

Purpose and Functions

Purpose

The National Museum of Ethnology conducts anthropological and ethnological research and aims to promote a general understanding and awareness of peoples, societies and cultures around the world through the collection and conservation of ethnographic materials and public exhibitions. It was established in 1974 as an Inter-University Research Institute under the “Law to amend part of the National School Establishment Law” (No. 81, 1974), and in April, 2004 made a fresh start as a member of the National Institutes for the Humanities, under the “National University Corporation Law” (No. 112, 2003).

Functions

Research Institute The Museum functions as a research institute equipped with a museum. It serves as a research center for anthropology and ethnology, providing information and research results to academic communities and the general public through publications and a variety of other forms.

Joint Research As an Inter-University Research Institute, the Museum supports and organizes joint research projects with a number of researchers from other academic institutions. Research materials collected and stored in the Museum are widely used by those researchers.

Information Center The Museum has collected and maintained ethnological research materials over the years, including artifacts, audio-visual materials, books and other forms of research data. It is also a repository for the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). Information about these materials is provided to researchers inside and outside the Museum through computerized databases.

Exhibitions The research results of the Museum are open to the public through exhibitions. The Museum has emphasized the close-linkage between research and exhibition as its basic policy, and the academic staff participate in the planning and organizing of the exhibitions. The main hall consists of two different types of exhibitions, regional and cross-cultural. The former exhibits cultures and societies and is arranged by major regions such as Oceania and the Americas, while the latter emphasizes cultural elements shared across human societies such as music and language.

Thematic Exhibitions are also held from time to time which focus on rapidly changing world situations and feature current research in cultural anthropology and ethnology. In addition to these galleries, the Museum presents temporary, comprehensive exhibitions on special topics to make its joint research available to the public.

Social Contributions In order to present the latest research findings to the public, the Museum offers academic lecture programs, seminars, the Weekend Salon, special lectures and performances, and film showings. The Museum also organizes intensive courses on museology and various projects for other museums as part of its international cooperation effort.

Graduate Programs The School of Cultural and Social Studies of the Graduate University for Advanced Studies, based at the Inter-University Research Institute, is located at the Museum. It has two courses: Regional Studies and Comparative Studies. These Departments offer research training programs leading to the Ph.D. degree with the aim of producing unique professional scholars. The Museum also cooperates with other universities in training graduate students enrolled in doctoral programs.



Guide to Educational Resources at Minpaku: For University Students and Their Teachers

One of the purposes of this manual is to encourage universities to use Minpaku as an educational setting. It has therefore been prepared to enable students and faculty to make full use of Minpaku's research, exhibits, archived documents, and facilities.

The manual provides a broad range of content, including methods for utilizing the museum's exhibits, library, and artifacts.