

Who Cares (Krems, 1–3 Jul 26)

Krems, Universität für Weiterbildung Krems, Jul 1–03, 2026

Deadline: Jun 26, 2026

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Who Cares: Collecting, preserving, and curating in museums, archives, and organizations.

Background and Scope

For the verb to care, derived from Old English *caru* (“concern, anxiety, sorrow, grief, trouble”), the Oxford English Dictionary lists 17 different meanings. Among them “to be interested or concerned,” “to give care,” or “to feel trouble or anxiety.” Within the rather vast semantic spectrum this every-day verb entails, the DAC Summer School 2026 aims at investigating “who cares?” in the context, museums, archives, and comparable institutions of cultural heritage as well as organizations in general.

Collections grow, material traces decay, organizations expand. Both analog and digital repositories are exposed to an ever-increasing flood of information and objects that require proper, sustainable, and long-term care. Museums, archives, libraries, and conservation professionals are confronted not only with new materials and technologies but also with managing fast-growing collections while ensuring their safeguard against processes of deterioration, obsolescence, disruption, and loss. Companies and public organizations face related challenges in knowledge stewardship, documentation, and long-term management of digital and physical assets.

Across these contexts, the accelerating circulation of data, materials, and responsibilities exerts continuous pressure on systems, people, and practices. Digitization—once celebrated for its potential to expand and democratize access to objects and information—has proven deeply ambivalent. The early optimism has turned into a sense of overload and fragmentation, leading to new demands for orientation, regulation, and sustainable models of incisiveness and care. Understanding the question “Who cares?” therefore also means asking:

- Who tends to the fragile, the ageing, the damaged, the forgotten?
- Who restores and safeguards cultural goods and material as well as immaterial heritage?
- Who navigates the ethical, ecological, and emotional dimensions of conservation and loss?
- Who is affected by our work and caring practices, and how do we care for the people beyond our heritage ethically?

Care, in this specific sense, encompasses material maintenance, conservation science, preventive strategies, curatorial decision-making, and the everyday labor of those who work with vulnerable collections, objects, and environments. It is also an attitude—one of responsibility, attention, and thoughtful engagement with pasts that demand stewardship, presents that require selection, and

futures that call for sustainable preservation and loss management.

Parallel tensions exist in other sectors, related, however, to the field of cultural heritage in many ways: health, child and elderly care, social work, education, or organizational knowledge management. Care practices include documentation, protocol duties multiply, however, and clash with other tasks. Digitization promises efficiency but raises ethical and ecological questions, including energy consumption, data longevity, and the carbon footprint of storage infrastructures. In all these situations, care becomes both a practical and relational challenge: it is about protecting something—people, data, objects, environments—while navigating the limits of attention, resources, and institutional priorities.

Questions and Topics Addressed

Conference contributors explore discourses, practices, ethics, and politics of care in contexts of collecting, preserving, restoring, curating, interpreting, and managing or organizing. They approach these questions through cultural, organizational, conservation-oriented, or interdisciplinary lenses—ranging from theoretical reflections and empirical studies to case examples, artistic interventions, or practice-led research.

- Who cares for objects, materials, data, and their histories – also in view of the social mission and responsibility of heritage institutions? How are decisions made about what is preserved, restored, or allowed to decay?
- How do we deal with fragile, ageing, damaged, repressed, or illegible materials—documents, artworks, artifacts with digital methods?
- How do we ensure the preservation of digitized records and how do we develop sustainable practice for managing born-digital texts and artifacts?
- What does “curating” or “restoring” mean from a perspective of care and advocacy for long overlooked agents, materials, or practices?
- How can we make mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion visible—also in restoration practices, conservation priorities, strategies, and heritage politics?
- How do organizations collect, maintain, repair, and sometimes erase knowledge, memories, and data and how can such collective memories and repositories be restored and investigated?
- How do climate change, environmental degradation, and resource scarcity transform conservation and restoration practices, and which strategies already exist? (e.g., climate proofing collections, dealing with mold, humidity, pests, extreme weather events)
- How do care concepts and practices differ across cultural heritage institutions, companies, communities, or activist groups?
- How can the societal actors be actively involved in care practices, especially through participatory approaches and/or Citizen Science?

Programm

Wednesday, 1st July 2026

10.30-11.00 Welcome address, introduction, organizational announcements

11.00-11.45 Keynote: Antje Schmidt: New Horizons of Care? – Navigating towards new forms of

collecting and connecting in the German Maritime Museum (working title)

11.45-12.45 Short Paper Session

Jakob Holzer: The formation of Resistance – Curating unknown remembrance Tom Waibel/Elisabeth Streit: How, Who and Whom? Curating Curator(s). Taking Care of Marginalia in the Amos Vogel Library

Elisabeth Seyerl-Langkamp: The Umoⁿhoⁿ and the Francis La Flesche Collection in Berlin. A long-term collaboration and two exhibitions at the Humboldt Forum

12.45-13.45 Lunch Break

13.45-14.45 Long Paper Session

Elisabetta Cicigoi: Who cares? From Symbolic Participation to Legal Responsibility: Heritage Communities and the Faro Convention

