



International cooperation: German Museums Association revises Recommendations for the Care of Human Remains

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Together with researchers from societies of origin, the German Museums Association is revising the guideline "Care of Human Remains in Museums and Collections". The guideline will be published in German, English and French.

Human remains in museums are considered sensitive collection items. The culturally and ethically appropriate care of them and the consideration of the needs of the various societies of origin pose great challenges for museums. An interdisciplinary working group at the German Museums Association is revising the recommendations for the Care of Human Remains (2013). With contributions from Australia, Hawaii and Namibia as well as international reviews of the first version, various perspectives from societies of origin will be included in the new edition. With the new edition, the German Museums Association wants to strengthen the fundamental understanding of how to care for human remains in museums, to raise awareness of perspectives from societies of origin and to promote international dialogue on the subject.

In their contributions, the international authors clarify the importance of human remains and the sacred objects associated with them in the societies of origin. The constant connection to the ancestors is for instance emphasised. The contributions describe successful returns and highlight the great importance of returning human remains to their homeland, as they have often been removed without the consent of relatives.

In 2013, the German Museums Association published the guideline "Recommendations for the Care of Human Remains", thus providing urgently needed recommendations for museums. With the new edition of the publication, the German Museums Association is offering working tools for the care of human remains to the museum staff and to public sponsors, especially in connection with claims for restitution. In many cases this is a discussion of the colonial past. To promote international exchange, the new version will be published in German, English and French.

Prof. Dr. Wiebke Ahrndt, leader of the working group on the guideline and director at the Übersee-Museum Bremen explains: "The fact that the revised version of the guideline includes the expertise of scientists from all over the world is another important step on the way to a more open discussion of the past of German museums. The contributions from the societies of origin convey to the German museums the urgency of dealing with the issue of deaccession and to develop a willingness to return human remains if necessary."

The German Museums Association has been representing the interests of German museums and their employees since 1917. It connects people, diverse institutions and relevant topics related to museums. The Association advocates high-quality museum work and the promotion of exchange between museum specialists.

International authors:

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