

Best Practices of collaborating with members of source communities on museum and archival collections

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Abstracts

Keynote

Participatory practices: collaborating through writing, photography, collecting and curating

Haidy Geismar

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In this keynote I present an exhibition of sorts, the objects drawn from the past twenty years of fieldwork and research exploring the resonance of historical collections for contemporary communities, developing participatory and collaborative methods and models for collecting, curating, and representing in museums, and working with a wide range of constituents from communities and contemporary artists in Vanuatu and New Zealand, curators and collectors in New York, and schoolchildren and filmmakers in London. By presenting this as an exhibition, I want to highlight not just the networks of social relationships that emerge around collections and through the technologies and practices of collecting, curating and exhibiting. I also want to explore the shifting nature of collections, the vital importance of materiality and the nature of objects themselves in forging these complex webs of meaning.

The Return of the Images: Preserving Memories of Place through Visual Archives

Peter Mesenhöller

Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum Cologne

In 1841, the German 'naturalist' Ernst Dieffenbach (1811-1855) explored the interior of the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand on behalf of the young British colonial government of that country. During his travels, he was accompanied by the itinerant painter Joseph Jenner Merrett who carefully depicted both landscapes and people, thereby creating a body of some 90 hitherto unknown ink-and-wash drawings which was rediscovered only a few

years ago. Unfortunately, most of Merrett's drawings only bear generic captions, thus leaving it difficult to exactly identify the circumstances of their initial recording. Furthermore, Merrett's images rather reveal European aspects of perceiving the 'other' than telling their stories from an indigenous point of view.

This paper will focus on Merrett's depictions of landscape – a genre evoking notions of place, history and identity among the Māori population of Aotearoa which are mostly unknown (or forgotten) in Western societies. In 2018, 30 high-end scans and museum-standard facsimiles of Merrett's drawings from around Lake Taupo were 'returned' to local Ngāti Tūwharetoa together with a documentation of historic travel reports etc. in order to provide material for an open virtual archive which will invite members of the community to constantly add their knowledge and memory. The author will provide insight into the challenges and advantages of this collaboration over the past years and outline prospects of developing visual archives as a repository for future generations.

Walking Taonga Home: A Māori Perspective on Creating Pathways for Reconnection, Access and Reciprocity

Eleazar Manutai Bramley

Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Tokaanu/Aotearoa

In 1840 Aotearoa New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi considered to be our nation's founding document was signed. It is an agreement between the British Crown and many Rangatira (chiefs) to establish broad principles on which to form a nation state and government. In 2014, our nation was amidst Waitangi settlement claims and Ngāti Tūwharetoa were in deep consultation with hapū (subtribe) and the crown concerning our historical grievances and treaty breaches. It was at this time German Peter Mesenhöeller of Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, made his first contact with me regarding an album of sketches, 25 of which he believed were depictions of our tribal land by another German, 'Naturalist' Ernst Dieffenbach & artist Joseph Jenner Merrett. Images created in the same era as when the Treaty was originally signed. This contact would mark a new chapter in the continuing story of our shared history.

This paper will focus on key concepts stemming from my understanding of Mātauranga Māori (A Māori World View). That underpinned the approach taken in this project. Discussion will focus on the complexities I negotiated as an iwi (tribal) descendant stewarding Peter and the Dieffenbach project within the Ngāti Tūwharetoa world. The challenges of brokering opportunities for a relationship between world perspectives, time, people and taonga will be elaborated and the way tikanga (cultural protocols), was vital in bridging differences for meaningful connections. This done within an evolving socio-political and socio-cultural context as our iwi move into a time of new vision regarding the Kaitiakitanga (guardianship) of what our tribal community consider to be taonga (treasured).

Mātauranga Māori is an evolving and holistic expression of Māori values, concepts, culture and world view to explain the world in which we live. It is framed by whakapapa (genealogy) of all things and whanaungatanga (kinship) connections between them. A museum or institutes understanding of Mātauranga Māori creates an opportunity to involve iwi and Māori communities and the way the museum or institute cares for and manages taonga. It can facilitate valuable partnerships allowing rich, contrasting and innovative opportunities for reciprocity.

