

WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY





The Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology is a dynamic teaching museum in which students co-curate insightful exhibits based on its collection of over 300,000 archaeological, artistic, historical, primatological, and ethnographic artifacts. Our collections span the globe and range from prehistoric to modern, with a particular focus on the Americas (Native North and Latin America, U.S.-Mexico borderlands), Africa, Southeast Asia, and Europe. Three galleries host rotating exhibitions co-curated by WCU Museum Studies students.

Originally operated as the All College Museum throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology was established in 2017 under the Department of Anthropology & Sociology. In 2013, Dr. Michael A. Di Giovine became its first formal Director.

The Museum is part of the West Chester University Museums and Special Archives (WCUMSA), which is composed of our institution, the Francis Harvey Green Library, and WCU Special Collections. It is also part of the College of the Sciences and Mathematics' Center for STEM Inclusion, which helps support community outreach to local elementary and middle schools. We are a member of the American Alliance of Museums.

Our mission is to serve as a welcoming, vibrant center where faculty, students and the public can connect and experience new ideas through our focus on teaching, research, collecting and public engagement.

Our vision is to further the University's Plan for Excellence by serving as a leader in community engagement and enhancing the quality of life for all campus community members. It is an inspiring classroom and promotes a collaborative culture of thought and inquiry by connecting academic units across the West Chester campus together with a larger public audience.



The Museum conserves over 300,000 archaeological and ethnographic artifacts from all over the world. These are used for teaching, research, and exhibitions. These collections include:

NORTH AMERICA



Pre-colonial Americas: Our most well-known collection is an extensive archaeological collection of pre-historic Eastern Woodland hunting and cooking implements that are between 5000 and 8000 years old. We are also a local repository for the Delaware Tribe of Indians (Lenape), stewarding new donations until such time that the tribe requests them. *Photo: Soapstone bowl*



Colonial and Historic Pennsylvania collections: The Museum has extensive archaeological collections of colonial artifacts from several diverse sites in which our archaeologists excavate, in Philadelphia and here in West Chester. These include Quaker settlements, battlefields, and early industrial sites. *Photo: 19th century Philadelphia glassware*



Schlendorf Vintage America Collection: Dating from the 1890s-1940s, this collection includes a fascinating array of vintage clothing and toys including rare trains and erector sets, blocks, and life-sized dolls. The Museum also curates numerous additional artifacts from the 1920s. *Photo: Toy cement mixer, 1920s*

Earth Day and Sustainability: Artifacts from various Earth Day celebrations, from the first Earth Day in 1970 until the present, include magazines, books, pins, buttons, posters and first-hand accounts. *Photo: "Water is Life," Christi Belcourt*



LATIN AMERICA

Borderlands Collection: This powerful collection provides a fascinating look at the things undocumented migrants carry – and leave – as they cross the Sonoran Desert. In addition to a robust collection of photographic and mixed-media artwork from leading artist-advocates such as Alvero Enciso, Debbi McCullough, and Michael Hyatt, these include religious artifacts, clothing, foodstuff, documents, personal letters, and methods for survival and evading border control. *Photo: Carpet shoe; "The Anonymous Hostage," by Santiago Bell*



Chilean Human Rights Collection: This includes a small collection of soparopos (small dolls produced by Chilean political prisoners in which they hid contraband notes) and "The Anonymous Hostage," a powerful work by renowned artist Santiago Bell gifted to the museum in memory of Dr. Hans Schroeder.

Edmundo A. Morales Andean Hat and Headdress Collection: This collection include scores of elaborate Andean hats and headdresses collected over 50 years ago from Bolivia and Peru. *Photo: Andean hat*



EUROPE



Cold War and Berlin Wall Collec-

tion: An extensive collection of artifacts from 1945-1989 from Bulgaria and East Germany, including housewares, clothing, documents, books, toys, and pieces of the Berlin Wall.

This also includes an extensive collection of Soviet-era postcards donated by Bulgarian anthropologist Rossitza Ohridska-Olson, Ph.D. *Photo: Pieces of the Berlin Wall sold to tourists*

AFRICA



East Africa: In conjunction with the WCU Richard Shinehouse Gishwati Field Station in Rwanda, the Museum boasts an extensive ethnographic collection of historic and contemporary cultural artifacts from Rwanda and Uganda. These include primatological artifacts used in the field station, a rich collection of original photography, and artifacts that are used to instruct on the Rwandan genocide. Artworks include various imigongo (traditional dung paintings) and “Banana Beer Production,” an embroidery by Tutsi widows donated by the organization Pax Rwanda. *Photos: Battery powered radio, the driver of the Rwandan genocide; “Banana Beer Production”*



