

EXPLORING EMOTION, CARE, AND ENTHUSIASM IN "UNLOVED" MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Edited by ANNA WOODHAM, RHIANEDD SMITH, and ALISON HESS





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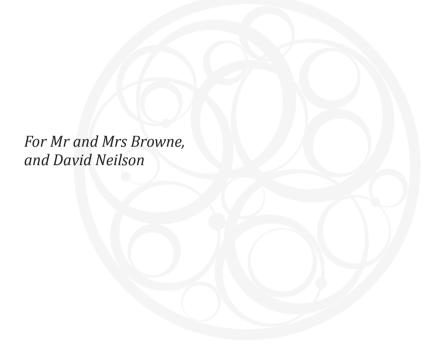
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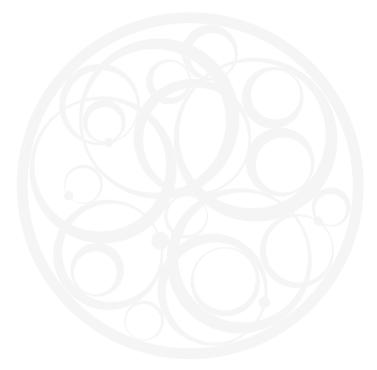
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INTRODUCTION

ANNA WOODHAM, RHIANEDD SMITH, AND ALISON HESS

Setting the Scene

IT IS A misty November day in Manchester, UK. The fog lingers in the lower yard of the Museum of Science and Industry, the site of a former railway station, as a group of museum staff, expert researchers, and a film crew in scarves and warm jackets walk into the museum's Collections Centre. We are here as part of a research project to talk about how "expert enthusiasts" engage with museum objects. Sometime later, while most of the group is milling around in the open storage, exploring, eagerly taking photographs, and chatting to each other about the objects in front of them, the film crew asks one of the curators to talk on camera about what she thinks is significant about this group's visit. Immediately she replies: "Getting the right people in front of the objects you want answers about ... is kind of invaluable. There's something very special about having the insight of an expert, onsite, with the objects ... and that triangulation that happens."1 Her comment strikes us as getting to the heart of what this volume concerns, and it gives recognition to the critical, but under-explored, dynamic between collections of "unloved" objects and the groups, individuals, and institutions who actively care for them. This volume asks: (1) What are "unloved" collections and who cares for them? (2) How can considering theoretical concepts of care and emotion help us to understand and interrogate experiences of "unloved" collections? (3) How do different kinds of carers, especially, but not limited to, "enthusiasts," express and share their love for collections in daily practice? (4) And finally, are there ways in which different types of carers can work together collaboratively and creatively to engage others with collections?

The vast majority of museum objects, both in the UK and internationally, sit in storage facilities, which are both costly and chronically underused. They often contain items which are not deemed worthy of display but which are seen as having research potential. On the face of it, keeping an object in storage rather than on public display implies a value judgement that these objects are, for some reason, not of interest to a nonspecialist audience. But in reality, most museum objects will never be included in an exhibition or go on loan, and there are many reasons for this, including pragmatic choices around limited display space. This does not mean, however, that a stored object has no value or relevance but that its significance may be harder to recognize.

Not all of the objects discussed in this volume are in storage, but most would be described by the people who worked with them as "dull." People find this "lack" hard to

I "Energy in Store" project participant, 2017. "Energy in Store" was a follow-up project to the "Who Cares? Interventions in 'Unloved' Museum Collections" research project introduced in this section. See also footnote 50, this Introduction.

articulate, and often such objects are best described as "uncharismatic" in comparison with objects such as the "charismatic" Sultanganj Buddha described by Wingfield.² In contrast, the objects discussed in this volume may be unable to "elicit such a degree of human response."³ However, this is not an issue which only affects museum objects in storage, as for Monti and Keene many displayed objects are also to some extent "silent."⁴

According to Pearce,⁵ collections are created by people who care, hence they are, among other things, a manifestation of emotional energy. Sometimes this is easy to understand, but certain collections reflect a singular passion that can be hard to share with a wider audience. Many of the chapters that follow explore the nuances of this specific kind of emotional attachment. Our authors consider: why an object or collection could be deemed "unloved" (as this is far from straightforward), who champions these collections, how they "fell in love" with them, and how we might harness their "enthusiasm" in order to connect with wider audiences. One of the key communities of interest for these collections is not academic researchers but so-called "enthusiasts," people with a detailed knowledge of and a personal passion for certain kinds of objects.

Most analysis of museum interpretation tends to focus on work that engages people in public spaces. Here we aim to take the exploration of emotions, care, and enthusiasm "behind the scenes" and locate these ideas within both seen and unseen museum practices around objects. In doing this we draw on ethnographic, archival, and activist methodologies which seek to explore the spatial, social, and historical dimensions of these practices. By discussing the process of knowledge exchange and the creation of conversations around material things in informal, "behind the scenes," or "raw" museum spaces, recognition can be given to the "lives" of unseen museum collections. Hence this volume goes beyond discussions of curated exhibitions and public spaces, ultimately broadening our understanding of where and how museum-object relationships take place.

