

Report of the Online Workshop „Archaeological University Collections: Past Lessons and Future Goals“

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As part of a two-year collaboration project between the Heidelberg Collection of Classical Antiquities and the Helsinki University Museum “Flame”, a two-days online workshop took place on 27th and 28th November 2023. The workshop aimed at discussing problems, exchanging ideas and facilitating contacts between university collections on an international level. In total 15 papers from archaeological, ethnographical, art historical collections and university museums in Germany, the US, Austria, Belgium, Ireland, and Italy were presented. Discussions centered both on common problems that university collections in specific have to deal with on financial and administrative levels, and on innovative projects and ideas from individual collections that could be adapted to and imported by other collections in order to strengthen their role within universities and foster more visibility from the outside. The following contains a short summary of the workshop and its individual papers.

27 NOVEMBER 2023

Session 1: Digitisation in Research and Teaching

Chair: Polly Lohmann (Heidelberg University)

10:20–11:00 Digitising the Toro Farnese. A New 3D Project in the Plaster Cast Collection of the Museum of Antiquities at Leipzig University

Joana Apelt, Katharina Meinecke & Paula Michalski (University of Leipzig)

The work presented is a best practice example for conservation, documentation and digitisation of a plaster cast, including digital and physical accessibility, outreach and teaching.

The Leipzig Antikenmuseum host original ancient objects as well as about 800 plaster casts, the most complex of which is the cast of the Farnese Bull which the presented project focussed on. The original sculpture of almost 4m height was found in the Baths of Caracalla in Rome and represents a Roman copy of the 2nd century BCE. The Leipzig cast of the sculpture had been acquired by Johannes Overbeck from the Berlin Gipsabformerei in the late 19th century, and consists of over 50 pieces. Until two years ago, the sculpture had been dismantled after having been stored for decades since World War 2. In the course of the project, the individual pieces of the plaster cast are being 3D scanned in order to reconstruct and remount the whole cast; additionally, tests of 3D prints for a future for the museum shop are being conducted. The project has also been presented at different events (like the “Museumsnacht”).

11:00–11:40 Three 3D Projects of the Archaeological Museum of the University of Münster

Helge Nieswand & Ammalina Schöler (University of Münster)

Three different kinds of 3D projects have been implemented in the Archaeological Museum which were presented in the workshop. 1. The Münsterland Project „Apokalypse Münsterland“ asked visitors which cultural asset should be preserved for future – and why, in case an apocalypse would

happen. The objects from different collections and museums in the German region of Münsterland selected by the audience were 3D scanned and shown in a mobile exhibition at with the aim of gaining more visibility and attracting new target groups. 2. A VR station of the Athenian Agora, based on a historical physical model of the Athenian agora in the middle 2nd century AD. The physical model was constructed in a scale of 1:100 between 1950 and 1959. The virtual model is a scan of this original model, including the colouring, and also contextualises the scanned historical model digitally, by e.g. correcting information/updated research by text bubbles and other forms of information for users. 3. A digital model of Sicily is currently being created, projecting different features like rivers, based on analogue physical model in the Münster Archaeological Museum.

12:00–12:40 Interactivation of a Dust-Catcher: with Students – for Students – for Research
Barbora Weissová, Clarissa Haubenthal & Leah Schiebel (Ruhr University Bochum)

The project presented deals with the digital exploration of both the Attica Archive and the archaeological finds housed at Classics Ruhr University. This includes digitising diaries, field records, drawings of finds, plans, photos, slides, and historical 19th century maps of the analogue archive founded in 1981, and the ceramic finds from neolithic to byzantine periods, inherited from professors of the archaeological institute. Several interdisciplinary seminars, hands-on exercises, summer and winter schools have been conducted to train students in the digitisation works, methods, and its implications: It trained students in creating and using online databases, and in methods of computational archaeology. The presentation included a (former) student's perspective, as well as the project leaders'.

