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THE 2024/2025 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS - UPDATE

The 2024/2025 call for applications opened on the 5th of November 2024 closing on the 19th of January 2025. This was the 7th granting call of the Endangered Material Knowledge Programme.

In preparation for the call, the programme organised four online webinars in English and Spanish focused on the Documentation Grants and one webinar in English entirely focused on the Legacy Digitisation Grant. As in previous rounds, the webinars were intended to support potential applicants and help answer any questions that may have come up in the application process. We saw a rise in the attendees and the interest in these sessions, and we want to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who attended and showed their interest in the programme. We expect to keep increasing the offer for webinars and Q&A sessions in the coming calls.

This year, the number of applications submitted rose again, compared to previous years, making the 2024/2025 call the year with the highest number of applications so far. Whilst it is exciting as a programme to receive such a wealth of fantastic proposals, it is also a reminder of the precarity of the material world around us and the need to preserve,

document, and digitise these knowledge systems.

Thank you again to all the applicants that submitted a proposal! If you were not able to submit an application for this call, the next round will open later in the year.

The programme is now in the process of reviewing all the applications and we expect to release news on the funded projects in the summer months, so stay tuned!



Ana Carolina Brugnera (EMKP grantee) experiencing the raw material collection process (Image: Marina Pinheiro Lisboa, 2023).

BORN-DIGITAL COLLECTIONS, ARCHIVES AND MEMORY

After a year of hard work, the awaited Born-Digital Collections, Archives and Memory Conference (BDCAM) took place between the 2nd and 4th of April, at Senate House, London. The conference was co-organised by EMKP, The School of Advanced Study at the University of London, The British Library and Aarhus University, and was sponsored by the EMKP, the University of London, and the Digital Preservation Coalition.

With more than 300 delegates, the three-day event brought together academics, students, practitioners, and digital preservation professionals from across the world (both in person and online) to explore how the born-digital transforms what and how we research in the humanities.

Key themes throughout the conference were the use and role of AI in digital collections, archives and preservation, discussions on personal digital heritage and online platforms, various approaches to the preservation of art, games, and literature, and cultural heritage and languages amidst precarious situations and contexts across the world.



Dorothy Berry presenting the keynote lecture for the conference (Image: Alex Rumford and the School of Advanced Study, 2025).

The conference opened with an inspiring keynote lecture by Dorothy Berry, the Digital Curator for the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, who drew upon the contexts of why archives have existed for centuries, to learn from as we look toward the future of born-digital archives.

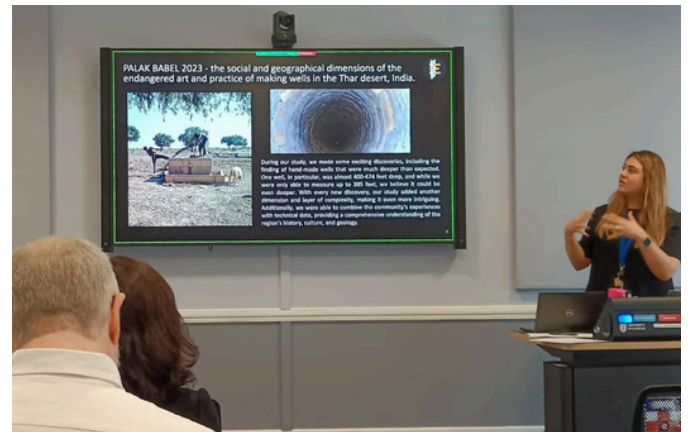
Key discussions throughout the conference included:

1. "Taking a global perspective: Who can actually discover and access born digital collections", featuring Anasuya Sengupta, Serge Sagna, Nick

Thieberger, Valentina Vapnarsky, and Mandana Seyfeddinipur (Director of the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme).

2. "Environmentally sustainable infrastructure for computationally intensive work in digital cultural heritage", featuring Jane Winters, Giovanni Colavizza, Andy Jackson, Leontien Talboom, Giulia Osti, and James Baker.

3. Closing Reflections for Born-Digital Collections, Archives and Memory, with Susan Aasman, JuEunhae Knox, and Rosario Rogel Salazar.