West Africa: In addition to everyday objects, jewelry, religious amulets and Islamic materials purchased at local markets in Ghana, Niger, and Nigeria, the Museum houses the Dean B. Olewiler, MD Collection, compiled by an American doctor in Nigeria during the 1940s. This collection includes jewelry, Indigenous medicinal implements, chieftain's objects, ceremonial artifacts and ritual objects purchased or gifted to him by members of the Bambuka, Kulang/Wurkum, and Jenjo tribes. Dr. Olewiler meticulously photographed each artifact in use by their original owners, providing additional provenance and important cultural documentation. *Photos: Olewiler collection (Nigeria); grigri (amulets) with Quranic verses (Northern Ghana); medicinal cook pots, mortar and pestle (Northern Ghana).*



ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Ronald and Karen Smith Collection of Papua New Guinea artifacts: A collection of daily life artifacts, including fishing tools, hunting and cooking implements, as well as religious artifacts collected in the 1960s-1970s in Papua New Guinea, it complements the museum's small Indonesian collection of contemporary artifacts.

Schlendorf Middle Eastern Collection: This small collection includes clothing and artifacts from Oman and other Gulf States.



Research

Our faculty conduct archaeological, historical and ethnographic research and conservation projects, often in conjunction with students in our museum studies program. Their work is presented at international conferences and thematic lectures sponsored by the museum, and in peer-reviewed publications and museum exhibition catalogs.

Our faculty experts also are available for public consultations. Please contact the museum for an appointment.





Facilities

Our facilities include:

- Three exhibition galleries. Please consult our website for current exhibitions.
 - Atrium gallery: our most prominent gallery, located on the main floor as you enter Old Library
- Gallery 102: our smallest gallery, located on the main floor adjacent to the Atrium Gallery
 - Lower Level Gallery: our largest gallery, located on the lower level
- Visitor lounge
- Conference room for pop-up exhibitions, meetings, receptions and guest lectures
- Climate-controlled archaeology and ethnographic storage facilities
- State-of-the-art anthropology and archaeology laboratory
- Textile Conservation Lab
- Museum Studies and exhibit catalog library
- Classrooms for student groups and faculty/guest lectures

A facility report is available upon request for lending organizations.



Exhibitions

The Museum's award-winning exhibitions are the product of collaboration by many members of the greater West Chester University community. Exhibit development involves substantial planning by student co-curators in WCU's Museum Studies program, collaboration with faculty experts across disciplines and departments on campus, expert input from guest collaborators who also act as content advisors, and, of course, interactions with our welcomed visitors.

Virtual Exhibitions



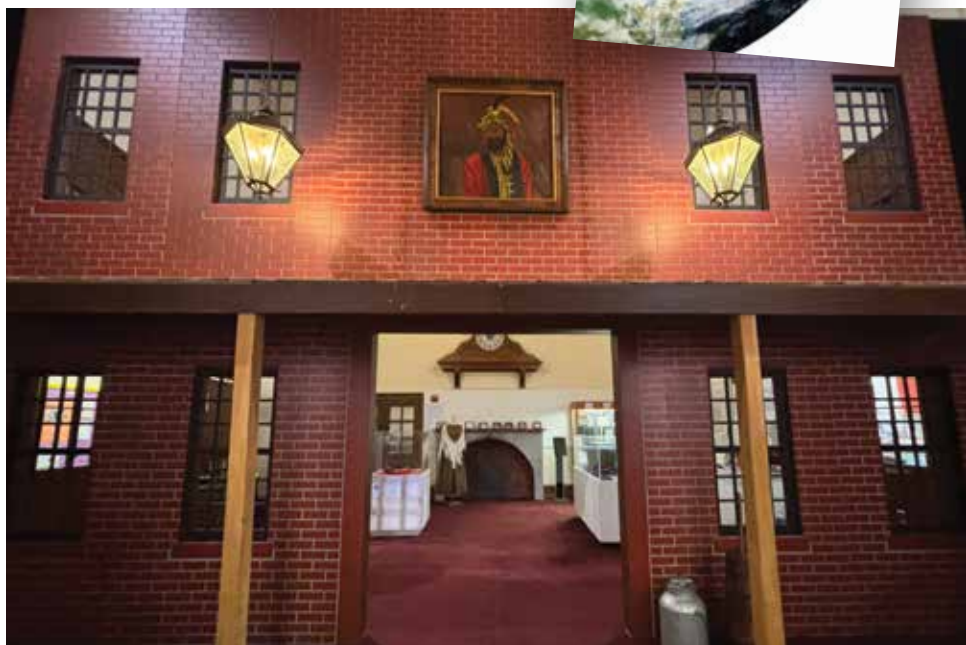
In addition to exhibition catalogs, since 2020 all of our exhibitions are accessible online as 3D virtual exhibitions. Users can navigate digitally through each exhibition, examining individual artifact images, labels, videos and additional content including video tours by student co-curators. Our virtual exhibition, "Beyond the Bell," was a finalist in the 2025 H5P Awards for Impressive Use of Multimedia.



Photos: Roaring in Secret: Subversion and Change in the 1920s (above); "Becoming America in West Chester" (next page), which won the West Chester Downtown Foundation's 2026 Preservation Service Award.

