

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023





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J. Van de Voorde © RMCA

*Bart Ouvry, Director General of the RMCA.*

# INTRODUCTION

Bart Ouvry  
Director General  
of the RMCA

2023 was a significant year for the AfricaMuseum. Five years ago, we reopened the Museum after a thorough renovation of the building, along with a fundamental rethink of who we are and what we want to realize. We are no longer a Museum about Africa, but a Museum striving to interact with Africa. We do so in our permanent and temporary exhibitions, through a collaborative effort with African partners. We do so in our management of the collections under our care, which we examine more than ever in light of new Belgian legislation that allows for restitution of stolen cultural artefacts. We do so in our scientific work, particularly with the program funded by Belgian Development Cooperation, which must see us strengthening the institutional capacities of our partners and work in a spirit of equal partnership.

In 2023 we commemorated 125 years as a Museum. In line with the motto of our Museum, 'Everything passes, except the past', we continue to take a critical look at our past as a colonial institution. But, as you will see in the coming pages, the 125/5 program has also been the occasion to present scientists, artists, and civil society actors who represent current talents and dynamism from both Africa and African diasporas. The first event in May was very much at the heart of our commitment to be involved and engaged in today's society: the *Let's talk about racism* space we inaugurated is necessary in view of persistent

racist incidents in Belgian society and beyond. Overall 125/5 attracted a diverse public of families, people from diasporas, youngsters, artists, and more, thus broadening the audience of the Museum. My congratulations to all colleagues who contributed to 125/5!

On a very personal note, 2023 was my first year at the helm of the AfricaMuseum. I arrived in May so the first four months of 2023 saw my colleague Karel Velle, Head of the National Archives, leading the Museum. We are very grateful for his exceptional commitment to our institution. My first months in Tervuren allowed me to fully appreciate the exceptional commitment, expertise and passion of Museum staff for our common task. Conditions are not easy; we are confronted with a structural deficit of about 1.8 million EUR. A thorough re-organization of the institution is necessary. This is the subject of a common reflection which will consist of a strategic plan and a savings plan to be finalized in the course of 2024. This strategy must be upheld by a shared vision not just among Museum staff but also with our major stakeholders, civil society in Belgium, including the diasporas, and our partners in Africa. Pending this broader strategic plan, a number of urgent decisions were made. The 'Marginalized: Sculptures stored away' gallery, which was more often than not misunderstood by the broader public, was moved to a more convenient location

## || We are no longer a Museum about Africa, but a Museum striving to interact with Africa. ||

and will be refurbished in order to drive home our message on deconstructing colonial stereotypes. A system of wayfinding is due to be introduced, in order to improve the storytelling in the permanent exhibition. A new department for the coordinated management of all collections was created, in order to better respond to the expectations and standards in the preservation and disclosure of the collections in our care, and also to create a single library bringing an abundance of information and knowledge on Africa under one management. Digitization will certainly be even more important, if we want to enable more scientists, artists and citizens from all over the world to have access to the collections. A new five-year cooperation program for 2024-2029 was developed and will be more collaborative than ever, strengthening institutions in the South and transferring skills and capacities to the African countries where we have partnerships. Finally, I am happy to report an increase in visitors last year: 132,000 is a very respectable figure. We are currently investigating the appreciation of our public as part of our ongoing major strategic reflection.



*Marie Daulne (lead singer of Zap Mama) with Bart Ouvry at the inauguration of the Afropea Gallery and the closing event of the 125/5 programme.*

There is much energy, expertise, and passion in the AfricaMuseum, and we are working hard on our strategic plan, on a calendar of temporary exhibitions over the coming five years, on a review of the permanent exhibition, on new scientific initiatives and partnerships in Africa. This report shares only part of what we have realized in 2023. Do not hesitate to contact us if you want to find out more.



Panel discussion, 'Rencontre littéraire' during a 125/5 event.



More than 900 people visited the scientific departments of the CAPA building during the Open Bedrijvendag/Journée Découverte Entreprises.

# 01



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# MUSEUM LIFE

## || ...the 125/5 programme – a fitting occasion for questioning the role and the impact of the museum... ||

### 125/5 YEARS: WHAT IS THE MUSEUM'S ROLE?

2023 marked the 125th anniversary of the AfricaMuseum. It has also been five years since the museum reopened its doors after a renovation. The museum therefore chose to organise activities focusing on the museum's role in the past, present and future.

Four main objectives were formulated:

- introduce the scientific institution to the general public;
- provide opportunities for the general public to meet and exchange views;
- update the permanent exhibition to include contemporary societal debate related to Belgian colonial history and the African continent;
- strengthen collaboration and reflection between and among museum staff.

In addition to its planned activities, the museum also called on individuals and organisations active in the African diaspora in Belgium make suggestions, which led to the selection of six projects. The 125/5 programme attracted 3,700 visitors, with some 50 to 100 visitors attending each event.