Session 2: Object-Based Teaching, Learning & Students' Involvement

Chair: Anna-Maria Wilskman (University of Helsinki)

13:40–14:20 A Labour of Sisyphus? Challenges in Managing a Small Study Collection
Matthias Meinecke (Leipzig University)

The collection of prehistorical artifacts at the university of Leipzig originally consisted of about 2,000 objects before World War 2. About of half of these were, however, destroyed in an airstrike during the war. The collection faced five relocations, including losses of objects, until today. Nowadays the collection is only visible on special occasions, because it is located in an office space. Already during the time of the German Democratic Republic (DDR), teaching with the collection included material studies, statistics, drawing, and photographing of objects. Such courses have been continuously being conducted, and today, also documenting/cataloguing and digitising of the objects (database) is integrated into seminars. More efficiently than in teaching, however, such work can be done by student assistants, whenever possible.

14:20–15:00 Chances and Challenges of Students' Work: Studying Greek Ceramics in the Heidelberg Collection of Classical Antiquities
Katharina Voll (Heidelberg University)

This talk presented a student's perspective of working in and with archaeological university collections. The Antikensammlung Heidelberg was founded in 1848 and hosts almost 9,000 original objects as well as about 1,200 large-scale plaster casts and a variety of small casts. It is used broadly

in teaching all different kinds of courses, from researching and documenting objects (drawing, 3D-scanning, photographing) to hands-on courses of handling objects, designing smaller special exhibitions, or creating apps and Youtube videos. One additional large project conducted together with students is the redesigning of the whole permanent exhibition on 1,000 m² over the course of several years. Katharina Voll took part in various of these courses and internships offered, getting into contact with the Heidelberg Collection and its objects. Her personal study curriculum lead her do even her MA thesis on objects from the Collection, and she is convinced that this was mostly motivated and possible because of her previous experiences.

15:20–16:00 The Value of Coins in the History Classroom: Increasing Accessibility, Inclusivity, and Primary-Source Literacy for First-Year Students

Allison B. Kidd (College of Charleston)

The Joel Handshu Antiquarian Coin Collection, donated in 1998, is the only collection of ancient material in South Carolina. No sources on its provenance exist, but it had probably been built up until 1998, with its contents presumably been bought from art dealers. In seminars, students learn about coins as material sources, and research one specific coin from the collection each. Most students attending do not have had any encounter with museum or archival work before, and coins offer valuable teaching material for primary source literacy. They are asked and taught to slow down pace, observe and handle the coins, describe, examine, and contextualise them, and also do an ethical assignment on the matter. In the discussion afterwards, the idea to collect course concepts like this one on a specific type of (archaeological) objects that could be downloaded from a centralised platform and being implemented in other collections.

16:00–16:40 Campana Reliefs from the Magoffin Collection of the Wilcox Classical Museum

Phil Stinson & Aaron Fugate (University of Kansas)

The Wilcox university Classics Collection of plaster casts was founded in 1888 as a teaching collection, named after Alexander Wilcox, a professor and supporter. In 1909, first original ancient objects were acquired by Ralph V.D. Magoffin. He acquired 195 objects in total in Italy, probably mostly from Rome and surroundings, some directly come from excavations, but there is no precise provenience. The collection includes also fakes and reproductions. In the course of the discussion after the talk, a potential comparative analysis of object labels across various collections and museums was brought up which could offer clues to shared provenances in some cases.

28 NOVEMBER 2023

Session 3: Public Outreach, Participation & Identity

Chair: Miia-Leena Tiili (Tiedemuseo Liekki – Helsinki University Museum Flame)

9:20–10:00 Thriving in the Presence of Uncertainty: Bringing Medical Professionals into the Museum

Ashley Cercone, Archana Mishra & Robert Scalise (University at Buffalo)

The Anderson Gallery at Buffalo University consists of two main collections: the David Anderson Collection of 1,400 post-war art pieces, and the Cravens Collection of 1,100 archaeological objects.