Tijana Zakula: Holy Mess: rethinking sustainability of religious heritage

14.45-15.15 Coffee Break

15.15-16.30 Parallel Workshops

Michaela Moser/Marcel Sagesser: Caring Epistemologies: A Socio-Sonic Fabrication Workshop for Collaborative Archive Creation

Cristina Moraru: Who Cares for the Forgotten? A Participatory Ritual of Attention

16.30-16.45 Short Break

16.45-17.45 Short Paper Session

Konstantina Maria Serjannis: Dis/placement in the Collection: Rapid Response, Caring Activism, Rhizomatic Collecting Practices

Yulia S. Tikhomirova: Who Cares for Contested Heritage? Agonistic Care and Digital Heritage Governance

Narciss Sohrabi: Caring for the Margins: Minority Heritage and the Politics of Preservation

Tuğçe Eylül Başkaya: Caring for the afterlives of violence: Digital memorialisation and witnessing in the Madımak Archive

17.45-18.00 Wrap Up Day 1

19.00-21.30 Dinner

Thursday, 2nd July 2026

09.00-09.15 Welcome, organizational announcements

09.15-10.00 Keynote: Julia Frieberger: Documentation and Ephemerality: A Conflict of Care. Theoretical Reflections on the Status of the Artwork

10.00-10.45 Short Paper Session

Rida Arif Siddiqui, Lilian Häge: Who Cares About Whose Memory? Findings from a Transnational Needs Assessment on Inclusive Remembrance Culture in Europe

Rowan Ashraf Aly: Listening to the Last Echoes: Memory, Decay, and Middle Class Housing in Nasr City, Cairo

Eva Schmolzmüller: Aging as a Taboo: The Exhibition as a Platform for Addressing Challenges

10.45-11.15 Coffee Break

11.15-12.45 Long Paper Session

Andra Silapētere: Safety Zones and Shifting Timelines

Robert Simpson: Second burial and Transitional Custody: A theoretical framework for disposal practices of spontaneous memorials collections

Freda Fiala: Reworking the Legacy of Andreas Reischek

12.45-13.45 Lunch Break

13.45-14.30 Short Paper Session: 3 Papers à 15 min incl. discussion

Renia Korma: Mapping Bellini's Operatic World: A GIS-Based Digital Cultural Heritage Project Bridging Scholarship and Public Engagement

Eliara Beck Souza: Devalued: A study of the declined designations to Brazilian National Built Heritage

Amy Nygaard, Ph.D./ Gretchen Wagener Bureau: Creating and Curating Alternative Art Histories: A Digital Collaboration and Visual Repatriation Project at the American Museum of Asmat Art

14.30-15.00 Coffee Break

15.00-16.15 Parallel Workshops

Jennifer McHugh: Animating stories and future narratives: The archive as interactive space

Cosmin Minea: Who Owns Heritage? Negotiating the Ownership of Historical Monuments Between Experts and Communities

16.15-16.30 Short Break (to change rooms)

16.30-18.00 Poster Session: Posters à 3 min Poster Slam (incl. Moderation) + Poster Exhibition

Jelena Sofronijevic: Restoring Petar Hadži Bošković's Place in London, Bradford, and Skopje

Linn Borodkina: From the Street to the Shelf: How do we care for a (queer) feminist protest banner?

Anna-Viktoria Eschbach: Take Care – Infrastructures of Care in the Art System

Beatrice Senatore: Restoring or leaving untouched? Home movies as an expression of amateur filmmaking

Anna Puhr: Bridging the Digital Heritage Gap: The European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage (ECCCH)

Francesco Aresti: Heritage interpretation at the UNESCO-listed Tower of Hercules (Galicia, Spain): a case study of cultural organisations and local communities

19.00-21.30 Dinner

Friday, 3rd July 2026

09.00-09.15 Welcome, organizational announcements

09.15-10.00 Keynote: Jamie Armstrong: Beyond Information: Cultivating Human Connection and Creativity in Archives

10.00-10.45 Short Paper Session

Felix Köstelbauer: Found, lost and found again – On rediscovering the contexts of fragmented and forgotten archaeological collections

Alíz Horváth: Inclusive curation as pedagogical method: Experimental digital scholarly editing on Transkribus

10.45-11.15 Coffee Break

11.15-12.15 Online Paper Session

Nicola Urbino: Caring for collective memory: Territorial narratives and the preservation of cultural heritage through the BORGHI model

NN: Curating Under Threat: How a Digital Archive Turns Collection Policy into an Ethics of Care

12.15-13.15 Lunch Break

13.15-14.30 Parallel Workshops

Marie Niederleithinger: The sensory history of disembodied work: documenting bodily relating to technological environments in health care and research

Simone Rack/Klaus Neundlinger: Who Cares How? Practices, Decisions, and Learning Across Heritage Work

14.30-15.00 Wrap-up Day 3 & Summer School

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Free Admission, Registration required until June 26, 2026. Please register via: dac-summerschool@donau-uni.ac.at.

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Reference:

ANN: Who Cares (Krems, 1-3 Jul 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 12, 2026 (accessed Jun 12, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52694>>.