



1.2 Introduction to Pacific Collections: Learning Methods



Learning from Objects

Two key methods of learning have been employed throughout the *Pacific Collections in Scottish Museums: Unlocking their knowledge and potential* project. The first approach was learning through looking at objects. Collections knowledge can be developed through the study of artefacts and focussing on elements such as style, size, construction, and type of material, as well as looking in detail at supporting museum documentation.

It may not be possible to spend time in museum stores with a large volume of Pacific material but artefacts can be accessed through visits to other museums with permanent displays, by attending special exhibitions, and by consulting online collections databases. The following is a list of useful resources:

Museums and Galleries

- National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh
- Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow
- British Museum, London
- Horniman Museum, London
- Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge
- Musée Quai Branly, Paris [has material on display and a changing exhibition programme]

Collections online

- Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand: <http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/> and <http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/explore> (Select options relating to Pacific collections or Māori collections)
- British Museum, London, UK: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx
- The Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawai'i: <http://data.bishopmuseum.org/ethnologydb/index.php>
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA: <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online>
- Horniman Museum, London, UK: <http://www.horniman.ac.uk/collections>

A list of relevant publications can be found in part 4.1 of the *Introduction to Pacific Collections*. Most of these texts can be accessed at the National Museums Scotland Research Library or online.

Learning from People

The second method of learning employed in the project was to engage in knowledge exchange with people. This was achieved through working closely with the members of the project team from each partner museum and their colleagues. This facilitated the development of knowledge not only of Pacific material but also relating to work with broader ethnographic material, collections care, the history of collections both at the specific institutions and more widely, repatriation cases, working with communities, conducting collections research, and fieldwork.

Connecting with relevant networks and individuals was also an effective way to expand knowledge of specific material and Pacific history. The following is a list of useful networks:

- Museum Ethnographers Group: <http://www.museumethnographersgroup.org.uk/en/>
- Pacific Arts Association (international and European): <http://www.pacificarts.org/>

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- Ethnomuseums mailing list: <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=ETHNOMUSEUMS> [Visit this link to subscribe to the mailing list. Queries can be emailed to the group]
- St Andrews Centre for Pacific Studies: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/pacificstudies/>
- Pacific Islands Museums Association: <http://www.pima-museum.com/>
- ASAOnet: <http://www.asao.org/pacific/ASAOnet.htm> [Visit this link to subscribe to the mailing list. Queries can be emailed to the group]

Both the Museum Ethnographers Group and Pacific Arts Association (Europe) have annual conferences.