Berlin, 9 July 2024

Transparency and Dialogue: German Digital Library Launches Online Portal "Collections from Colonial Contexts"

A key prerequisite for the centralised digital publication of information on collections from colonial contexts

Via its new online portal "Collections from Colonial Contexts", the German Digital Library (Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek) offers centralised access to digitalised collections from colonial contexts in all German cultural and academic institutions. The new portal is particularly intended for people from the countries and communities of origin and provides information about the items and their history in German, English and French. The German Digital Library's online portal has thus created a basis for the greatest possible transparency about the location of collection items from colonial contexts in German cultural and academic institutions, which in turn enables a dialogue to develop with the countries and communities of origin all over the world. The portal is free of charge and registration is not required.

At the time of launching, information about more than 100,000 items in a total of 26 institutions in Germany can be retrieved through the portal. These include cultural assets, artefacts, jewellery, tools, weapons and musical instruments as well as botanical specimens, all from territories that were once under colonial rule or on which colonial structures continued to have an influence. The portal also includes records of cultural assets that have already been restituted.

The "3-road strategy on the documentation and digital publication of collections from colonial contexts held in Germany" agreed between the German federal government, the *Länder* (federal states) and municipal umbrella organisations in October 2020 provided the basis for creating the portal. It was funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.

The research resources offered by the portal will be continually expanded, with a steady increase in the number of items in the database. In the longer term the portal is intended to make comprehensive records of holdings from colonial contexts in German cultural and academic institutions accessible to an international public.

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Claudia Roth, Minister of State for Culture and the Media: "Our collective goal is to make decisive progress in reappraising our colonial past. Providing transparency about cultural assets from colonial contexts is one aspect of this. The central online portal of the German Digital Library now offers both researchers and representatives from the countries of origin a new opportunity to track down these cultural assets and reveals where such items are held in German collections. Bearing this in mind, I appeal to all institutions and their sponsoring bodies in Germany to make their holdings visible via the German Digital Library. This will enable us to provide clarity for a future-oriented partnership with countries and communities of origin."

Timon Gremmels, Chairman of the Conference of Culture Ministers and Minister of State for Science, Research, Art and Culture in the federal state of Hesse: "The *Länder* welcome the launch of the national, central digital portal for 'Collections from Colonial Contexts'. The online portal represents an important step in providing transparency vis-à-vis the countries and communities of origin about the colonial-era cultural assets located in Germany. In developing the portal, the German Digital Library consulted the German Contact Point for Collections from Colonial Contexts as well as museums, researchers and collection curators in Germany and experts from the countries of origin. Noteworthy special features of the portal are its interface in several languages and the user-oriented design. Here I would like to say a special thank you in the name of the *Länder* to the committed team of the German Digital Library."

Prof. Dr. Hermann Parzinger, Spokesman for the Board of the German Digital Library and President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz): "I am delighted that with the launch of the new online portal the German Digital Library has created a basis for transparent access to collection items from colonial contexts. Users will find a portal in which a wide variety of cultural institutions within a network of many others have already made their collections accessible to a broad public."

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Further information

Some key figures (at the time the portal was launched)

Around 110,000 items made accessible from a total of 26 cultural institutions

Links to the portal "Collections from Colonial Contexts"

Home page https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de

Background https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/en/content/ueber-das-portal

FAQs https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/en/content/fragen-antworten

Participating cultural institutions at the time of the launch https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/en/institutions

Functions

Filters and advanced searches

When searching for items in the online portal, users can filter for "society of origin", "object type" and "places". The records contain structured information about the production and use of the items as well as changes in ownership. An advanced search can be used to look specifically for events in the history of an item, such as its production and provenance as well as its materials or techniques.

Provenance

The circumstances under which cultural assets from colonial contexts originated and how they ended up in collections is often complex: they may have been exchanged, gifted, purchased, stolen or looted. The new online portal charts the history of changes in possession and ownership, enabling users to trace the provenance more easily. The records give the original names of the items as well as the language of origin; where they are not known, this is indicated.

Sensitive objects

The portal also includes information about items that are treated restrictively in the communities of origin – for example, items that not everyone is allowed to see. For sensitive items of this kind the portal offers information in text form only. This applies particularly to items with a ceremonial or ritual function.

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Contact to cultural institutions
Users can send their comments, corrections and questions directly to the cultural institution in question via a contact form – this is designed to facilitate dialogue between representatives of communities of origin and researchers.

Background

The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media: Collections from Colonial Contexts (in German): https://www.kulturstaatsministerin.de/DE/aufarbeiten-und-erinnern/kolonialismus/praxishilfen/praxishilfen.html

Guidelines for a "3-road strategy on the documentation and digital publication of collections from colonial contexts held in Germany" (in English, PDF)

https://www.cp3c.org/3-road-strategy/Guidelines_for_a_3-road_strategy_on_the_documentation_and_digital_publication_of_collections_from_colonial_contexts.pdf

"3 Wege-Strategie zur Erfassung und digitalen Veröffentlichung von Sammlungsgut aus kolonialen Kontexten in Deutschland" (in German, PDF):
https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/2020/201014_Kontaktstelle-Sammlungsgut_Konzept_3-Wege-Strategie.pdf

For cultural institutions

Recommendations for creating digital records
To help cultural institutions publish information about their holdings in the online portal, 25 leading cultural and academic institutions in Germany came together with representatives of the countries of origin to draw up recommendations for creating basic digital records of relevant collection holdings.

