

Press release
**British Museum
receives its largest
single grant in a
decade from Arcadia**
*Endangered Material Knowledge
Programme is extended for a further 7
years*

Press images: TBC

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- The British Museum is pleased to announce it has been awarded a grant of £8.8 million from Arcadia to extend the Endangered Material Knowledge Programme (EMKP) for a further 7 years (2021-2028).
 - Arcadia, a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin, has pledged the largest single donation to the British Museum in almost a decade.
 - Applications for the 2021 round of funding for the EMKP are open and are encouraged from experts and communities from across the world.
 - Today recipients of the 2020 round of grants are announced, as funded projects from 2019 have continued preserving material knowledge across the globe during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The EMKP is a ground-breaking initiative that awards grants across the globe to preserve knowledge of the material world. Working at all scales from the small, domestic world of daily cooking and eating cultures, to the special and extraordinary worlds of ritual events, this programme collects knowledge of how individuals and communities uniquely make and shape their worlds. In a rapidly changing global environment, this material knowledge – be it social, economic, symbolic or ecological – is the key to sustaining communities and preserving the rich diversity of global culture into the future, and to prevent them being lost forever.

As part of the grant British Museum experts offer specialist training to grantees in a wide variety of tools and methods that can be used during the documentation process, including different media such as films, photographs, interviews, drawings, maps and 3D reconstruction. Once this material has been collated, it is uploaded onto an open access digital database hosted by the British Museum, and a digital copy is also shared with a partner in the country of work so that it remains close to the community whose cultural heritage it represents. By working together with experts and communities across the world, the approach of the EMKP continues the British Museum's work to share and preserve knowledge of human history, with global collaboration remaining at the heart of all future partnerships.

The EMKP began awarding grants in 2018, and since then projects in 24 countries¹ have been supported. Recently concluded projects include work on beekeeping in Kenya, paper clothes making in Japan and the traditions of mouth harp making and playing in Cambodia. As well as increasing the number of projects to be supported, the landmark grant from Arcadia will allow the British Museum to support larger projects and to preserve additional critically endangered heritage in greater detail.

The grant will also increase the in-house EMKP team at the British Museum with two new members of staff, who will focus on curating the digital records for the repository. This enhancement of the programme follows a growth in demand for the second round of grants in 2020 which saw an increase of over 20% of applications from the first round, demonstrating the desire and urgent need for funding to protect at-risk cultural heritage. Critically, nearly 60% of all applications have come from researchers based in, or from, the country of work, ensuring a truly global approach and outlook. This will ensure that in these ever-uncertain times, that the work of the EMKP and the grants available can reach as many communities and academic research facilities as possible.

The third round of applications for EMKP grants is now open. Following on from the success of grants awarded in 2019 and 2020, this funding is available to anybody to carry out documentation work on active material practices and knowledge systems. Applications are particularly encouraged for projects that will carry out work in areas and countries with limited local funding infrastructure, where this EMKP funding can make the most difference and save living heritage that may otherwise disappear. There is no restriction on the nationality of the applicants, nor on the regional coverage of the work being proposed, making the EMKP a truly global initiative. The deadline for applications for the new grant round is 31 January 2021.

Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum said “The British Museum was created to preserve our shared human history for future generations and the Endangered Material Knowledge Project (EMKP) is a vital extension of this work into the 21st century. With this most generous pledge from Arcadia, Museum experts can continue to work with communities and colleagues around the globe to preserve material practices that may otherwise be lost. Through this programme, Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin are enabling us to provide the skills and resources to create a heritage storehouse for future generations.”

Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin, Co-founders of Arcadia

We are delighted to renew our support for the Endangered Material Knowledge Programme. In our rapidly changing world, this programme helps preserve the richness, diversity and complexity of human knowledge. We are grateful for the passion of EMKP’s grantees and the communities who have shared their wisdom, and for the British Museum’s expertise and support of this work. This endeavour will safeguard disappearing knowledge and make it freely accessible for the benefit of generations to come.

¹ Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Burkino Faso, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Somaliland, South Sudan, Thailand, Vanuatu, Vietnam, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

Ceri Ashley, Head of EMKP

We have been lucky enough to continue working on EMKP throughout lockdown thanks to the continued support from Arcadia. This meant that we could carry on working with our international advisory panel to review and select the next round of grants, and ensure this vital work – now ever more threatened by the effects of the global pandemic – can continue. In the last few months we have offered grants for work on stone walling in Zimbabwe – a practice that can be dated back hundreds of years to the World Heritage Site of Great Zimbabwe, ceramic production in Ecuador, Peru, Ethiopia and Papua New Guinea, and a project that works with the Dalai Lama's tailor to record the rituals and traditions of how his clothes are made.

Endangered Material Knowledge Programme (EMKP)

The Endangered Material Knowledge Programme (EMKP) is the first programme of its kind relating to the material world and offers grants to researchers globally to undertake detailed fieldwork to record disappearing or endangered practices. Societies around the globe are changing at an unprecedented rate, and specialist, locally informed knowledge is in danger of being lost - knowledge that has helped communities thrive in unique environmental, social and cultural contexts.

This programme will focus on fieldwork in areas of the world where material practices and knowledge are recognized as endangered or threatened in some way, by awarding grants to enable scholars and local communities to collect knowledge of their unique material lives, and share this richness globally.

The Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at the British Museum

The British Museum houses one of the finest collections of art and artefacts in existence, representing the world's cultural heritage for the benefit of the public. Founded in 1753, it encourages people to explore their culture and history, and how it relates to wider world histories. The collection of the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas includes around 350,000 objects, representing the cultures of the indigenous peoples across four continents.

www.britishmuseum.org/our-work/departments/africa-oceania-and-americas

Arcadia

Arcadia is a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin. It supports charities and scholarly institutions that preserve cultural heritage and the environment. Arcadia also supports projects that promote open access and all of its awards are granted on the condition that any materials produced are made available for free online. Since 2002, Arcadia has awarded more than \$777 million to projects around the world.

www.arcadiafund.org.uk

Appendix

List of grants awarded for 2020 applications

List of projects continuing from 2019



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www.emkp.org/

Contact the Press Office: communications@britishmuseum.org

High resolution images and caption sheet available at [TBC](#)