Exhibition catalogs

Peer-reviewed catalogs, written by faculty experts and student co-curators, are published for many of our exhibitions. These supplement in-person and virtual exhibitions with additional background research, and are often utilized in courses. They can be purchased through online booksellers or via our website.





**STUDENT
CURATOR-LED
TOURS**

**BEHIND-THE-SCENES
EXPERIENCE**



**LAB TOUR
AND TEACHING
DEMONSTRATIONS**

**LEARNING
FROM THINGS**



Student Groups

Teaching is a central component of our mission, and the Museum is frequently used in WCU classes. We also work closely with area K-8 schools, some of whom can receive support through the College of the Sciences and Mathematics Center for STEM Inclusion (CSI). We offer a variety of hands-on experiences for school students, including:

- **Student curator-led tours** specially tailored to your grade level and interest. Many of our exhibitions have additional elementary grades content available online. Photo M17a
- **Behind-the-scenes experience.** Tour the Museum including our storage facilities and textile conservation lab to learn about collections care and management. Photo M17b
- **Pop-up exhibition.** Does a collection align with your lesson plans but is not currently on display? We will organize a special pop-up exhibit exclusively for your group! (i.e.: Native American prehistory, colonial Pennsylvania, sustainability, immigration).
- **Lab Tour and Teaching Demonstrations:** Tour our state-of-the-art anthropology laboratory to learn about the kinds of work we do, including archaeology, forensics and restoration work. This is often coupled with a hands-on interactive experience, "Learning from Things." Photo: M17c
- **Hands-on interactive experience:** Learn about archaeology, anthropology, and curation in these special experiences geared to your grade level! These include
 - **Learning from Things:** What is archaeology? What is anthropology? What can archaeological or ethnographic artifacts tell us about culture and experience? WCU archaeology and anthropology students explain the discipline and what can and cannot be interpreted from cultural objects. Students have opportunities to work with objects from our collections, such as recording measurements or analyzing their conditions for care and management. Ideal for STEM, social science and humanities lessons. M17d
 - **What's the Big Idea?** After a brief discussion on developing a "big idea" narrative for an exhibit, students work in teams to choose 5 objects exhibit curation, students are provided with a box of artifacts from our teaching collection, and will work in teams to create a cohesive display and related narrative. This is also an excellent opportunity for discussion of how to curate one's portfolio for high school or college.



Support the museum

Donations to the WCU Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology Fund will assist in our mission to promote learning, support museum studies students, build partnerships, deliver timely programming and enhance campus life. Gifts are tax deductible and can be made in person or easily online by scanning the QR code.

Are you considering donating an artifact to the museum?

The Museum welcomes inquiries about donating your cherished artifacts, and follows best practices for ascertaining its history, provenance, legal status and educational value. We are also a local repository for the Delaware Tribe of Indians (Lenape), stewarding artifacts on their behalf. Please contact the museum for more information on the donation and accessioning process.

Scan to donate:



Focus on “Artifact Alliance” FIRST LEGO League winners

During the 2025-2026 school year, the Museum hosted some 35 different area middle school groups competing in the annual FIRST LEGO League Challenge. The competition challenged students to design robotic solutions to real-world problems archaeologists faced. Composed of 5th-8th graders, teams toured the exhibitions, storage and conservation spaces; were taught by the department’s archaeology students; and worked with artifacts. Some even participated in digs with our archaeologists.

Three teams made it to the Pennsylvania finals in Harrisburg, with “Artifact Alliance” taking home first prize. They stood out at the international finals in Texas, where they won Breakthrough Award honoring the team that has made significant progress in both design and innovation, and are “excellent examples of core values” of the competition.

After meeting with Museum staff, coach Bo Li said he was surprised that he learned as much about Archaeology as his son, Ethan, who was on the team. “Initially, I thought you were just trying to dig out of the ground,” he said. “But I realize now that there’s a careful methodology. The treasure is the knowledge itself, not just the artifact. That’s really inspiring for the kids.”

Li also said he was thankful to WCU for its warm welcome.

“We’ve contacted professors all over the country, and this is the best reaction we’ve had,” he said. “I really appreciate what West Chester University is doing.”

Read more at this QR code.



Visit

The Museum is free and open to the public from 9 am – 4:30 pm on weekdays during the academic year. Check our website for special hours for exhibitions in the Lower Gallery.

Curator-led group tours are available upon request. A voluntary donation is appreciated to support the students and the program.

We are located on campus in historic Old Library, the iconic neoclassical building at the corner of Church Street and Rosedale Avenue (look for the Ram statue!).



Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology

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www.wcupa.edu/museum

Ample, metered street parking is available on Church St. and in the New Street parking garage.

Constructed in 1902, Old Library is on the National Register of Historic Places, and as such retains a great deal of historical character, but also poses accessibility limitations.