Portal for data partners of the German Digital Library giving information on supplying data (in German): https://pro.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/daten-liefern/lieferung-subportale
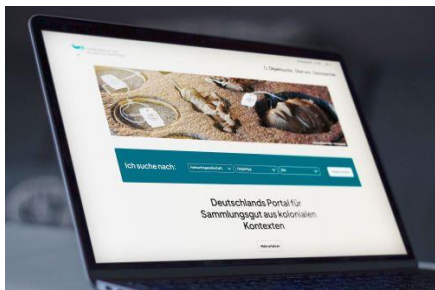
Images

Download here

Captions and licenses

	Germany's portal for collections from colonial contexts, a subportal of the German Digital Library Can be used in the context of press coverage. **You can filter your search according to community of origin, object type and current location.** Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek, 2024
	Arm spiral **Dark iron spiral (wire thickness 0.5 cm, h. 13 cm; diameter at the upper end 5.6 cm, at the lower end 7.5 cm), Cameroon, Ndzimu group, photo: Larissa Arlt** Attribution 4.0 International **This arm spiral has been attributed to the Ndzimu group and was brought to Germany in 1902. The Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz acquired it in 1971 in an exchange with the Linden-Museum Stuttgart.** **Provided by: Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, ethnographic study collection** **Further information:** https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/en/item/OY5V5XW4GAPWOYWGUHFGCWBC4BOTD66M

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Strawberry guava
Cameroon, Bibundi (historic origin); photo: Gabriele Kranz
Attribution – NonCommercial - ShareAlike 4.0 International

Botanical specimens like this strawberry guava also originate from colonial contexts and are included in the portal.

Provided by: Applied Botany Collection (ABC), Universität Hamburg
Further information: https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/en/item/L5NXT5UUXYX4ZVXVH4CJK52X53EIMDPY

Fragment of a feather tunic with a puma motif
Peru, 65 x 70 cm, photo: Anatol Dreyer
Attribution 4.0 International

This uncu, dating to the time of the Incas, probably belonged to a high-ranking officer. Feathers were associated with war and were also a highly sought-after luxury item.

Provided by: Linden-Museum Stuttgart Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde
Further information: https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/en/item/EKLIXNVLGBGMAWMYDZV6CSQQ57DUM2JM

Animal figure (fish)
Sculpture, wood (12.2 x 47.4 x 8.7 cm), North New Ireland – a province in the independent state of Papua New Guinea, before 1902
Attribution 4.0 International

This animal figure was used during an elaborate commemoration ceremony, known as the Malanggan, to honour the dead. Such ceremonies are still held today on some islands belonging to the Republic of Papua New Guinea.

Provided by: Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, Cologne
Further information: https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/en/item/5IIYSDEC6DGL62JBFQ6BI5E2SOG2VDQR

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Relief plaque from the Kingdom of Benin
bronze, 52 x 38 cm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum; photo: Martin Franken
Can be used in the context of press coverage.

This bronze was returned to Nigeria in August 2022.

Provided by: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum
Further information: https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/en/item/27YFF7EAVW63YFWMF2NCYWUQELNNS3ZS

Bowl
Sakhalin Oblast, 9.3 x 18.7 x 17.7 cm
Attribution 4.0 International

This receptacle has been attributed to the Ainu from Northern Asia and served as a soup bowl. It is called *shikarinpax* in the Ainu language.

Provided by: Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum - Kulturen der Welt
Further information: https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/en/item/DJNVB5WYICAA7CARWXJ5UGBBFOIV3WG6

Flint axe
Tool, weight: 184 grams, dimensions: 7.7 cm x 5 cm x 4.1 cm; photo: Nicolai Kästner
Attribution 4.0 International

This flint axe from Togo was acquired by the Five Continents Museum Munich in 1915 as part of a large set of similar objects comprising 269 pieces. It originates from the collection of the former governor of the German colony Togoland, Julius Count von Zech auf Neuhofen (1868–1914), and was given to the Museum by his sister-in-law, Countess von Zech.

Provided by: Museum Fünf Kontinente
Further information: https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/en/item/V6COAWSHHDPDU65BNLGV3DUJJMDF4FDT

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Press Release
Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek

For the press section of the German Digital Library please click <u>here</u>

<u>German Digital Library</u>

The German Digital Library acts as a hub providing centralised access to the digital holdings of cultural and academic institutions in Germany. Anyone can access digitalised museum items, books, musical works, monuments, films, documents and many other cultural treasures. The German Digital Library functions as a network, linking and presenting the digital resources of its partners, thus contributing to the democratisation of knowledge and resources.

Press mailing list

If you would like to be included in the German Digital Library's press mailing list, please send an e-mail to <u>presse@deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de</u>.

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