Object Lessons and Nature Tables (Reading, 23 Sep 16)

University of Reading, Sep 23, 2016
Deadline: Jun 15, 2016

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Object Lessons and Nature Tables: Research Collaborations Between Historians of Science and University Museums

With the 'material turn' in the humanities, historians of science are paying greater and greater attention to collections of all kinds, and to their complex structures and histories. University museum collections in the UK and across Europe form a singular meeting point in humanities discourses for which history of science is highly significant – such as environmental history, histories of colonialism, and information histories.

What exactly does this new landscape of university researchers and their science collections look like now? How do we approach the material culture of science? What are the research projects taking place in this arena, and what is its future potential? How do collaborations between curators and historians of science function – especially inside university contexts? What are the examples of innovative research conjoining university collections and historians of science? When do teaching and research in history of science come together in collections contexts? What public histories of science are being co-produced in university- based science museums? These epistemological and practice-based questions will be the focus of this one-day conference co-sponsored by the Centre for Collections Based Research and the Department of History of the University of Reading, and supported by the British Society for the History of Science.

This conference hopes to attract historians of science of all fields and career levels, from doctoral students including CDAs through to early career researchers and senior figures, as well as curators, archivists, collections managers and research funders. The conference addresses both methods and findings, and will therefore have both formal papers in panel structures and presentations of actual collections objects.

We are soliciting proposals for conference participation in the form of conventional papers (15 – 30 minutes) and also proposals for 'object animations' (20 minutes).

Object animations will involve the presentation of actual collection objects, demonstrating just what incisive and relevant work can be done with material culture investigations in the history of science. Proposals will be selected through a peer review process.

The 'object animations' participants will be offered flexible support to enable their participation. This will include the option of arriving the night before as a guest of the conference in order to

facilitate couriering of objects, as well as the assurance that the conference venue (Special Collections/Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading) is a collection-secure area. We will also provide appropriate AV technologies (object camera with overhead data projection) for demonstrating objects close-up.

Proposals of up to 750 words (and images of objects) are solicited in the following suggested areas and beyond:

- practices and methods of material culture in history of science
- history of science research projects in university collections: practices, processes, experiences and outcomes
- university scientific museums as arenas for the public history of science and for history of science impact
joint appointments, curatorships and embedded research in history of science and university museum collections
- Collaborative Doctoral Awards in history of science and collections
- university museums as training grounds for new practices in history of science

Please send your proposal by 15/06 to the co-convenors of the conference:

Dr Martha Fleming, Programme Director, Centre for Collections-Based Research, University of Reading : m.fleming@reading.ac.uk
Dr Rohan Deb Roy, Lecturer in South Asian History, Department of History, University of Reading : r.debroy@reading.ac.uk

The conference will be preceded by an optional afternoon on the previous day (22/09) during which collections visits to the University of Reading's Herbarium, Geology Collections, and the Cole Museum of Zoology will be possible. Please note that this conference will take place concurrently with the University Museums Group 2016 Conference at University of Reading, and that there will be opportunities for synergy between the two events. Thanks to the generosity of the British Society for the History of Science, a number of stipends will be available to enable the participation of students.

Reference:
CFP: Object Lessons and Nature Tables (Reading, 23 Sep 16). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 26, 2016 (accessed Nov 12, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/12812>.