In addition to arguments of more theoretical interest, many of the chapters in this volume offer potential practical applications by suggesting strategies for the "reinvigoration" of "unloved" collections. Authors also explore the value of experimentation and of bringing together the voices of academics, enthusiasts, and heritage professionals to consider different viewpoints. We argue that stored collections and traditional communities of interest, specifically enthusiast groups, could be a part of the growing body of research and practice around co-curation and co-creativity. Many of the "enthusiast" collections specialists discussed in this volume are actively engaged in forms of audience development outside of collecting institutions. Examining the politics of their

² Christopher Wingfield, "Touching the Buddha: Encounters with a Charismatic Object," in *Museum Materialities, Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, ed. Sandra Dudley (London: Routledge, 2010), 53–70.

³ Wingfield, "Touching the Buddha," 55. USE ONLY

⁴ Francesca Monti and Suzanne Keene, *Museums and Silent Objects: Designing Effective Exhibitions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

⁵ Susan Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995).

contribution to the heritage sector and investigating the challenges posed by a need for intergenerational discourse are, we believe, all part of a socially engaged museology.

The rest of this introduction frames our approach to these guiding concepts. First of all, we elaborate on what we mean by "unloved" and explain the context around why this term was selected and how we use it. We then set out to position "unloved" collections within a broader framework of stored collections, relating discussion to wider trends in the development and understanding of these spaces. Our approach to emotion, care, and enthusiasm/enthusiasts in the context of "unloved" collections is then introduced, before the final part of this introduction outlines our methodological approach and sets out the structure of the volume.

"Unloved" Collections

The majority of the chapters in this volume have their origins in the "Who Cares? Interventions in 'Unloved' Museum Collections" conference held on November 6, 2015 at the Dana Research Centre, Science Museum, London. The conference marked the culmination of a year-long research project of the same name, funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Participants were asked to consider what "care" means in relation to museum collections and to explore the emotional aspects associated with stewardship and enthusiasm. They examined the emotional potential of stored, bulky, mundane, "unloved" collections and the place of these collections, and those who care for them, in the future of curatorial and collections management practices.

The term "unloved" was deliberately chosen to provoke discussion, as we were well aware that the vast majority of stored objects are not neglected by their professional custodians and are loved with great intensity by some curators, enthusiasts, and other communities. However, we felt that "unloved" as an idea had a place in our research, as, arguably, for all but a small proportion of the population, stored collections have little or no personal meaning.⁶ As introduced above, these objects are hidden from view in museum storerooms, often considered to be unfit for display.⁷ Collections knowledge might also be lacking, as curatorial staff no longer always have the expertise and resources to catalogue specialist collections. This is a double bind in which objects are deemed uninteresting and as a result, little research is undertaken to explore their potential significance.

It is clear that "unloved" as a classificatory term implies a number of judgements about the changing values associated with objects. It raises questions about why objects may be "unloved" and how they came to be considered in this way. The objects in this volume became "unloved" for a variety of reasons. This includes their physical and aesthetic characteristics, their status as one of multiple duplicates, the type of history they are connected with (e.g., industrial, working class, rural), changing points of cultural reference for museum visitors, the way they are classified within museum collections, their lack of visibility within a museum, loss of interested champions and research culture, or

⁶ See Martine Jaoul, "Why Reserve Collections?," Museum International 47, no. 4 (1995): 4-7.

⁷ Jaoul, "Why Reserve Collections?," 4–7.

a combination of all or some of the above. To this list we also add a point raised by Simon Knell, who mentions changing historical trajectories, which for some objects results in them becoming "estranged"⁸ from the reason why they were collected in the first place. This suggests that simply becoming a museum object is not enough to ensure an enduring sense of purpose.⁹ We argue that a greater understanding of these processes may also provide a path towards igniting "love" for them.

Drawing on the work of colleague Hilary Geoghegan,¹⁰ we realized that another potentially fruitful avenue for investigation into "unloved" collections could be in the growing field of research exploring "enthusiasm." Enthusiast groups with an interest in history tend to engage with museum collections, create their own personal collections, and share specialist knowledge among themselves and with the public. This project questioned what care meant for these stakeholders, which emotional states are connected with acts of care, and how enthusiasm for "unloved" objects might be manifested and experienced. It also asked how this extreme form of engagement could be harnessed for wider value.

The original research project centred around three case studies of so-called "unloved objects" that form the focus of three chapters in this volume: the locks and fastenings collection at the Science Museum, London (chapter 1); the Museum of English Rural Life's hand tools collection (chapter 2); and the National Slag Collection at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (chapter 3). However, as the "Who Cares" conference demonstrated, there was value to broadening this focus to engage with a wide variety of different types of collection, ranging from medical instruments and natural history specimens to textiles and archival material. The contributions in this volume reflect many of the ideas around what the term "unloved" concerns and allow us to critically examine it.

To us, the range of terminology used by the authors here—and by others—to describe the collections that they focus on reveals some of the nuances in approach to this category of object: from "lost objects" to "silent objects"¹¹ to "uninteresting" and "difficult" objects.¹² These terms convey a range of meanings, which we recognize are not always precise synonyms for "unloved." Yet we suggest that there is a link between them relating to the ease with which it may (or may not) be possible to form an attachment to these objects. Each term, we believe, also indicates the latent interpretive potential of specific objects that do not at first glance appear to have an emotional potency.

⁸ Simon Knell, "Introduction: The Context of Collections Care," in *Care of Collections*, ed. Simon Knell (London: Routledge, 1994), 1–10.