Paula Granados Garcia presenting on critical approaches to digitally preserving living community knowledge. (Image: Shubham Mishra, 2025).

The conference also featured a presentation by Head of EMKP, Paula Granados Garcia on "Critical approaches to digitally preserving living community knowledge, a case study from the Endangered Material Knowledge Programme", which drew on many examples of EMKP projects, completed and ongoing.

A huge thank you to all the colleagues and volunteers who helped to organise and facilitate the conference, and in particular, Naomi Wells (School of Advanced Study), Michael Donnay (School of Advanced Study), Anna-Maria Sichani (School of Advanced Study), Gabby Bodard (School of Advanced Study), Beatrice Cannelli (School of Advanced Study), Paula Granados Garcia (Endangered Material Knowledge Programme), Helle Strandgaard Jensen (Aarhus University), and Stella Wisdom (British Library).

We hope this conference will set the path for future collaborations and partnerships among colleagues working with born-digital collections, heritage, and memory, and hopefully we will see a future iteration of the conference.

LAST OF THE BEMBA BARK CLOTH MAKERS OF NORTHERN ZAMBIA

Lawrence Barham

Feathery leaved trees adorned with leathery seed pods frame the miombo woodlands of south-central Africa. From Angola to Mozambique, 100 million people today depend on these woodlands for food, fuel, timber, shelter and medicine. In the recent past, the inner bark of these trees also provided the raw material for clothing. The need no longer exists for fathers to teach their sons which trees make the finest cloth, fit for a coronation, and which tools to use to strip then pound the bark into pliable sheets. Songs of gratitude no longer need to be sung to the forest for its bounteous bark. These skills and protocols lie on the cusp of extinction. Mass-produced textiles and a thriving second-hand market of cast-off western clothes have almost destroyed bark cloth making.



John Mukopa with finished fine bark cloth (Image: Lawrence Barham, 2022).

In northern Zambia, at the start of [our EMKP project](#) with colleagues at Moto Moto Museum and supported by the Endangered Material Knowledge Programme, only three craftsmen still produce bark cloth. Today, just two remain, Mr. Simon Chileshe and Mr. Patrick Chanda. A year ago, in March 2024, the eldest of the three artisans, Mr John Mukopa, passed away. All three have contributed to an extensive body of knowledge, material and intangible, recorded as an audiovisual archive as part of our project. Tools used in the craft are curated in Mbala, Zambia at the Moto Moto Museum.

From a professional and personal perspective, the time spent with Mr. Mukopa made a lasting impression on me. As an archaeologist with an interest in traditional technologies, I had the rare



John Mukopa's workshop (Image: Lawrence Barham, 2022).

opportunity to observe the effortless flow of gestures of a skilled artisan whose mind and body were one with the materials in hand. Dare I interrupt this intimate pas de deux to ask questions? Yes, but only where absolutely necessary to clarify an action before the moment had passed. The audiovisual archive and transliteration by Moto Moto Museum staff will preserve this precious record.

John Mukopa revealed to me an animated landscape. As he finished pounding a strip of fine cloth, he thanked the tree for its sacrifice but also complained about its hardness; it had blunted his iron axe blade. Did he expect an apology or was this a rhetorical comment? Either way, I realised a world existed beyond the material.



John Mukopa being interviewed by Stephen Mwila, Moto Moto Museum (Image: Lawrence Barham, 2022).

To read the full article on the EMKP website by Lawrence Barham, [click the link here](#).

REPOSITORY UPDATES

EMKP celebrates the upload of four new projects over the last few months. From the first completed project in Central and South America, to boatbuilding techniques in West Bengal, India, here's a breakdown of what you can now explore in the EMKP repository:

Earth Under Transformation in Brazil

(Ana Carolina Brugnera, 2022)

In Oleiras do Candéal, Brazil, women have shaped the earth into pots and storage vessels for over a century. The craft embodies resistance against droughts and survival across generations. However, diminishing resources and lack of continuity have threatened this material practice. The project worked with the Oleiras do Candéal's community collectively to preserve their heritage. Emphasis was given to involving young women and children, and the project culminated with the construction of a small community building to house and display the documentation, making the collection available at local level.



