eater Triceratops, said Richard H. Benson, chairman of the National Museum of Natural History's paleobiology department.

From the final, three-dimensional image appearing on a screen, scientists built plaster casts. The resulting man-made skeleton, Benson said, "will be more accurate and better" than the museum's current model, which was assembled from the bones of 15 or more different animals.

Triceratops' new 7-foot-long plastic skull was delivered to the Smithsonian Tuesday from two firms in Oklahoma, Shared Replicators and Tulsa Technologies, which built it as a gift to the museum.

Museum staff are making the legs and torso and hope to have the replica on display by February.

Benson called the man-made Triceratops "a miracle of surveying." He compared the process of its creation to satellites circling and measuring the Earth to plot an exact map of the world.

"It will be as though he's aware of the near danger and they are circling."

— Richard H. Benson
Chair of Paleobiology Department

While the Smithsonian's original four-legged Triceratops is perhaps the best specimen around, its head came from an animal a lot smaller than the rest of the skeleton, said Ralph Chapman, director of the museum's morphometrics lab. The new skull is about 15 percent larger than the one that has been on display for nearly a century.

"It fits rather nicely and looks the way it should," Chapman said.

More help came from a group of paleontologists who agreed on what a skeleton of a complete Triceratops should look like. Some bones on one side of the dinosaur are mirror images of those on the other side, Chapman said, and the back feet were made from foot scans of a different Triceratops altogether. The new technology also allows scientists to mold the skeletons into dramatic poses — an impossibility with fragile fossils.

The Smithsonian already has one plastic dinosaur on display, the meat-eater Tyrannosaurus Rex. He is not as accurate as the new Triceratops, his measurements were not digitalized but estimated "within the tolerance of scientific knowledge and artistic license," Benson said.

But T. Rex's pose is so lifelike, people can almost see saliva dripping from his hungry jaws. Triceratops will be positioned directly across the exhibit gallery from T. Rex and could be his lunch.

"It will be as though he's aware of the near danger and they are circling," Benson said.

Microsoft prefers appellate court

WASHINGTON (AP) — Microsoft Corp. renewed its argument that the Supreme Court should let a federal appeals court next handle the huge antitrust fight that threatens to break the computer software giant in two.

"The benefits of comprehensive review by the court of appeals far outweigh whatever time, if any, might be saved by direct review in this court," Microsoft's lawyers said

in a brief filed Monday with the Supreme Court.

The company's brief flatly denied as "unfounded" the Justice Department's contention that Microsoft is seeking initial review in a federal appeals court as an effort to delay final resolution of the case.

"No one is more anxious than Microsoft to see this case brought to a prompt conclusion," the 10-page brief said.

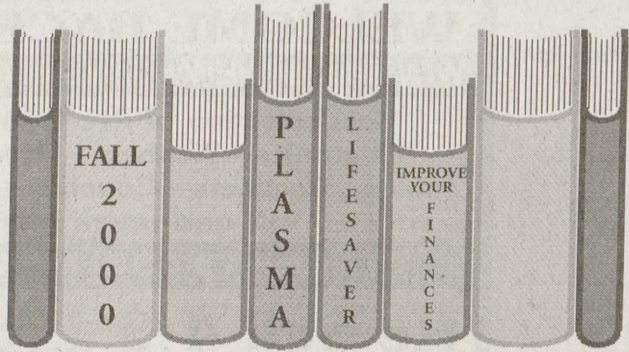
Microsoft filed its Supreme Court appeal July 26, seeking to overturn U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson's appeal that it engaged in illegally anticompetitive conduct. That appeal urged the nation's highest court to "avoid the onerous task of sifting through a large and complex record and forgoing the many benefits of intermediate appellate review."

In a response filed Aug. 15, Justice Department

lawyers said sending the case to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia would result in a delay that "could irreparably harm competition in a vital and rapidly evolving sector of the national economy."

While Jackson's June ruling would require Microsoft's breakup, the judge has delayed any enforcement of his order pending the company's appeal.

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By JASON LIND

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