

## 2 PhD Positions, University of Vienna

Vienna, Oct 1, 2024–Sep 30, 2027

Application deadline: May 15, 2024

Alan S. Ross

2 PhD Research Positions "Associated Media of Austro-Hungarian Zoological Education (AMAZE) – Zoological wallcharts and glass lantern slides".

Applications are welcomed for two positions (PhD candidates) to become part of the research team of the project Associated Media of Austro-Hungarian Zoological Education (AMAZE) – Zoological wallcharts and glass lantern slides at the University of Vienna. The project is led by Assoz.-Prof. Alan S. Ross at the Department of Education and is funded by the Austrian Science Fund (fwf.ac.at).

AMAZE aims to establish visual and material studies as a central concern of the history of education. The usefulness of material sources for reconstructing the historical 'realities' of teaching, ie. the equipment, architecture and methods of teaching, has long been recognised, while their use for approaching epistemological and ideological questions was a marginal concern. Recent studies have shown that natural history education as a field in which objects and images were used to reinforce nationalist and imperialist as well as racist and specist ideologies in education.

However, multi-ethnic and multilingual states such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire have been largely ignored in the context of the propagation of nationalist and imperialist as well as racist and specist ideologies in education. The project aims to place the Habsburg Empire at the centre of visual politics during the nationalisation of education and the sciences in the late nineteenth century. The working hypothesis of the project is that visual and material culture was key to internal colonialism in the sciences of the Habsburg Empire.

The project will pioneer the exploitation of two types of serial media as sources for the history of education. The two collections originated in the former Institute of Zoology at the University of Vienna and are currently held at the Department of Evolutionary Biology. They depict images across the whole range of life-forms and were tied in to natural history teaching at the University of Vienna.

In their size and their documentation, these collections are unique in Europe:

- a) one-off, handpainted educational wallcharts.
- b) glass lantern slides.

The study of the Viennese collections advances the study of Habsburg imperial science both in

terms of its relationship to other research centers in the empire as well as abroad. The exchange of educational media slides allows for the reconstruction of lop-sided relationships between center and periphery in the context of science and pedagogy.

Enquiries should be directed to the PI, Alan Ross: alan.ross@univie.ac.at

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1) Research Position: "From three to two dimensions: wall charts and their role in natural history education at the University of Vienna, 1864 – 1918".

Job description:

The candidate will be in charge of the Work Package concerning the collection of handpainted wallcharts. Starting date is 1 October 2024.

The collection is made up of approx. 1000 original, hand-painted wallcharts, making the collection one of the largest of this kind world-wide. The wall charts were executed between the 1860s and 1984 by a small group of artists. Unlike the vast majority of educational wall charts, the collection of wall zoological wallcharts at the University of Vienna was neither mass-produced to be used in schools. The Viennese collections were commissioned one by one to illustrate particular points made in specific lectures. As a result, the wall charts shed light directly on teaching practices at the University of Vienna, one of the most important global centers of research and education in the natural sciences in the nineteenth century. Of particular relevance to the special role of the University of Vienna in the context of natural science education is the university's prominent role in the early propagation of Darwinian evolutionary theory.

The wallcharts demonstrate how a particular brand of research and education was created for and exported from the capital of the Habsburg Empire.

What we expect:

The candidate will collaborate with the PI and the rest of the team as well as staff at the Department of Evolutionary Biology at the University of Vienna. The candidate will spend Year One of the project working through the collection of wallcharts at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and will collaborate with the staff of the department in documenting, digitizing and cataloguing the yet undocumented collection of zoological wallcharts.

The candidate is expected to write a PhD thesis in the wider field of the research position and to publish preliminary results. The candidate is also required to attend fortnightly meetings with the PI and the other members of the team, to co-organize conferences and research meetings and to maintain the website of the project.

Preference will be given to graduates of history, the history of science, the history of art or educational science with a proven background in the history of the Habsburg Empire as well as some experience of working with visual and/ or material sources.

Very good language skills in German and English are required. Additionally, competence in a second language of the Habsburg Empire or the proven ability and willingness to acquire one during the project is expected.

What we offer:

- an international and lively environment.
- an inner-city research location.
- wide range of training possibilities.
- a fully equipped office space.
- 3-year contracts.
- a salary of 37.577 Euros per year.

How to apply:

Applications (titled SURNAME, Amaze, application 2024, wallcharts) can be made in either English or German. They should be sent to the PI Alan Ross: alan.ross@univie.ac.at

The deadline is 15 May 2024.

The following material should be sent in a single PDF document:

- 1) A two-page letter of motivation. This letter should detail what skills and prior experience qualify you for the position. Outline how you think visual and material sources can help us understand the history of education and science and/ or the Habsburg Empire.
- 2) A CV, including a list of publications (if applicable).
- 3) A writing sample (for example an article or a comprehensive chapter of your MA thesis). The writing sample does not need to have been accepted by a publisher.
- 4) The name, email address and telephone number of at least two referees (do not send recommendation letters).
- 5) The certificate of your Masters degree.

Online interviews will take place at the end of May/ beginning of June 2024.

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2) Research position: "From Vienna to the world – zoological glass lantern slides and the propagation of Habsburg imperial research agendas"

Job description

Starting date is 1 October 2024.

The candidate will be in charge of the Work Package concerning the collection of approximately 8000 glass lantern slides produced between 1910 until 1970. Of these slides, approximately 1600 items (20%) were manufactured specifically for the collection.

The collection makes exceptionally clear the entanglement of older and newer media and the migration of visual topoi between them. On the one hand, it is possible to reconstruct in detail the sources for glass lantern slides. Photographers documented a large number of objects in the institute's collection of human and natural history specimens, producing, for instance, more than 200 photographs of skulls still extant at the Department of Evolutionary Biology. A considerable number of the Institute of Zoology's one-off wall charts were also reproduced as lantern slides. On the other hand, it is possible to reconstruct the international distribution of the glass lantern slides as well as their later role as source material for newer media. The detailed hand-written catalogue of these lantern slides also shows that lantern slides were exchanged with major research institutions abroad such as the American Museum of Natural History in New York. A considerable number of glass lantern slides have also been utilized in educational films. A large number of these

have survived at the University of Vienna and are currently being examined and catalogued as part of a large project funded by the FWF.

**What we expect:**

The candidate will collaborate with the PI and the rest of the team as well as staff at the Department of Evolutionary Biology at the University of Vienna. The candidate will spend Year One of the project working through the collection of glass lantern slides at the Department of Evolutionary Biology and will collaborate with the staff of the department in documenting, digitizing and cataloguing the part of the collection that has not yet been digitized.

The candidate is expected to write a PhD thesis in the wider field of the research position and to publish preliminary results. The candidate is also required to attend fortnightly meetings with the PI and the other members of the team, to co-organize conferences and research meetings and to maintain the website of the project.

Preference will be given to graduates of history, the history of science, the history of art or educational science with a proven background in the history of the Habsburg Empire as well as some experience of working with visual and/ or material sources.

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Reference:

JOB: 2 PhD Positions, University of Vienna. In: Arthist.net, Apr 21, 2024 (accessed Jul 31, 2025),  
<<https://arthist.net/archive/41706>>.