In the context of this collection, connection and access we move forward as global citizens into the digital realm and emerging technologies to create and establish new cultural spaces to steward our uniqueness and exercise our sovereignty through the philosophy of Rangatiratanga (chiefly authority). This is expressed through leadership and participation to unify and weave our people together through vision that strengthens our tribal concepts, values and Māori identity to empower our people for generations to come.

„Rauru Project 2012“. Taking care of a meeting house from Aotearoa/New Zealand: Challenges and perspectives.

Jeanette Kokott

Museum am Rothenbaum Hamburg

In October 2012, centenary celebrations for a carved meeting house from Whakarewarewa took place at the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg, Germany – since September 2018 known as Museum am Rothenbaum (MARKK). Antecedent to this inauguration in Hamburg by a major delegation of Te Arawa elders, the meeting house was visited by dedicated descendants of the initial carvers. Having a professional background in the arts of carving, weaving, and the preservation of traditional Māori meeting houses they initiated the ‘Rauru Project’ to honour the legacy of their ancestors and reconnect with this precious house abroad. This meeting house bears the name “Rauru” as he was said to have been the originator of the art of woodcarving. It can look back on a complex history: First commissioned by Te Waru of Ngāti Whaoa, it was Charles Nelson, the proprietor of the Geyser Hotel at Whakarewarewa, who finished the erection of the building by employing carvers from Ngāti Tarāwhai background. In March 1900, the opening ceremony took place and two respected tohunga performed the sacred rites. Soon afterwards, Nelson decided to put the house on the market and finally Georg Thilenius acquired house Rauru for the newly built ethnographic museum in Hamburg. A hundred years after this transfer to Germany revisions of the museum’s gallery were taken into consideration in combination with conservation works by members of the ‘Rauru Project’ that was called into being after a first visit to analyze the situation in autumn 2011. Major preparations consisting of harvesting and processing the fibre materials in Aotearoa/New Zealand preceded the installations in August 2012 giving special attention to the roofing and the fading patterns of some of the tukutuku panels. This project provided a physical and intellectual basis to explore collaboratively the techniques and traditional skills to be found in house Rauru. The

artisans shared their knowledge about the construction, social significance, historical background, and associated beliefs that have crucial implications for the ongoing care and potential interaction. Discussions ensued over protocol and adjustments to a museum's environment.

The presentation will discuss how this collaboration improves and challenges the museum's ability to safeguard the meeting house for future generations. It addresses questions concerning the balance of conservation needs, public expectations and special obligations that result from acknowledging the relationships that are the legacy of house Rauru.

500 People, Five Decades of Personal Data: Negotiating Informed Consent and Research Collaboration in Namibia

Anke Kuper

Human Ethology Film Archive of the Senckenberg Research Institute Frankfurt

The Human Ethology Film Archive, which was started in the 1960ies by Irenaeus Eibl-Eibesfeldt as a cross-cultural research program on universals in human behavior, documents everyday life of people around the world in candid cinematic recordings. Beyond short studies in many countries, in five societies in Southern Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia/Oceania, researchers regularly visited the same families and neighborhoods over and over for several decades, so that life histories of individuals as well as history and social and cultural change of their societies are remarkably well documented. In 2014, this valuable material had been entrusted to Senckenberg, where it shall be made available for research and educational purposes. This objective, of course, gives rise to various ethical and legal questions. The archive involves personality rights and personal data – in the form of images, sounds, spoken words, text, and research data – of thousands of individuals worldwide, who, for the most part, live in areas with little or no technical infrastructure and did not involve with formal education systems until very recently, most of them using oral communication exclusively.

Apart from the challenges associated with legal issues on behalf of the archive, such as informational self-determination, consultation of the individuals filmed and a formal “informed consent” to secondary data use and digitization, the manifold rights of the research partners and their societies, their interests and their perspectives on this research need to be addressed. These matters thus inevitably emphasize the discussion of structural imbalances of past and present research relations and of possibilities to transform these. As a pilot project, I initiated the process of negotiating these issues in one of the societies represented in the archive in Northern Kunene Region in Namibia.