As part of a collaboration between the local medical school and the Anderson Gallery, an ongoing workshop for medical professionals has been created, dealing with the feeling of uncertainty, and preventing burn-out. The workshop applies different methods and tasks, like interpreting and reading art works, creating own art works, reflecting on topics like bodies, colours, death. This does not only make attendants reflect on diverse issues, but also learn to slow down and taking their time also in professional decisions and professional daily life, e.g. while diagnosing people. So far, about 100 medicine professionals and 30 medical students have taken part in workshops which thereby also bring new target groups to the museum, keeping arts and humanities relevant. According to the participants, the workshops reduce stress, promote well-being, and encourages artistic expression.

10:00–10:40 Old Collections on New Pathways: The Case of the Jena Collection of Antiquities
Eva Winter, Stefanie Adler & Nick Petukat (University of Jena)

The Jena Collection of Antiquities initially presented their promotional film to show the range of opportunities Classical Archaeology can offer to students. A brief summary of its collections from 1846 until present outlined the material, objects as well as premises that are utilized for teaching, research, restoring and exhibitions. The permanent exhibition used as depository as well as teaching room for students, schools and other groups and a special exhibition within the ground and basement floors of the Jena Institute of Classics. The Jena Collection of Antiquities started carrying out model projects in museum education in 2016 to reach out to new target groups aiming to address a more diverse, young, and even intergenerational audience. New methods – including media and forms of participation – were developed. These activities and new networks – built also with other museums – involved Bachelor and Master students to broaden their horizon of the professional scope of archaeology and to give them hands-on experience in exhibition design and museum education. Future goals are to strengthen the interdisciplinarity of their work, to address marginalised (especially non-academic) groups as well as to broaden their network and cooperations.

10:40–11:20 Handling our Past: Widening Participation in Classics in Ireland with a University Collection
Jo Day, Bridget Martin & Sasha Smith (University College Dublin)

The Classics Collection at UCD Dublin was established in 1911 by Rev. Henry Browne. Even though provenance records are sparse, some objects are known to have been bought from auctions. Work in the collection nowadays relies a lot on the work of students and volunteers, due to limited capacities. Through different kinds of events, the broader public is being addressed, e.g. during the series “Muses at UCD” which included visual art, music, and poetry events in the collection. Creative writing groups meeting in the collection are another possibility to engage with the public. The “Access Classics program”, as part of a transition year unit between highschool and university, offers a manual for teachers to open access to and engagement to Classics, from a wider and more diverse audience: Activities and resources are available online, to facilitate input for teachers. At the same time, schools are offered both visits to the collection and classroom activities, like introductory lectures, work sheets, painting ceramics, making curse tablets, and having the students handling objects on site. The aim is to facilitate school visits to UCD with hands-ons interactions.

11:40–12:20 *Moving Forward or Treading Water? Experiences from the Vienna Archaeological Collection and the Quest for Sustainability*
Matthias Hoernes (University of Vienna)

The collection of the University of Vienna has faced ups and downs throughout its history. In 1868/1869, Alexander Conze, first professor for classical archaeology, established the collection, which was originally housed at the Academy of Fine Arts before it moved to a separate space in 1888. Under Otto Benndorf, Conze's successor, the first original artefacts were acquired. The collection survived World War 2 and nowadays consists of 5,500 objects (plaster casts and some architectural models, as well as originals). There is, unfortunately, no permanent staff (i.e. no curator's position), but two students assistants and volunteers).

Different projects include research and students' involvement, such as blog posts on Greek ceramics, or on the topic of emotions in antiquity. In different kinds of events, the broader public is also addressed on site, like the "University for Children", the "Long Night of Museums", or a special offer for people with visual impairments who were able to explore plastercasts. In the frame of a collaboration project, students designed guided touch tours to improve the inclusivity of the collection. One question posed was how to turn such activities and engagement into a sustainable, long-lasting impact.

