

IUAES

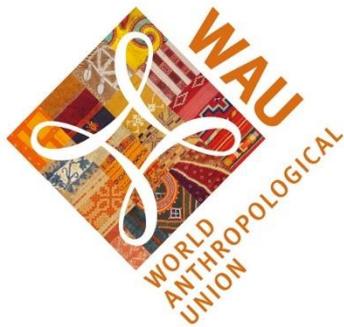


Call for support for the Museu Nacional of Rio de Janeiro

June 28, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

On Behalf of the Museu Nacional of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, we call for your support for the museum.



The fire that ravaged the Museu Nacional on the night of September 2, 2018 destroyed almost all of the historical and scientific collections acquired over two hundred years. The losses covered some twenty million cataloged items. In addition to its rich collections, the historic building that housed the Museum suffered extreme damage.

Not only material collections were lost that night, but the fire was seen as attack on the very memory and identity of Brazil as a country. João Pacheco, a former President of the Brazilian Anthropological Association affirms that “there is a sense of loss that has overtaken the Brazilian people, and both the general public and specialists are unanimous in that this space urgently needs to be filled with new information, images and narratives. In the days that followed the fire, many indigenous peoples phoned the researchers at the National Museum to express their sadness and to announce that they would make new pieces and collections to send to the Museum and replace those that were destroyed by the fire.”

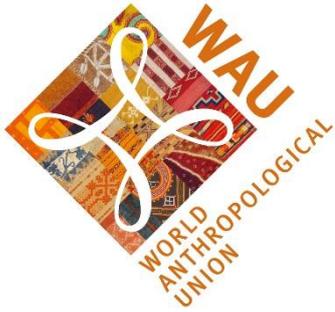
The rebuilding of Museu Nacional, while enormously difficult, is underway. The World Anthropological Union (WAU) wants to contribute to this endeavor by asking associations, museums and individual scholars to send out a **call for the sharing of digital collections featuring the indigenous people of Brazil**. This sharing of knowledge and any existing materials held by major museums and institutions around the world would create an international **digital repository of the indigenous cultures of Brazil**, accessible first and foremost to the indigenous people themselves as well as the larger public.

Interested parties should contact directly the anthropologist and curator of the MN ethnology collections, João Pacheco de Oliveira (jpo.antropologia@mn.ufrj.br).

Additionally, the Francisca Keller Library of the Museu Nacional also needs **books** (in English, French, Portuguese or Spanish) to replenish its collections. Some international publishers have already made donations, but more books are still needed. To avoid sending multiple copies of the same book, the WAU recommends that **lists of possible book donations** be sent to Dulce Maranhã Paes de Carvalho (bfkppgas@mn.ufrj.br).

Thus, WAU is seeking to address two of the three objectives deemed essential to the success of the ongoing project of the reconstruction of the Museu Nacional:

- 1. Digital archives with images of artifacts of Brazilian Amerindians from museums and institutions elsewhere in the world.**
- 2. Reconstruction of the library of the Museu Nacional.**
3. Reconstruction of the collection of artifacts through donations, research and shared curatorship with Amerindian leaders and scholars.



Anthropology Today provided a succinct history of the museum and its role in Brazil:

The museum's history – and the collections of the museum – took shape through colonial encounters, and later as part of a nation-building project. The 'Royal Museum', as it was originally called, was created in 1818, alongside other key cultural institutions in Brazil (such as the Public Library and Archives, the Royal Academy of Arts, the Botanical Gardens and the National Observatory). The creation of such institutions was an attempt by the Portuguese crown to establish the cultural conditions for a remote functioning of its colonial empire in Rio de Janeiro as the court fled to Brazil when its capital, Lisbon, was taken over by Napoleon's armies. After the independence of Brazil (1822), and especially during the long Second Reign (1840-1889), the museum turned its focus towards research on the diversity of the traditions that compose the Brazilian national identity, bringing together collections of ethnology, archaeology, physical anthropology and the natural sciences. With the advent of the Republic, the National Museum was transferred to the old imperial palace, consolidating itself as a research institute that preceded the emergence of Brazilian universities.

ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY VOL 35 NO 1, FEBRUARY 2019.

Given the continued importance of this institution and the necessity of ensuring that it will be rebuilt, the WAU is asking all to contribute what that can to the success of this endeavor.

Please circulate this call to your country's relevant museums, institutions and academic leaders.

Junji Koizumi
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