

## Workshop Medical museums: material sources in medical history

### Dates & times:

- Online preparatory meeting with keynote (date and time TBA), and
- 7 March 2021, 12.30 – 17.00h, Museum Boerhaave, Leiden

**Coordination:** Prof. Rina Knoeff (History, Health and Healing)

**ECTS:** 1

**Maximum no. of participants:** 15

**Registration deadline:** 21 February 2022

### Topic

Historians of medicine have access to many different types of sources. The workshop *Medical museums: material sources in medical history* deals with approaches and methods to analysing, describing and the keeping of objects in collections and museums. In addition, the workshop introduces the participants to (creative) methodologies of using objects in knowledge utilization projects (in exhibitions, art installations and the like).

Objects and heritage are, of course, important in cultural history. More importantly, the workshop speaks to the third strategic teaching mission: ‘the stronger emphasis in science policy on social impact and valorization invites us to consider new opportunities for training to professionalize research skills in this regard’. Our keynote speaker [Karen Ingham](#) (professor of Art, Science and Technology Interactions at Swansea University) has been very successful in this regard. She will share with us some insights from her diverse portfolio of projects. The workshops address timely issues in object research and utilization (curating, design, ethics and digital heritage).

The workshop is open to members of the Network HHH, but is also relevant to graduate students of the Huizinga institute. In aid of the Graduate Workshop we organize a preparatory meeting with Karen Ingham and an ‘afterparty’ during which students prepare an online exhibition based on an academic object biography.

### Programme

The programme consists of three elements: A preparatory meeting for graduate students, a workshop day and an ‘afterparty’.

#### 1. Online preparatory meeting (1 week before the workshop):

Based on the work of Karen Ingham students will be challenged to creatively think about the cultural history of medical objects and how to present them to a wider audience. During the meeting Karen Ingham will share her experiences and give tips and tricks related to the object biographies the students must write as part of the workshop.

## 2. Workshop day:

Tijd	Lezing / Workshop
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 14.30	Keynote lecture <a href="#">Prof. Karen Ingham</a>
14.30 – 15.30	Workshop 1 and 2 (participants choose one workshop)
15.30 – 15.45	Tea break
15.45 – 16.45	Workshop 3 and 4 (participants choose one workshop)
16.45 – 17.00	Closing remarks

### *Workshop choices:*

- 1 Curating Collections (Kristel Wautier, University Museum Gent)
- 2 Designing an exhibition (Studio Louter)
- 3 Ethics and the museum (Fenneke Sysling)
- 4 Digital medical heritage (Hugo Schalkwijk)
- 5 Guided tour Boerhaave Museum (Bart Grob or Tim Huisman) during both workshop rounds

The programme is designed as a workshop day. Participants (including the students) are free in choosing workshops (either 2 workshops or 1 workshop and a guided tour) that fit the aims of their object biographies (see assignment below). They don't write a report of the day. Students are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned (sometimes very practical knowledge) in their object biographies. Participation in workshops is mandatory.

## 3. Afterparty:

During the afterparty, students work on an online exhibition in which they adapt their object biographies for an online exhibition. The online exhibition will be hosted and promoted on the HHH website.

### **Assignment**

Students must write an object biography (1,500 words) of a medical history museum object of their own choice (via the websites of medical history museums, eg Museum Boerhaave, de universiteitsmusea van Groningen en Utrecht, Museum Vrolijk, Farmaceutisch Museum, etc.). The object biography should be attractive and directed at a public audience, while simultaneously written with utmost academic care. This means the biography must be rooted in thorough academic research of the object. The object biographies must show evidence of knowledge acquired during the workshops. As a guide to writing the object biographies students are encouraged to follow Karen Harvey's three step model (Harvey, p.15):

- 1 We should attempt a description of the object itself, its physical attributes. Assess what the object is made of, how it was made and (of course) when; production methods and manufacture, materials, size, weight, design, style, decoration and date are some of the key issues to address here, though different forms of material culture will require different questions. If possible, find out how much such an item would cost for contemporaries.
- 2 We can place the object in a historical context, primarily by referring to other evidence. Here we can explore who owned this (or similar) objects, when, and what they were used for. Some of this can also be gleaned from handling or experiencing the objects themselves, an important part of the research process, and to be undertaken if possible. Knowledge about the physical attributes of an object, combined with external information, should help us understand how it was used.
- 3 Finally, we can explore more fully the place of the object (or its type) in the socio-cultural context, perhaps including 'documentary' and 'imaginative' written documents, as well as visual references. At this stage, and indeed throughout, the researcher will continue to engage with and reflect on the material nature of the object.

The object biographies and their online presentation will be assessed on the following criteria:

- In-depth and contextual knowledge of the object (according to Harvey's three step model);
- Accessible writing style;
- Adaptation to online presentation.

The assignments will be assessed by Rina Knoeff and Gemma Blok.

#### **Literature:**

- Karen Harvey, *History and Material Culture. A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London/New York: Routledge, 2009)
- Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (eds.), *Writing Material Culture History* (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2015). The book offers good examples of how to do object history.
- Karen Harvey, *Narrative Remains* (London: Wellcome Trust, 2009)

#### **Learning outcome**

At the end of the workshop students have acquired:

- Knowledge on how to write an object biography;
- Insight in creative methods in order to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and public audiences;
- Insight in curating and/or designing collections and exhibitions;
- And/or insight in the ethics of object research as well as the ethics of keeping and exhibiting sensitive heritage;
- And/or insight in digital heritage as well as digital tools in public activities.