⁹ Knell, "Introduction," 1.

¹⁰ Particularly Hilary Geoghegan, "Emotional Geographies of Enthusiasm: Belonging to the Telecommunications Heritage Group," *Area* 45 (2013): 40–46; and Hilary Geoghegan, "'If You Can Walk down the Street and Recognise the Difference between Cast Iron and Wrought Iron, the World is Altogether a Better Place': Being Enthusiastic about Industrial Archaeology," *M/C Journal: A Journal of Media and Culture* 12, no. 2 (2009): unpaginated.

II Monti and Keene, Museums and Silent Objects.

¹² See Macleod, this volume.

Contextualizing Stored Collections

This volume speaks to the growing interest in the contents and use of museum storerooms. In a time of economic austerity, museums are under increased pressure to demonstrate their wider social value, and stored collections can be seen as an unnecessary luxury. In the UK, a series of reviews and research projects has provided a greater insight into the proportion of museums' collections in storage and the extent to which audiences use these stored objects. It is difficult to be exact, but a DOMUS review (1998-1999) estimated that there were approximately 200 million items in UK collections.¹³ However, over half the museums surveyed by Keene and colleagues in 2008¹⁴ had fewer than two visitors a week to their stored collections. Similar issues around lack of engagement with stored objects have been found in more targeted reviews, such as for archaeological archives.¹⁵ This is a potentially serious position for museums linked to neoliberal agendas¹⁶ concerning value versus economic expenditure. As alluded to above, for museums in receipt of public funding, financial investment in storage facilities can be particularly hard to justify in terms of maximum public benefit. There are also arguments emphasizing an ethical and professional duty to ensure the use of stored collections. As Glaister suggests, "If an object sits in a store for ten years, without anyone looking at it, and if it is not published or made available on the internet, can that museum be realizing its responsibilities towards the object and towards the public? If we, as a profession, are merely acting as caretakers and not as collection activists then we are not fulfilling our obligations."¹⁷ Her words hint at an association between professional caring practices in museums and inactivity, a state which she implies fails to keep collections alive and in motion.

Recently, the Mendoza Review has identified storage as an increasing concern for England's museums, an issue that is far from straightforward to resolve, requiring crossorganizational collaboration.¹⁸ Prior to this, in 2002, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) commissioned the consultants PKF to write a report on the costs of

¹³ DOMUS refers to the "Digest of Museum Statistics," a database established by the then UK Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC). See Sophie Carter, Bethan Hurst, Rachael H. Kerr, Emma Taylor, and Peter Winsor, *Museum Focus: Facts and Figures on Museums in the UK*, issue 2 (London: MGC, 1999).

¹⁴ Suzanne Keene with Alice Stevenson, and Francesca Monti, *Collections for the People* (London: UCL Institute for Archaeology, 2008); see also Suzanne Keene, *Fragments of the World: Uses of Museum Collections* (Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005).

IS Rachel Edwards, *Archaeological Archives and Museums 2012* (Society for Museum Archaeology, 2013), http://socmusarch.org.uk/socmusarch/gailmark/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Archaeological-archives-and-museums-2012.pdf [accessed June 29, 2019].

¹⁶ Jennie Morgan and Sharon Macdonald, "De-growing Museum Collections for New Heritage Futures," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (2018): published online.

¹⁷ Jane Glaister, "The Power and Potential of Collections," in *Collections for the Future: Report of a Museums Association Inquiry*, ed. Helen Wilkinson (London: Museums Association, 2005), 8–9.

¹⁸ Neil Mendoza, *The Mendoza Review: An Independent Review of Museums in England* (London: DCMS, 2017).

storage for the seventeen national museums in the UK.¹⁹ The results of the report are complex. However, the underlying assumption was that storage was costly and that space could be used more efficiently. In the 2015 Autumn Budget Statement, the UK Government announced that it would provide £150 million for new national museum storage and sell Blythe House, a central London facility that had been used as museum storage for national museums in the capital since 1979.²⁰ Although this decision was driven by a clear economic argument that the income generated from the sale of the site, in its prime West London location, would more than offset the cost of relocating the collections, it also signalled an investment by the UK Government in improving storage facilities for these national museums.

Museum storage is not simply a UK problem, as evidenced by ICCROM's 2016 RE-ORG seminar "Reconnecting with Collections in Storage," which brought together delegates from twenty-eight different countries to discuss the dangers to objects stored in poor conditions.²¹ This seminar was in addition to the India-Europe Advanced Network 2014 conference at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A)²² and Brusias and Singh's recent edited volume, which also takes a global approach to the theoretical challenge of museum storage.²³ Hence there is an increased strategic and theoretical interest in the management and physical structures of stored collections.

Suzanne Keene has been one of the few researchers to explore the potential uses of stored collections in contemporary museums.²⁴ But in academia, the arguments have also recently progressed, for example, in the "Assembling Alternative Heritage Futures" project.²⁵ The approach of this project speaks to many of the issues discussed here. This volume, therefore, sits within a new wave of research that moves away from discussing the physical requirements and management of museum storage²⁶ towards examining the emotional experiences of collecting, curating, conserving, and interpreting "unloved" objects.

