



"Accepting and Holding Objects "in Trust" – an International and Interdisciplinary Perspective"

Conference | Vienna University Library | May 2-4th, 2017

The question of how to deal with cultural property or looted property held "in trust" concerns libraries, archives, museums, and Jewish institutions.

While ordinary kinds of acquisition in cultural institutions, i.e. purchases, donations, deposit copies or exchanges, have been examined within the scope of NS provenance research, another type of transaction has been mostly overlooked so far. It concerns the transfer of objects with conditions attached, with institutions accepting items "in trust", as loans or as legacies, or objects being allocated to institutions by the state, which occurred as part of NS book and art looting as well as in the course of later political developments.

German and Austrian libraries, archives and museums hold objects obtained directly after these had been looted in NS Germany or in areas occupied by the Wehrmacht between 1933 and 1945. Objects transferred to public institutions in the post-war era also often include (looted) objects with problematic provenances. After the Shoah, Jewish institutions received heirless objects because it was deemed inappropriate for such objects to go to the successor states of the "Third Reich".

Furthermore, property was also transferred due to the restitution efforts of the collecting points. Finally, twentieth-century political transformation processes, especially concerning post-fascist and post-communist states, have had an impact on the issue. As a consequence, institutions are faced with the challenge of having to address the legal status of cultural objects which they have accepted into their collections but do not own and whose status is unclear because it is not known whether and to what extent restitution efforts have already been made.

On the basis of how libraries, archives and museums have so far dealt with cultural objects held "in trust", national and international librarians, historians, curators and legal experts are invited to discuss structured procedures and lead an interdisciplinary debate on the requirements, chances and limits of appropriate measures concerning objects which have been illegally acquired and have been received "in trust".

Research topics can include, but are not limited, to:

- Legal and historical aspects of the topic
- Case studies of transactions or objects held "in trust"
- How objects received "in trust" before and after 1945 have been, are being or should be dealt with
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The conference languages are German and English. The results are to be published in conference proceedings. Please send your proposal with title and abstract (max. 3.000 signs) with a short CV until December 19th, 2016, via e-mail to provenienzforschung.ub@univie.ac.at.

For further information: <https://provenienzforschungstagung2017.univie.ac.at/en/>

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An event organised by the team Provenance Research at Vienna University Library in cooperation with the Department of Contemporary History of the University of Vienna, the Association of Austrian Librarians (VÖB), the Society for Book Research in Austria, the Arbeitskreis Provenienzforschung und Restitution – Bibliotheken, the Arbeitskreis Provenienzforschung e.V., the Commission for Provenance Research, the Department for Restitution Affairs of the Jewish Community Vienna and the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for the Victims of National Socialism.