12:20–13:00 *„Making‘ an Exhibition – New Approaches to Teaching and Exhibiting in the Kunstsammlungen Antike Bochum*
Lucas Latzel & Soi Agelidis (Ruhr University Bochum)

The Kunstsammlungen RUB consists of two collections: the collection of modern and contemporary arts, and the collection of ancient art. The latter one includes only two non-original objects (plaster casts) and otherwise houses ancient originals, including larger portraits, Roman lamps, coins, and ancient vases. The focus of current works is on making the collection(s) more inclusive, and on its digitising – an ongoing process which will still take many years. By including the collection in academic teaching, a wiki for the plaster casts has been implemented, including structure from motion 3D scans. Students also inventorised the collection digitally in an experimental laboratory; cooperating with the university's makerspace, they are involved in creating a new exhibition and transform the permanent exhibition of the Kunstsammlungen. The makerspace of the RUB is a co-working area for collaborative work and exchange, focused on craftsmanship, and can be used by all university members for works and projects. New features developed together with students for the archaeological collection include QR-codes for more information on the objects, audioguides, and 3D-prints.

14:00–14:40 *Managing the Identity of a University Museum. The Case of GiArA – Plaster Casts Museum and Antiquarium of the University of Pisa*
Chiara Tarantino (University of Pisa)

GiArA is the plaster cast and antiquities collection of University of Pisa (Gipsoteca di Arte Antica e Antiquarium). It was created in the second half of the 19th century from three different collections, the earliest of which is the plaster casts collection – one of the oldest of its kind in Italy. Nowadays, since 2012, the collection is placed in the Church San Paolo all'Orto: the plaster casts moved in in 2012, the palethnological collections and antiquarium in 2018, and in 2022, everything was turned into an actual museum, since then named GiArA, Plaster Cast and Antiquities Museum. Due to its

history and the different steps of its formation, finding an identity and creating a corporate design and “brand” was part of the move of the different collection parts. Today, GiArA collaborated with other museums and cultural heritage sites in Pisa, not least by cross-referencing to lead tourists through Pisa’s cultural landscape.

14:40–15:20 Not at Home – Peruvian Archaeological Collections at Bryn Mawr College

Carrie Robbins, Curator & Marianne Weldon (Bryn Mawr College)

In the mid 1960s, Bryn Mawr College received 946 objects from mostly unknown Peruvian contexts by a private donour. The objects include mostly pots (ceramics) and textiles. In the frame of current an ongoing discussions on the provenance of objects, the collection have to tackle questions like how to research and deal with the legacies of the collection? What ways are there to deal with ethical questions and make the history of the collection transparent to the public? Another issue that was brought up during the discussion after the talk was the general question of how to deal with the human remains present in university collections. Since there are no university wide policies in most universities (yet), collections are usually left alone with those questions.

Session 4: Out of the Box

Chair: Polly Lohmann (Heidelberg University)

15:40–16:20 Constructing Archaeological Learning at the Museum L with Archives and Collections

Bénédicte Duvernay, Muriel Damien, Charlotte Langohr, Anthony Peeters, Alizé Van Brussel, Annelies Van de Ven & Laurent Verslype (Museum L/Catholic University of Louvain)

Museum L houses diverse collections which originate from different disciplines using objects for teaching at the Catholic University of Louvain. The archaeological collection of Museum L consists of both plaster casts (about 1,000) and original ancient objects (about 2,000) and was founded in the second half of the 19th century. Key figures for the history of this collection were Edmond Remy and Fernand Mayence, who acquired a larger number of originals and plaster casts in the first half of the 20th century. Other collections of Museum L include the collection of modern art, historical art, folk art, as well as collections deriving from the teaching of different natural sciences.

Study programmes withing the museum engage students in questions about how collections have been formed, what and how they should communicate. Actual work with objects is included by combining theoretical concepts with material objects, and telling stories (biographies) of objects.

Conclusion:

The workshop for the first time brought together persons in charge of or working with mostly but not exclusively Classical archaeological university collection. It showed that problems and challenges in many cases are the same, be it (infra)structural or administrative issues whose reasons lie in the respective universities or national university systems, or be it the fundamental lack of financial and human resources. Nonetheless, a variety of stimulating approaches and innovative projects were presented which offered input and inspiration for implementation. Based on the common spirit of the workshop and the encouraging presentations, the participants agreed on staying in contact via the mailing list established for the workshop, and to work on ways to share teaching materials for

collections and information for provenance research on persons and objects labels potentially connecting different collections.