¹⁹ This unpublished report was secured by Suzanne Keene, following a Freedom of Information Request, and subsequently critiqued in Suzanne Keene, "Collections in the English National Museums: The Numbers," *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology* S1 (2007): 115–34.

²⁰ HM Treasury, Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015 (London: UK Government, 2015).

²¹ ICOM-CC, Working Draft Recommendation: Reconnecting with Collections in Storage (Paris: ICOM-CC, 2017).

²² See: https://arthist.net/reviews/9456/mode=conferences for a report of this conference [accessed November 26, 2018].

²³ Mirjam Brusius and Kavita Singh, ed., *Museum Storage and Meaning: Tales from the Crypt* (London: Routledge, 2017).

²⁴ Keene, Fragments of the World.

²⁵ See, for example, publications from the "Profusion" strand of this project, such as Morgan and Macdonald, "De-growing Museum Collections for New Heritage Futures."

²⁶ See, for example, May Cassar, *Environmental Management: Guidelines for Museums and Galleries* (London: Routledge, 1994); Suzanne Keene, *Managing Conservation in Museums* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2002); and Freda Matassa, *Museum Collections Management: A Handbook* (London: Facet, 2011).

Framing Emotion and Care in Relation to "Unloved" Collections

The aim of this volume is not simply to look at policy and practice around museum storage but to explore what happens when people who care about stored collections are brought into the research, engagement, and curatorial process. In order to achieve this, our authors have engaged with an emerging body of literature regarding concepts of emotion and care in relation to heritage. While this is not a book on emotion and heritage per se, concepts of care and emotion, particularly at the points of intersection, are central to it. It is well established in arts and humanities research that "heritage" is a highly contested field through which identity is negotiated and shaped.²⁷ Yet research into the relationship between affect, emotion, and heritage experience is a (relatively) recent development.²⁸ Researchers argue that, in contrast to earlier ideas of emotion being inferior and in opposition to reason and rationality, or even "dangerous,"²⁹ emotion is the key to understanding engagement with heritage. As Robinson suggests, "any engagement with the world and its peoples is an emotional engagement, in the sense that we neither read, experience or recall the world and our place within it, solely as fact and without sensation, judgment, consideration of value and processes of evaluation."³⁰

We recognize that asking, "who cares?" as per the title of our original research project is also not a straightforward proposition. Our choice of words was again intentional, with the concept of "care" in need of critical exploration in this context. What does care, and what do the emotions that caring concerns, look like for specific communities? Are certain forms of care perceived to be more appropriate than others in a museum? Likewise, we acknowledge that framing the act of caring or not caring as simply one of personal choice does not recognize implicit power structures at play when we discuss museums (see this book for further discussion on these points). Not all individuals and groups are able to "care" equally within these structures.

The term "collections care" is not usually problematized within museum studies, but, taking the approach we have in this volume, "collections care" as a practice becomes a key site for critical exploration. It is often portrayed as the nuts and bolts, day-to-day work which keeps objects safe. However, research into "care" highlights its complex meaning and indicates the need to rethink our approach to it. Conradson,³¹ for example, argues

²⁷ See, for example, David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

²⁸ Two new major edited volumes were published in 2017 and 2018: Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton, and Steve Watson, *Heritage, Affect and Emotion: Politics, Practices and Infrastructures* (Abingdon: Routledge 2017), and Laurajane Smith, Margaret Wetherell, and Gary Campbell, *Emotion, Affective Practices, and the Past in the Present* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

²⁹ Laurajane Smith and Gary Campbell, "The Elephant in the Room: Heritage, Affect and Emotion," in *A Companion to Heritage Studies*, ed. William Logan, Máiréad Nic Craith, and Ullrich Kockel (Chichester: Wiley, 2015), 447.

³⁰ Mike Robinson, "The Emotional Tourist," in *Emotion in Motion: Tourism, Affect and Transformation*, ed. Mike Robinson and David Picard (London: Routledge, 2012), 21.

³¹ David Conradson, "Geographies of Care: Spaces, Practices, Experiences," in *Social & Cultural Geography* 4, no. 4 (December 2003): 451–54.

that practices of care are implicated in the production of social spaces where people are brought together around care-taking tasks such as feeding, washing, teaching, and listening. To this list we also add the social space of the museum. Conradson also notes that in interpersonal terms care can mean the proactive interest in the well-being of another person, we suggest this might include objects and more-than-human subjects as well.³² However, the things we choose to care for and the practices of care are not neutral. Laurajane Smith's and Emma Waterton's joint work on authorized heritage discourse³³ and Caitlin DeSilvey's³⁴ work on curated decay, for example, highlight the political nature of decisions around care.

Other recent research has used a broad understanding of "care" in the museum to include the relationship between museums, public health, and social care.³⁵ For this volume, these debates raise questions around who has the right to care in the space of the museum. Which forms of care are recognized and which are marginalized? And how should museums balance different and sometimes competing forms of care, as seen in Hess's chapter in this volume? We see "care" in museums as going beyond the preservation of objects to include active promotion and research, care for people, and care for communities and places, something Woodall's chapter, which draws on the work of cultural geographer Caitlin DeSilvey,³⁶ engages directly with. We use the term "care" to explore the sharing of knowledge practices. This includes, as Woodham and Kelleher in this volume suggest, recognizing the political and relational characteristics of the term. Because of their specific institutional and political status and their complicated emotional relationship with the public, "unloved" collections offer a unique opportunity to engage with these different personal and collective definitions of care.

