

CfP: Natural History Collections & Empire (HSS2021)

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

April 15, 2021

Location:

United States

Subject Fields:

Colonial and Post-Colonial History / Studies, Environmental History / Studies, European History / Studies, History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, Maritime History / Studies

Dear colleagues,

We are currently preparing a panel proposal on the theme of **** Natural History Collections and Empire **** for the Annual Meeting of the History of Science Society (HSS) in New Orleans, Louisiana, 18-21 November, 2021. We are looking for possible paper contributors.

Suggested panel focus (to be sharpened, depending on paper proposals):

Natural history museums and herbaria in the Global North owe much of their authority to plants, animals, and minerals collected in Europe and its former colonies. Recent estimates assume that a large majority of natural objects in repositories in Europe and the United States stem from former colonial areas in South America, Asia, and Africa. This unequal distribution of the planet's natural heritage is the historical result of intimate and often invisible linkages between natural history repositories and evolving schemes of colonial exploitation, violence, and commerce. This panel encourages presenters to take natural historical collections as analytical starting point for their inquiry into the field of natural history and empire. Contributors to this panel are invited to reflect upon questions such as: How can natural historical collections help us to better understand daily practices and polycentric networks of collection and natural historical knowledge production in former colonial empires? How can a collection centred focus enable us to write a history of 'biodiversity heritage' in which often violent forms of colonialism are not ignored? Proposals which focus on new approaches are particularly welcome. Large-scale digitization and the digital enrichment of collections and archives in the field for example, provide historians with new means to understand how and with which implications millions of objects have been transferred from the Global South to the Global North over the last three hundred years. But micro-histories of particular objects too show how specimens from the natural world contain more than only biological or geological information, but have cultural and political histories too.

In order to finalize the panel, we are looking for abstracts of papers of not more than 250 words addressing themes including (but not limited to):

- Collection practices in former colonial empires
- Digitization of natural history collections (opportunities and challenges for historiography)
- Violence and natural history collections
- Labour and natural history collections

- Collecting infrastructures and natural history collections
- Trading natural historical collections / trading specimens
- Decolonizing collections

Please submit your abstracts (max 250 words) together with a short bio and institutional affiliations to the conveners Dr. Andreas Weber (University of Twente) and Dr. Fenneke Sysling (f.h.sysling@hum.leidenuniv.nl). Please email your paper proposal before April 14, 2021. After a selection has been made by the convenors, the panel proposal will be finalized.

Contact Info:

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Contact Email:

a.weber@utwente.nl

URL:

<https://people.utwente.nl/a.weber>