Linking San communities with museum archives - projects at the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford and !Khwa ttu San Heritage Centre, South Africa.

Chris Low

University of Oxford

For the last five years I have been leading the setting up of !Khwa ttu San Heritage Centre <https://www.khwattuheritagecentre.org/>. !Khwa ttu is a part Swiss not-for-profit (Ubuntu), part San (WIMSA) venture which is based 70kms north of Cape Town, South Africa. The heritage centre opened in September 2018, although !Khwa ttu has been running as a learning and tourist centre since 2000. !Khwa ttu is the only heritage centre dedicated to the San. The Centre is rooted in community curatorship and community collaboration.

As part of our initiative, we have undertaken a number of outreach projects to link San communities with their heritage. In this session, I will describe some of our endeavors, focusing on the aims, strengths and weaknesses of the process. I will additionally sketch forthcoming work. The examples I consider will include a joint !Khwa ttu / Oxford Pitt Rivers museum initiative to return 1950s anthropological somatotype photographs to a San community in Bere, Botswana and the plans for our !Khwa ttu Satellite initiative which involves !Khwa ttu San Satellite Pioneers hosting local digital archives and contributing to the !Khwa ttu San Digital Archive <https://khwattuarhive.org/>.

Confronting Colonial Pasts, Envisioning Creative Futures

Nehoa Hilma Kautondokwa, Museums Association of Namibia

Jonathan Fine, Museum of Ethnology Berlin

This project, a collaboration between the Museums Association of Namibia (MAN) and the Ethnologisches Museum der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (EM), grows out of cooperative provenance research and an exploration of the future potential of the historical collections from Namibia at the EM conducted by experts from Namibia and researchers at the EM. The historical collections from Namibia at the EM were acquired primarily during German colonization (1884–1919). The collections reflect not only the process of appropriation by German colonial agents, but also the resourcefulness and creativity of Namibian people. They are a vital source for historical research, including oral history, and a crucial source of inspiration for contemporary artists and designers. Because of the German colonization of Namibia, the vast majority of these objects is held in German, not Namibian, institutions and is therefore not accessible to most Namibians. This project seeks to begin to redress this imbalance.

After extensive collaborative exploration and research in Berlin, MAN, in consultation with advisers from different Namibian communities selected twenty-three artifacts from Berlin

to be transferred to the National Museum in Windhoek. They will be used in workshops in Namibia with experts and communities to reactivate knowledge about Namibian cultures, societies, and history, and to serve as a basis for creative contemporary artists and designers. The engagement with historical objects seeks to connect the past to the present, to begin the process of restitution as a way of engaging communities and developing museums in the heritage sector, and to envision creative futures.

Collaborative Ethnographies at the Wayana-Apalai university collection (BASA Museum, Bonn Collection of the Americas)

Karoline Noack
Universität Bonn

Between 2016 and 2018, the BASA Museum has been the working space where representatives of the Wayana-Apalai, the experts of indigenous knowledge, anthropologists of the research project “Men-Thing entanglement in indigenous societies” (BMBF) and students encountered to work together the Wayana-Apalai collection hosted by the BASA Museum. The idea was to edit the ethnographic collection, which was brought together by Manfred Rauschert in several campaigns he conducted in the field during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Because Rauschert not only focused on material culture alone, but also on the rich oral traditions of the Wayana-Apalai and on writing and publishing his ethnographic observations, the project’s objective was to analyze processes of cultural transformation and of knowledge transfer in the indigenous societies as well as to provide material objects, sources, information to their creators and descendants. The paper will concentrate on the “collaborative ethnographies” by which our experiences of cooperative work with representatives of the Wayana-Apalai turned in to a genuine collaborative provenance research. Within that process collection histories were clarified, but also new material objects were produced by the indigenous representatives. That challenges role models and calls for a new understanding of the museum as an institution, of provenance research and forms of restitution.