The concept of "care" brings an interesting dimension to the study of emotion in heritage, as its dictionary definitions include a "disquieted state of apprehension, uncertainty and responsibility," "painstaking or watchful attention," and "regard coming from desire or esteem."³⁷ Within museums we tend to use the term "collections care" to refer to provision of a specific form of guardianship. Objects are cared for in museums with

³² Conradson, "Geographies of Care," 451–54.

³³ See, for example, Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton, *Heritage, Communities and Archaeology* (London: Duckworth Academic, 2009).

³⁴ Caitlin DeSilvey, *Curated Decay: Heritage beyond Saving* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2017).

³⁵ See, for example, Nuala Morse and Helen Chatterjee, "Museums, Health and Wellbeing Research: Co-developing a New Observational Method for People with Dementia in Hospital Contexts," *Perspectives in Public Health* 138, no. 3 (2018): 152–59; Nuala Morse, Krisztina Lackoi, and Helen Chatterjee, "Museum Learning and Wellbeing," *Journal of Education in Museums* 37 (2016): 3–13; Lois H. Silverman, *The Social Work of Museums* (London: Routledge, 2010); and Nuala Morse, *The Museum as a Space of Social Care* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

³⁶ See, for example, DeSilvey, *Curated Decay*, and Caitlin DeSilvey, "Cultivated Histories in a Scottish Allotment Garden," *Cultural Geographies* 10 (2003): 442–68.

³⁷ Merriam-Webster, "Care," www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/care [accessed July 5, 2019].

stasis and a more fixed interpretation of preservation in mind.³⁸ We do not tend to talk about emotional states in reference books on collections care, yet many studies in this volume found that emotion is present in these interactions. The physical and often cognitive "inaccessibility" of many "unloved" collections could make the level of "object-love" that revolves around them seem remarkable. However, the fact that these interactions are more private and the associated knowledge is often highly specialist may be a part of what gives them value for the people who care for them and reduces the value for those without the "right" forms of expertise. This duality offers an interesting lens through which to explore how emotion might imbue daily practices of curation and interpretation, for both professionals and researchers, and to explore curation and collecting as an affective practice.

"Object-love" is a recurring theme of this volume, a term that was introduced by Macdonald in her key work *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum*.³⁹ It is used to describe the emotional connection felt by museum staff for objects in their collections.⁴⁰ This concept gives visibility to discussions concerning museum workers and their own emotional responses and emotional labour, something that Watson (this volume) argues has traditionally been unacknowledged.⁴¹ Within the museum sector, many professionals give extra time, use their own money, take positions for which they are overqualified, and continue to contribute in retirement. Emotional attachment to work, we suggest, may play a major role in this.

We are reminded by Smith and Campbell of the extent to which emotions are culturally and socially mediated and potentially subject to management and regulation.⁴² In relation to this, Geoghegan and Hess have asked what curatorial passion looks like, noting that professional staff often view extremes of emotion as a sign of amateurism.⁴³ Contributors to this volume, in particular Watson and Church, refer directly to these ideas in relation to the work of museum professionals and archival researchers, prompting us to consider that cultural workers and academics are certainly not excluded from historic (and present-day) practices of "emotion management." These final two chapters of this volume also problematize the idea that academics are objective while enthusiasts are

³⁸ See Caitlin DeSilvey, "Observed Decay: Telling Stories with Mutable Things," in *Museum Objects: Experiencing the Properties of Things*, ed. Sandra Dudley (London: Routledge, 2012), 254–68.

³⁹ Sharon Macdonald, Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

⁴⁰ Macdonald, *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum*; the term is also used by Hilary Geoghegan and Alison Hess, "Object-Love at the Science Museum: Cultural Geographies of Museum Storerooms," *Cultural Geographies* 22, no. 3 (2015): 445–65.

⁴¹ For work on emotional labour, see Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012 [1983]), and in the heritage sector, relevant research reports such as Harald Fredheim, Sharon Macdonald, and Jennie Morgan, *Profusion in Museums: A Report on Contemporary Collecting and Disposal* (York: Arts and Humanities Research Council, University of York, 2018), https://heritage-futures.org/profusion-in-museums-report/ [accessed July 9, 2019].

⁴² Smith and Campbell, "The Elephant in the Room."

⁴³ Geoghegan and Hess, "Object-Love at the Science Museum."

passionate by asking two academic researchers to explore how emotion fits into their research practice with collections.

Heritage sites are particularly intense spaces for "feeling," not least because of the opportunity these locations offer for individual "heritage-making,"⁴⁴ referring to the production and reinforcement of our own meanings, value systems, and emotional affiliations, processes which are complex and far from unproblematic. This kind of strong emotional reaction can easily be detected within the study of so-called "difficult heritage,"⁴⁵ hence much of the current work on emotion focuses on issues such as memorialization and indigenous rights struggles. However, Smith and Waterton⁴⁶ warn us that *all* heritage is difficult and that we need to explore working class and grass roots heritage alongside nationally and internationally contentious debates. Our interest here is to apply some of these theories to the management of collections and the more mundane behind-the-scenes interactions described in the opening scene of this introduction. For example, many of the contributors to this volume found that, while the term "unloved" was vehemently challenged, they were confused by a *lack* of extreme emotional response from some research participants.