In addition, 'Schatten van Vlieg', a free family activity in Dutch, French and English, was made available for the summer holidays. It reached 1,000 children and their families.

What follows are some of the activities organized in the 125/5 programme.

### Let's talk about racism!

Historically, the AfricaMuseum played a role in the creation and dissemination of racist stereotypes. Today, the museum offers a space for discussion and reflection on colonial history and its links with racism.



Marie-Reine Iyumva (left) and Salomé Ysebaert (right) giving a speech during the inauguration of Let's talk about racism!, a new space dedicated to racism in Belgium.



Inauguration of *Let's talk about racism!*, with artist *Leyla Cabaux* in the foreground.



The MuseumTalk included a presentation by former AfricaMuseum Director General *Guido Gryseels* on the museum's contribution to racism in the past.

On 13 May 2023, the museum inaugurated *Let's talk about racism!*, a new space dedicated to racism in Belgium. Graphics on the wall address various manifestations of racism in contemporary society. Headlines from recent articles about racist incidents in Belgium are on the floor, next to the graphics. Definitions of racism, colonisation, prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes and racialization are provided to help visitors better understand the subject of racism. Designed to evolve over time, this space aims to encourage an open and inclusive dialogue on the issue.



Inauguration of *Let's talk about racism!*.

The installation was designed by graphic artist *Leyla Cabaux*. Several experts were involved in designing the space, including *Amina Odofin*, a doctoral student in social sciences at UGent; *Laura Ganza*, a representative of *Africalia*; *Criso Kitenge*, a cultural journalist; and *Naima Charkaoui*, a political scientist affiliated with the organisation *11.11.11*.



The inauguration of *Let's talk about racism!* was followed by a MuseumTalk on the museum's contribution to racism in the past and on antiracism efforts in Belgium, during the colonial era and after the independence of DR Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. L to R: *Mireille-Tsheusi Robert* (chair of *Bamko*), *Amina Odofin* (PhD student at Ghent University) and *Tine Geunis* (AfricaMuseum, head of the Public & Partners service)

After the inauguration, a MuseumTalk was organized on the museum's role in racism education. The inauguration of *Let's talk about racism!* and the MuseumTalk were part of the launch of the *125/5* programme – a fitting occasion for questioning the role and the impact of the museum, and updating the exhibition.

## Science Month

In September 2023, the AfricaMuseum organized a Science Month. Over four weekends, visitors of all ages were able to meet museum scientists and discover their research in biology, geology, linguistics, musicology, art history, and more.



*The third weekend of Science Month, on 19 September 2023, was dedicated to wood biology.*

## Open Bedrijvendag/Journée Découverte Entreprises

On Sunday 1 October, the AfricaMuseum took part in the Open Bedrijvendag/Journée Découverte Entreprises. For this occasion, the museum opened the doors of its CAPA building, which houses collections, labs and scientific departments, and is usually closed to the public.

Over 900 curious visitors followed a well-designed trail to discover the collections, meet our scientists, and learn about their work. After visiting the CAPA building, visitors also had the opportunity to discover the restoration labs and talk to conservators.



*More than 900 people visited the scientific departments of the CAPA building during the Open Bedrijvendag/Journée Découverte Entreprises*



|| The museum opened the doors of its CAPA building, which houses collections, labs and scientific departments. ||



More than 900 people visited the scientific departments of the CAPA building during the Open Bedrijvendag/Journée Découverte Entreprises.



Artist Precy Numbi, performing *Éco-héros de Robot sapiens Kimbalambala* during the weekend '(Re)-appropriation. Artists & archives'.

## (Re)-appropriation. Artists & archives

From 13 to 15 October 2023, arts programmer and journalist Ayoko Mensah joined the AfricaMuseum in inviting the public to meet artists and researchers during a weekend of networking, debates, presentations and performances. Over 30 visual artists, filmmakers, musicians and performers were present in person or virtually from the African continent. They presented their work and research based on the museum's numerous written, visual and sound archives, discussed practices and experiences, and questioned their relationship with archives and the museum. National Archivist Karel Velle, who served as the interim Director General of the AfricaMuseum from September 2022 to May 2023, also participated in the event.

On 14 October, a round table discussion was held on the theme 'Appropriation of museum archives: what practices? What issues? What challenges?' Participating were historian Amzat Boukari Yabara, researcher Lotte Arndt, filmmaker Victoire Karera Kampire, and visual artist Fransix Tenda, moderated by Ayoko Mensah.

Over 250 people attended the 3-day event. The meetings were documented and filmed.



Performance of Eric Androa Mindre during '(Re)-appropriation. Artists & archives'



Round table on Saturday 14 October 2023 during '(Re)-appropriation. Artists & archives'. Moderator Ayoko Mensah led a discussion with Amzat Boukari, Lotte Arndt, Victoire Karera Kampire, and Fransix Tenda.