The potters follow the construction of the building and think about its future use. (Image: Luciano Dayrell, 2023).

Leather Technologies of the Kalahari, Botswana

(Chris Wingfield, 2020)

This project documented leather processing techniques and related practices at four locations in Botswana: Serowe, Lokgwabe, Ncaang and Kaudwane. Makers were asked to select specific artefacts that included a bag for keeping tea, a wrapper used for gathering and carrying loads, a mat, dancing attire and hunting sets. The stages in the manufacture of these artefacts were recorded using film and photography, as well as through process diagrams.



Flat bag decoration. (Image: Greine Jordan, Chris Wingfield, and Bolaane Maitseo, 2022).

Wild Silk Techniques in Burkina Faso

(Laurence Douny, 2019)

The practice of producing wild silks among the Marka-Dafing of Burkina Faso comprises a knowledge system called laada or tigné, meaning 'what is transmitted by the ancestors.' The practice is primarily women's work, from the initial stages of yarn production through to the finished garments. This project foregrounds human-ecosystem and multispecies interaction; as wild silkworms are increasingly rare, a special level of ecological understanding is requisite to sourcing materials.

The Chhot-builders of West Bengal, India

(John Cooper, 2022)

This project has recorded the material and intangible aspects of construction of the chhot boat in West Bengal, India. Working on the banks of the Rupnarayan River estuary, the team followed the work of the Mondal family of boatbuilders as they built a 10.7m-long vessel from scratch to launch. The chhot is built in the 'stapled' tradition of historic Bengal, where hull planks are attached to each other and to the keel and posts using small metal staples—rather than, for example, nails or stitching.



The launch of the chhot boat. (Image: Swarup Bhattacharyya, 2022).

NEWS BITES

Articles:

EMKP grantee Patrick Maundu's article in [The Conversation](#) highlights the endangerment of Baobab trees in Africa, as the global demand for it as a superfood grows. Baobab trees are incredibly fascinating, as Maundu explains:

"Baobabs are unique trees. They are among the world's longest-living trees, with some being over 2,000 years old. They can survive prolonged droughts thanks to their ability to store water in their huge trunks, which can attain a diameter of 10 metres or more. The trunk has amazing regenerative ability."

In the article, Patrick highlights the need for safeguarding the Baobab's cultural heritage (in reference to his [EMKP project](#)), promoting sustainable harvesting techniques, and the implementation of strategic policies that support livelihood programmes for communities.



Baobab tree. (Image: James Kioko Muia, 2023).

Exhibitions:

In March, the EMKP team visited the annual *PhD Research Projects Exhibition* at The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, which featured EMKP Grantee Te Chen Lu's documentation of [Paiwan slate houses in Southern Taiwan](#), which are endangered due to colonisation and relocation/remodelling policies throughout the past century, as well as current regulations restricting indigenous communities' access to forest resources. The exhibition showcased multimodal documentation techniques, including images, interviews, maps, and videos, from 14 months of fieldwork constructing a Paiwan slate house together through an intergenerational co-creating process with collaborator Ljavuras

Kadrangian, master craftsman Kui Tjuveleljem, and their families.



Te-Chen Lu's exhibition (Image: Te-Chen Lu, 2025).

In other news, materials from Myriem Naji's EMKP project which documents feminine textile knowledge in Souss-Massa, Southern Morocco, are currently displayed in [Amazighes](#), a new exhibition at the MUCEM museum, Marseille (30th April – 2nd November 2025). The exhibition showcases the material culture and practices of the Amazigh world which extends from Egypt to the Canary Islands.



Amazighes exhibition at Mucem Museum (Image: Myriem Naji, 2025).

Seminars:

In March, Paula Granados Garcia, Head of EMKP, and Lissant Bolton, Director of EMKP, presented a seminar to students of the MA of Social Anthropology, in partnership with the Universidad Autonoma de Madrid. The title of the session was 'Cultural Management, Tangible/Intangible Cultural Heritage in Museums', and was held in the museum and Centro Cultural La Corrala.

Contributions and suggestions for future issues should be sent to: emkp@britishmuseum.org