Smith, Wetherell, and Campbell's recent volume was helpful in this respect by warning against a tendency to focus on extreme emotion.⁴⁷ They argue for a theory of affective practice, where emotional engagements with the past in the present are routinely performed and become habitual, positing that "repeated affective practices have a dispositional potential and quality in the sense that they have become canonical and entirely routine for individuals as a result of their personal history and for communities and social groups as a result of collective histories. Affective practices ... wear what could be described as grooves or ruts in people's bodies and minds, just as walking particular routes over the grass year after year produces new paths."⁴⁸ It is, however, by exploring what have seemingly become normalized or mundane emotional responses that we can hope to reveal underlying "taken for granted" assumptions about the nature of caring practices in the museum. The focus on emotion in this volume can therefore be seen as a way of shedding light on different understandings of care and the implications these have for future practices around "unloved" collections.

⁴⁴ Laurajane Smith, "Theorizing Museum and Heritage Visiting," in *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies, Volume 1: Museum Theory*, ed. Kylie Message and Andrea Witcomb, series ed. Sharon Macdonald and Helen Rees Leahy (Oxford: Wiley, 2015), 460.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2009); Sharon Macdonald, "Is 'Difficult Heritage' Still 'Difficult'? Why Public Acknowledgement of Past Perpetration May No Longer Be So Unsettling to Collective Identities," *Museum International* 67, no. 1–4 (2016): 6–22.

⁴⁶ Smith and Waterton, Heritage, Communities and Archaeology.

⁴⁷ Smith, Wetherell, and Campbell, Emotion, Affective Practices, and the Past in the Present.

⁴⁸ Margaret Wetherell, Laurajane Smith, and Gary Campbell, "Introduction: Affective Heritage Practices," in *Emotion, Affective Practices and the Past in the Present*, ed. Laurajane Smith, Margaret Wetherell, and Gary Campbell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 6.

Enthusiasm and Communities of Care

As well as the role of institutional "care," the chapters in this book consider the communities and individuals who, through their active and often emotional engagement with heritage, care for museum collections. While a range of different "communities" are considered in the following chapters, from academics and artists to museum professionals and other audience groups, a reoccurring "community of practice" across many of the chapters is "enthusiast" groups. To delve into the meaning we wish to convey by using this term, enthusiasts are often the stalwarts of volunteer museums and demonstration sites across the UK and internationally, but arguably they have a complex relationship with the museum profession. We generalize to an extent in this description, but "enthusiasts" often have particular expertise and former or current professional connections to the collections that are the objects of their interest.

This volume partly locates itself within cultural geography, where the study of "affect" has also influenced research into "enthusiasm" and "enthusiasts," although "collectors," "amateurs," and "independent researchers" are also part of this terminology.⁴⁹ The terminology associated with this diverse "enthusiast" community can often be patronizing, and the way that this plays out within the museum and heritage sector can be problematic. The etymological origin of the word "amateur" is the Latin *amatar*, referring to one who loves, while the word "curator" means *to tend* or *to care*. However, in daily use, the values attached to each are very different. In an age of increasing specialization and professionalization, the terms *amateur* or *amateurish* can be derogatory and a source of concern for those who worry about things not being "done properly." This complexity is interesting in the museum context because it reveals something, as noted above, about who has the right to "care" for collections and whose knowledge and value systems are, or have been, historically prioritized.

What we care for depends both on wider discourse and on our own personal histories. Professional training may shape what we deem as acceptable practices of care, and different practices of care might sometimes come into conflict in shared spaces. For example, including an object in a museum reminiscence session may embrace new museum outreach practices of care but cause headaches for conservators who wish to protect objects from pollutants and damage, and it may challenge health professionals who wish to protect patients from germs brought in from outside. In this book, many enthusiasts came from professional backgrounds where getting hands-on and fixing

⁴⁹ See, for example, Dydia DeLyser and Paul Greenstein, "'Follow That Carl' Mobilities of Enthusiasm in a Rare Car's Restoration," *The Professional Geographer* (published online, July 2014); Ruth Craggs, Hilary Geoghegan, and Hannah Neate, "Architectural Enthusiasm: Visiting Buildings with the Twentieth Century Society," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 31 (2013): 879–96; Geoghegan, "Emotional Geographies of Enthusiasm"; Geoghegan, "'If You Can Walk down the Street and Recognise the Difference between Cast Iron and Wrought Iron, the World is Altogether a Better Place'"; Richard Yarwood and Nick Evans, "A Lleyn Sweep for Local Sheep? Breed Societies and the Geographies of Welsh Livestock," *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006): 1307–26; and Richard Yarwood and Jon Shaw, "N-Gauging Geographies: Indoor Leisure, Model Railways and Craft Consumption," *Area* 42 (2010): 425–33.

things to look like new was a source of pride. This may conflict with museological practices of care, which currently focus more on the stabilization of objects than on reconstruction. Some of the enthusiasts in this volume seek to emulate and engage with professionally defined kinds of museum practice, but many also like to "restore" and amass personal collections in a way that is at odds with current museum ethics, collections management, and conservation practice. The creation of collections outside museums by amateurs also creates a potential problem around legacy, as museums are not always able to collect this material due to space constraints and collecting priorities, meaning that collectors may be left with nowhere to place their collections when they give them up or when they pass away.