Touching the catalogue: toward postcolonial classification and knowledge production

Cara Krmpotich
University of Toronto

This paper begins with the recognition that while cultural institutions increasingly encourage physical handling of collections, the museum catalogue remains beyond the touch of communities. But it also explores the potential of touch to reorient museum

classification, thinking through multi-sensory knowledge production, place-based knowledges, and other possibilities for imagining and ordering the world and its objects. A necessary site of tension is the shift toward touchscreens and digital devices amidst the larger tendency for both objects and information to be accessed through digital forms. I ask how digitized catalogues mediate audience interactions with museums, knowledge, and material culture. If, as Chapman (2012) argues, digital cataloguing infrastructures enable interpretive possibilities, can cataloguing become a vehicle for communities and broader museum publics to become more “in touch” with the multiple histories, knowledges and cultural systems bound up with museum collections? Overall, this paper asks whether there is a possibility for a post-colonial catalogue that, as Anna Tsing offers, is about neither harmony nor conquest.

Building relations: bringing together Blackfoot ways of knowing and museum practice

*Alvine Mountain Horse; Kainai Board of Education/University of Alberta
Alison K. Brown, University of Aberdeen*

In this presentation we will focus on one of several museum engagement projects we have worked on together over the past two decades. The Blackfoot Shirts Project brought together museum and university researchers and members of the Siksika, Piikani, Kainai and Blackfoot Nations with five early nineteenth century ‘war’ shirts in the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. It involved the loan of these shirts to museums in Western Canada for display, ‘visits’, in which community members could engage with these ancestors without the barrier of museum cases, and the production of educational resources aimed at Blackfoot students. The project raised multiple questions about ownership, the ways in which historic collections can be used for knowledge regeneration at the community level, and the educational potential for Blackfoot and non-Blackfoot of learning about these items. We will reflect on some of the productive tensions involved in developing this trans-national project, and will indicate the ways in which we addressed them, drawing on Blackfoot cultural protocol and concepts of consensus as well as museum solutions. We will also comment on the importance of acknowledging the un-resolvability of some issues that arise when under-taking cross-cultural work using museum and archival collections as a focus.

Ownership-Control-Access-Possession: Reflections on 20 years of negotiating the digital return of anthropological and linguistic data

Mark Turin

University of British Columbia

What does 'source communities' mean and convey? How does it differ—in valence, value and responsibility—from other terms such as 'communities of origin'?

The formative contributions of Alison K. Brown, Haidy Geismar, Cara Krmopotich, Laura Peers and others at this conference (and beyond) have created pathways through these complex questions and offer different modalities for working in increasingly collaborative partnership.

In this presentation, I reflect on two decades of digitally-mediated partnerships with communities whose ethnographic, linguistic and audio-visual legacies I have had the privilege of working, both in the Himalayan region and more recently in Native North America. In particular, I focus on the missteps and baked-in naïve assumptions that have bedeviled the digital return projects in which I have been involved. As a researcher and teacher in a secure and privileged position, I propose that a realistic goal is not to make **no** mistakes (a hubristic foreclosure), but rather to make better ones.

***yaghudanggang* - To Pay Respect - Haida Repatriation**

Vincent Collison

Old Massett Village Council

Backgrounder

The Haida Nation has been working on repatriation of ancestral remains since 1996. During the request for the inventories of Haida and Northwest Coast Collections in 1994 were found the staggering number of Haida Ancestral remains, still being held in museums throughout North America and in Europe. The Haida Repatriation Committee immediately made the Haida Ancestors a priority and to complete this stage of repatriation as much as possible. Since 1996, over 500 Haida Ancestors were returned to Haida Gwaii from various museums in North America and from the United Kingdom.

The next stage of *yaghudanggang* - To Pay Respect - Haida Repatriation.

In 2019, the Haida Treasures being returned to Haida Gwaii began in earnest. Three Haida Totem poles from Yan, Skidegate and SGaang Gwaii were repatriated back to Haida Gwaii. The poles will remain in their crates until it is determined what will happen with the poles. There are complications such as the preservation treatment the poles received during their tenure at the museums. In some cases, these preservation treatments will affect what will happen to these poles once they are back on Haida Gwaii. There are chemicals that could leech into the earth for instance as an extreme example. Fragments from poles in Kiusta

and Old Massett, two sides of a burial bentwood box and a whistle used in ceremony also were returned.

