



UNIVERSEUM 2020 Pre-conference Training Workshop

Université libre de Bruxelles, 20 - 21 June 2020

Maison des Arts

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: 31 MARCH 2020

*Main UNIVERSEUM Conference takes place 22-26 June 2020

Functions and uses of cast models within university collections: the question of preservation at all costs

University heritage is an important resource for research and education, but it can also be used to bring universities closer to non-academic audiences in search of popularization. It often is a central element in the international outreach of universities, enhancing the identity of the university.

Nevertheless, there is a lack of consensus among the university community as to the extent to which university collections need to be preserved. Some think of those pieces as 'cumbersome heritage'.¹ The perception of the collections' value varies according to the different uses and interpretations of collections and the evolution of teaching methods.² As universities continually produce new heritage through the acquisition or production of new tools for research or teaching, the heritage potential of these objects is not always readily recognized as such by the university community.

Museum professionals are constantly under pressure to defend their collections, and to make explicit their criteria for preservation. Therefore, there is an urgent need for university heritage professionals to develop a coherent view on the selection of objects to be preserved.

To this aim, several questions can be raised:

- In view of the large body of accumulated university collections and its continuing expansion, what should be considered heritage?
- How does academic heritage differ from that of non-university institutions?
- What criteria determine the heritage value of an object: its economic value, its embedded knowledge, the era it enlightens, its scarcity, its aesthetic qualities, its potential for museological uses?

¹ Maison-Soulard, L. & S. Soubiran, « Musées et collections universitaires : nouveaux enjeux, nouvel élan ? », *La Lettre de l'OCIM* [En ligne], 2010, 129 | 2010, publ. 01/05/2012 <<http://journals.openedition.org/ocim/144> ; DOI : 10.4000/ocim.144op. cit.

² *Ibid.*

- Should a distinction be made between objects intended for research, teaching or public awareness?
- How should 'recent heritage' (pieces that may or may not acquire heritage value) be considered?
- What is the role of university heritage professionals in proposing criteria for preservation and valorization of objects and collections?
- On which grounds should the preservation period be decided? Should each piece be endlessly preserved?
- Are the universities the only or the most appropriate places to keep their own heritage? Should university museums be independent institutions?

The aim for participants is to discuss the concept of heritage value for academic pieces (what are the elements that give value to an object?), and from there, to establish evaluation files that make it possible to decide whether or not to preserve the piece.

For this purpose, casts from the ULB's collections will be made available. The Réseau des Musée de l'ULB, the ULB Museums Network, owns hundreds of them through the different museums, among which the medicine museum and the anatomy and embryology museum. They date back to the 19th and the 20th centuries and are their conservation state varies between fragile to excellent. They are mainly used for museum, didactic and research purposes.

The workshop will consist of two sessions, coordinated by cultural heritage professionals and academics from the Université libre de Bruxelles, as well as by some members of the Board of Universeum:

- 1) First, workshop participants will be divided into two groups, and each of them will receive several pieces from the ULB's collections, which will provide the basis for further reflections. Each group will then be asked to determine their heritage value based on the criteria that seems the most relevant to them and they will determine whether the object should be kept or not, and for how long this object should be conserved. The group will develop an evaluation record for each piece in order to support its decisions. The aim is to familiarize participants with this type of records, which is often used by professionals in university museum. Discussions within each group will be nourished by each participant's experience and expertise in this field.
- 2) In the afternoon, the two groups will meet in order to present their evaluation records and defend their point of view regarding the criteria they chose to discuss the preservation conditions of cast models.

Workshop results will be presented during the conference.

Who is it for? The workshop is aimed mainly at early career professionals working in university museums, archives, libraries, special collections, PhD students and early career researchers working with/on university collections.

Registration fee: There is no fee for attending the workshop.

Other costs: Lunch and coffee/tea during the day will be provided by Universeum. Participants, or their organisations, will be expected to cover their own travel and accommodation. Information and suggestions for these will be provided on the Universeum2020 website soon.

Maximum number of participants: To allow for hands-on and behind-the-scenes sessions and work in two groups, the workshop is limited to **20** participants.

Grants: The Universeum Board has decided to spare 2,500 EUR. in order to reimburse some participant's travel costs within Europe. We will try to help as much participants who apply for a grant as possible. Priority will be given to students and junior professionals.

Workshop dates: 20-21 June 2020, 1.5 day (before the main Universeum conference which will take place 22-26 June. Workshop participants are expected to attend also the main Universeum conference.

Venue: Maison des Arts, 56 avenue Jeanne, 1050 Brussels

Eligibility:

- Workshop participants should have paid the Universeum annual membership fee, either institutional or individual, for 2020 (so check if your institution is already a member). If you are interested in becoming a member, please check the [membership section](#) of the Universeum websites;
- Participants should be researching or working with a University collection, museum, archive, or library (either as part of their work or PhD or post-doctoral studies/research) at the time the workshop will take place;
- Participants should be fluent in spoken and written English.

Overall selection of applicants will take into account gender balance, as well as the diversity of their backgrounds, age, country, and museum/collection(s)

Participants should be prepared to do preparatory work before and during the workshop (e.g. readings and assignments), participate in its evaluation, and prepare a presentation for the main conference.

Application process: Applications should include:

1. Completed application form (Download [Universum Pre-Conference Workshop Application Form](#));
2. A letter of motivation from the applicant explaining why they wish to participate and what they expect to gain from the workshop (1 A4 page);
3. A short CV (up to 1 A4 page) indicating studies, training, work experience, publications, and current work responsibilities.

Applications should be sent by email to Universeum2020@ulb.be with the title: 'Application for Universeum pre-conference workshop 2020' before **31 March 2020**.

Contact: If you have any questions about the workshop, please send an email to Universeum2020@ulb.be