There are concerns expressed by many enthusiasts in this volume not just regarding the final resting place of their personal collections but also around where the next generation of enthusiasts will come from. As many enthusiasts learned their skills in a late industrial age, it is no longer just through professional apprenticeship that this transfer of "enthusiasm" will take place. Collaboration with professionals (see Hess and Macleod, this volume) around cataloguing and storage might be one way to leave a legacy without donating objects, and public engagement may be another. Despite a slightly "flat" expression of emotional engagement with some objects (as described above), many of the enthusiasts who feature in this volume are excellent communicators and far from the traditional concept of an "anorak." An unexpected finding of the original "Who Cares?" project (see Woodham and Kelleher, and Smith, this volume) was the ability of some enthusiasts to engage a nonexpert, young audience. These chapters draw out that more needs to be done to bring different communities that care (or that may have the potential to care) into contact with one another so as to maximize opportunities for the sharing of enthusiasm.

Discussions around sharing the locus of control in museums also touch upon both conceptual and physical ownership and access to museum spaces, particularly as these spaces have become increasingly professionalized. Some collections were created through "grassroots" initiatives and have continued to "belong" primarily to these communities. However, many collections have become part of larger institutions, and exclusive access to these collections has become harder to obtain. Models like Amberley Museum (mentioned in Smith's chapter in this volume) suggest how space might be created for enthusiasm to flourish. The creation of a new, large-scale museum storage facility as a consequence of the UK Government's sale of Blythe House in central London (as mentioned in this Introduction) also provides an opportunity to consider how new museum storage might be managed, including consideration of the level of access for the various "caring" communities.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ A key finding of the "Who Cares?" project was that museums that wish to develop meaningful and sustained relationships with enthusiast experts may be uncertain of the best methods to successfully achieve this. In order to consider these issues in more detail, a new knowledge exchange project called "Energy in Store" was created in 2017. The project brought together a working group of curators, conservators, enthusiast experts, and academic researchers, all with equal status. The working group undertook a year-long series of visits to the Science Museum sites and storerooms across England, taking part in structured discussions around such issues as collections access, the specific research practices and requirements of this expert enthusiast group, and how their needs can best be catered for in a way that benefits both them and the museum profession.

Many of the chapters in this volume engage with discussions around the role of socalled "nonspecialists" in knowledge production. Graham Black declared that we are now in the "age of participation,"⁵¹ in which audiences expect to be included in knowledge production.⁵² There is an urgent need, therefore, to understand the motivations of our core stakeholders, explore the opportunities for diversifying the potential collaborators in producing knowledge around museum collections, and to recognize the institutional power structures that restrict this.⁵³

Self in Method: A Note on Our Methodological and Written Approach

Noticeable in many of the chapters in this volume is the presence of the author, as many of us have written in the first person. We were keen to recognize that, as researchers, we are all constituent in the environments in which we operate and which we have written about. The authors, who are academics from a range of disciplinary backgrounds and practitioners, can be seen as both "stepping back from the action" in order to offer a theorization of it and "stepping up" to be an active part of the context. This semi-autoethnographic approach is inspired by David Butz⁵⁴ and responds to the point made by Geoghegan and Hess that "there is not enough work within museum studies from an insider's perspective or on the geographies of love based upon the researcher's own feelings."⁵⁵

We asked two contributors (Church and Watson) specifically to reflect on what explicitly engaging with emotions means for their own practice and, more broadly, to reflect on where this leads us. Like Geoghegan and Hess, however, we are aware that using our own experiences to directly inform our work could be criticized for being "self-absorbed indulgence."⁵⁶ However, in response to this, we consider this kind of reflexivity to be a strength. Indeed, within ethnographic writing and practice, the concept of positionality and experiments in written form have been common for decades, especially within feminist and queer approaches to methodology.⁵⁷ To deny this approach completely also

⁵¹ Graham Black, The Engaging Museum (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁵² See also Graham Black, *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-First Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), and Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Santa Cruz: Museum 2.0, 2010).

⁵³ Bernadette Lynch, "Collaboration, Contestation and Creative Conflict: On the Efficacy of Museum/Community Partnerships," in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First Century Museum*, ed. Janet Marstine (London: Routledge, 2011), 146–64; Bernadette Lynch, *Whose Cake Is It Anyway? A Collaborative Investigation into Engagement and Participation in 12 Museums and Galleries in the UK* (London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2011).

⁵⁴ David Butz, "Autoethnography as Sensibility," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, ed. Dydia DeLyser, Steve Herbert, Stuart Aitken, Mike Crang, and Linda McDowell (London: SAGE, 2010), 138–55.

⁵⁵ Geoghegan and Hess, "Object-Love at the Science Museum," 452.

⁵⁶ Geoghegan and Hess, "Object-Love at the Science Museum," 453.

⁵⁷ See Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash, *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research* (London: Routledge, 2016).

risks ignoring what we believe to be a valid data source that adds greater depth and texture to the research. Also, for a collection of chapters that explore the themes of emotion, care, and engagement in particular, it would seem peculiar (to us) if we divorced ourselves from the subjects of the research. After all, it is through our own eyes that we see and make sense of the world.