Short and long-term goals

The shift to Haida Treasures is a part of the long term goal of the return of Haida Treasures back to Haida Gwaii. We are committed to building a world class collection on Haida Gwaii of ancient Haida Treasures. They belong home. The history of the Haida Nation is a complicated historical tapestry epitomized by these ancient Haida Treasures. The story is just beginning in this stage of *yaghudanggang* - To pay Respect. /Repatriation of Haida Treasures. The Haida are determined to lead this next stage of repatriation of Haida Cultural Treasures to Haida Gwaii. It is time to begin the extensive review the over 12,000 Haida Treasures that we know exist within museums throughout the world. Establishing partnerships, educational programming and telling our story from the Haida perspective is part of the short-term plans with museums. It needs to happen as we proceed along into the 21st century. Righting the wrongs is part of the Reconciliation process. Taking action on more Haida involvement with their Haida Treasures is part of the solution.

Theory and Practice of „Best Practice” - Some Personal Reflections from Native North America

Rainer Hatoum

Freie Universität Berlin

After some fifteen years of personal experience with different collaborative museum- and archive-centered projects involving a range of native peoples from North America, this paper offers a welcome moment for reflection on the ideal and concept of “best practice,” as it surfaced in connection with my work. My dealing with different collections from the Navajo, the Northwest Coast and Franz Boas’ shorthand field notes offered me repeated opportunities to be challenged by different facets of that concept. And so, my presentation will contribute some rather personal reflections on how notions of “best practice” were expressed and played out in my different projects both in theory and in practice.

Curating with Communities: A Collaborative Project between the Museums Association of Namibia and Namibia San Council

Nehoa Hilma Kautondokwa

Museums Association of Namibia, Namibia

The Museums Association of Namibia (MAN), an umbrella body responsible for regional museum development in Namibia. MAN “... strives to ensure that museums in Namibia become educational resources, centers of creativity, dialogue and forums that serve as cultural contact zones and windows on the wider world ... and provide access to knowledge,

focusing on Namibia's unique tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage". MAN argues that this is "... best achieved by involving the communities that they serve ..." MAN is currently working on a collaborative project based on 'virtual repatriation', through photographing objects of the largest museum collection, documenting diverse Namibian San communities. The collection comprises 3,367 individual artefacts and 388 photographs, collected by Dr. Louis Fourie and currently held at MuseumAfrica in Johannesburg. The project involves the development of a mobile exhibition and catalogue reflecting the history and culture of Namibia's San communities, and is implemented in partnership between the Museums Association of Namibia and the Namibia San Council. The project not only presents an alternative narrative to the San history and culture, but brings to the fore practical experiences and challenges in curating exhibitions with communities.

First attempts of collaboration between the Oswin Köhler Archive and representatives of the Khwe in Namibia

Gertrud Boden

Oswin Köhler Archive, Goethe University Frankfurt

Thaddeus Chedau & Sonner Geria

Khwe Community, Bwabwata National Park, Namibia

Oswin Köhler, a German scholar of African Studies (1911-1996) recorded the Khwe language and culture during a period of more than 30 years (1959-1992). His academic legacy is housed in the Oswin Köhler Archive at the Institute for African Studies of the Goethe University in Frankfurt/Germany. The archival material consists of vernacular manuscripts, audiofiles, photos, ethnographic objects, drawings, dried plants, and a small number of ethnographic film sequences.

Due to their small and manageable size, the films were selected for a first collaborative editing project. The presentation describes the original films, addresses the challenges and questions which arose during the project and which continue to be virulent in ongoing plans for editing and making accessible the complete archival material to members of the source community.

In September 2019, Thaddeus Chedau and Sonner Geria visited the Oswin Köhler Archive in order to see the materials of their cultural heritage stored there, work on the materials and their presentation, as well as discuss access rights and further steps.