As academics and professionals working in universities and museums, the authors in this volume are driven by their own research passions and interests in a way that is similar to our "research participants." Does this make us more sympathetic to this kind of work? Perhaps, but it also gives us an insight into this important aspect of heritage practice that we are choosing to embrace rather than ignore. We believe that it is acceptable and even more appropriate for a subject such as this that we do not hide behind the arguments of academic distancing and objectivity when, in reality, this is impossible (and we believe undesirable) to achieve completely.

The Structure of This Volume

Section One, "Enthusiasts and Care for Collections," draws on the work of the original "Who Cares?" project. Alison Hess's chapter focuses on the Science Museum Group's collection of locks and fastenings to explore what new meanings external stakeholders can reveal about this collection and how an appreciation of emotion alters the ways we access these meanings. Hess's chapter also presents a number of challenges to the current interpretation of the collection, which is comprehensive to the point of being repetitive. Its subject matter is fairly mundane and there is also relatively little information on many of the objects within it. While all this seemed to point to the collection being "unloved" by the museum, a long-standing relationship with the Lock Collectors Association revealed that there were those who felt differently. Following this, Rhianedd Smith's chapter discusses the emotional, biographical, and professional ties that connect people to "unloved" objects, exploring emotional responses from donors, collectors, and former users of collections of historic hand tools. The case studies presented by Smith examine how the context and very act of collecting changes the meaning of these objects. Her discussion touches upon loss of meaning and the difficulties of transmitting skills-based knowledge. She argues for recontextualization of this kind of collection, which moves away from an object's typological significance towards an approach that reawakens emotional response. Anna Woodham and Shane Kelleher's chapter then presents the National Slag Collection as a case study of co-management by an external group. The chapter critiques what it means to care in the context of a museum, asking whether these institutions are ready to share this caring responsibility with others. Woodham and Kelleher's discussion examines who the enthusiasts are that co-manage the collection and what characterizes the forms of care they offer. The authors consider whether is it possible for their enthusiasm to be transferred or shared between those who "care" and those who seemingly do not.

The second section, "'Unloved' Collections," asks professionals to examine their work with "unloved" collections and to identify strategies for reviving collections. Here, the three chapters each engage with the question of how museums can approach their

collections to signal shifts in value and practice and the strategies needed to successfully reinvigorate collections in order to remain relevant. Alexandra Woodall focuses on what might happen when artists are encouraged to venture into the hidden spaces of museums. Focusing in particular on their interventions with neglected collections, Woodall argues that, rather than being places of unimagined objects, museum storage might instead become a place for imagining (and reimagining) these potential "treasures." By looking at ways in which artists have brought neglected collections to life and building on approaches to museum materialities, Woodall proposes a new type of "material interpretation," in which a delight in rummaging and using neglected collections is seen as transforming museum practice.

Museum practitioner Mark Carnall focuses on the changing use and valuation of natural history collections, where 99 percent of these collections have traditionally been treated as second class, distinct from the top tier of rare specimens or those originating from the collections of famous names. Carnall maps a crisis in the management of natural history collections and trends towards a holistic management of natural history specimens, arguing that a traditional approach that focuses solely on scientific knowledge seems at odds with the cultural role of the museum. The case studies in this chapter, which include "Underwhelming Fossil Fish of the Month" and road-tripping dodo models, argue for the integration of a wide range of different forms of expertise and knowledge in order to raise public interest in natural history collections. These approaches acknowledge personal responses, individual emotions, humour, creativity, and the unique characteristics of social media as platforms through which to connect with audiences.

Finally, in this section Mark Macleod reflects upon the establishment of medical instrument collections and specific challenges to their interpretation. Based on his experience at The Infirmary, Worcester, Macleod considers how, by making use of "expert volunteers" and careful interpretation strategies, the most mundane and impersonal medical objects can be used to engage communities, helping audiences to understand what it means to be human.

In the final section, "Emotional Research," two researchers are asked to explore the role of emotion and care in their practice with collections. Sheila Watson considers the recent turn towards emotion in the way that museums consider their collections. Using personal reflections, Watson focuses on what she calls "lost objects"—objects without any context or with very little—and how these are approached by museum staff as a consequence of this "lost" status. Importantly for this volume, Watson's chapter opens up the debate about how museum professionals can recognize their own emotional responses to these objects. She explores the challenges and pitfalls of acknowledging emotional significance and puts forward an understanding of what this means for cataloguing practices and a more meaningful engagement with these items.

In the last chapter, Francesca Church focuses attention on a different kind of assemblage—archival collections—and, in particular, the layers of care that are bound up in the archival practices of collections-based research. However, as with Watson's chapter, which explores the responses to objects of museum practitioners, Church's chapter also views the (archival) collection from a particular starting point: her own

experiences of working as an academic researcher with the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) collection held at the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL). Church's chapter discusses the ways in which researchers "care" in collections-based work through an examination of three specific forms of care: care for the material, care for the researcher, and care through communication. Church's discussion illuminates the relationship between a researcher, their emotionally demanding "care-full" work, and a collection of relatively silent archival objects.

At the end of the volume, Rhianedd Smith and Anna Woodham reflect in a concluding section on the themes that have been drawn through the various chapters in this book, returning to the four questions posed at the start of this Introduction and considering: what next for "unloved" collections?

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