Guided tour of the MY NAME IS NO-BODY project with artist Teddy Mazina on 29 October 2023.

## MY NAME IS NO-BODY

How can we understand the persistence of ethno-racial stereotypes through the prism of colonial photography?

That was the question asked in *MY NAME IS NO-BODY*, a project by artist Teddy Mazina. The artist carried out a research residency on the AfricaMuseum's photographic archives, studying the bias of colonial photographic missions to Congo and Ruanda-Urundi and the language used in the labels.

Mazina's project resulted in a video installation and wall publishing the original colonial photography and labels. As certain photos and labels from the museum's archives were shocking and potentially offensive to an unprepared public, the museum asked Mazina to accompany visitors in viewing these racist and misogynistic images, while sharing his doubts and his indignation at the way his ancestors were depicted, and supporting his desire to deconstruct stereotypes. The project could be visited in the presence of the artist on 29 October and 12 November, by prior arrangement with Mazina. Over 1,200 people visited *MY NAME IS NO-BODY* on these two dates. The public and internal debate which the project raised will contribute to the evolution of the ethical code of the Museum: while exposing past bias and stereotyping, we must avoid to continue this bias and particularly respect the memory of those who often reluctantly or by force figure in our audiovisual archives.

## Opening of the Afropea Gallery

To conclude the 125/5 programme, the AfricaMuseum inaugurated the Afropea Gallery, which shows the place and role of sub-Saharan Africans and persons of African descent in Belgium since the 16th century. Its name is a tribute to the album *Adventures in Afropea 1*, by the Belgian-Congolese group Zap Mama. Afropea opened to the public on Sunday 17 December, with works by Aimé Ntakiyica, John K Cobra, Moke, Henri Logelain, and Pierre Muanza, and the installation *The (in)convenience Store* by Rachel Hansoul.



Bambi Ceuppens (AfricaMuseum) during the opening of the Afropea Gallery.



Opening of the Afropea Gallery.



Singer and composer Ronny Mosuse during the opening of the Afropea Gallery.



Opening of the Afropea Gallery.



Marie Daulne (lead singer of Zap Mama) was present in her role as 'Marraine de la salle' at the inauguration of the Afropea Gallery, in the closing event of the 125/5 programme.

## More impressions of the 125/5 programme



From 18 to 20 May 2023, Bamko asbl, a feminist and anti-racist group, organized a decolonial training course around the question 'Can we decolonise the AfricaMuseum?' It included online training, guided tours and a conference at the museum. Special guest Françoise Vergès, author of the new book *Programme de désordre absolu. Décoloniser le musée*, gave a lecture.

During Brussels Fashion Week, Belgian-Congolese fashion designer Rosy Sambwa organized 'Aya Afrikaanse Fashion Héritage' in collaboration with the museum from 3 to 7 October. This event focused on the heritage of African fashion, questioning the role of the museum yesterday, today and tomorrow. On the last day, a fashion show was organized at the museum.



The AfricaMuseum welcomed comedian Cécile Djunga on 25 June 2023 for her new stand-up comedy show.



On 28 June 2023, the museum organized at the preview of the film LUMUMBA, le retour d'un héros by Quentin Noirfalisie, Benoit Feyt and Dieudo Hamadi. After the screening, held at De Cinema in Antwerp, Nadia Nsaji (AfricaMuseum) moderated a discussion between Ludo De Witte (author of the book De Moord op Lumumba), Randy Kalemba (chair of the cultural organisation ICK), and the audience.



From May to December 2023, the museum offered guided tours every last Sunday of the month, focusing on current events relating to the colonial past and racism.

## CREATING A NEW, MORE INTIMATE SPACE FOR TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

When the museum reopened in 2018, the cellars of the renovated building featured an introduction gallery, as well as a room called 'Marginalized: sculptures stored away' that was filled with works from the colonial period. These sculptures conveyed stereotypes about Africans, and while museum guides contextualised the pieces, individual visitors did not always understand the message of this room.

The renovated museum also has two exhibition halls for temporary exhibitions. Although these large halls are excellent for large-scale exhibitions, they are not ideal for smaller, more intimate shows.

For these reasons, the colonial sculptures were moved in July 2023 to another part of the cellars, still accessible for guided tours, and the introductory gallery was emptied. This considerable effort yielded a more compact space for future temporary exhibitions, offering new possibilities and allowing visitors to come closer to the topic.

The first exhibition to be shown in this newly created space is *ReThinking Collections* (19 January-29 September 2024). The exhibition, an exercise in transparency about the provenance of our collections, has attracted much attention from the Belgian and international press and is already a popular success with our visitors.



Moving the colonial sculptures of the 'Marginalized: sculptures stored away' gallery. The museum is preparing an updated museology for these sculptures, effectively deconstructing the stereotyped images they were meant to convey.

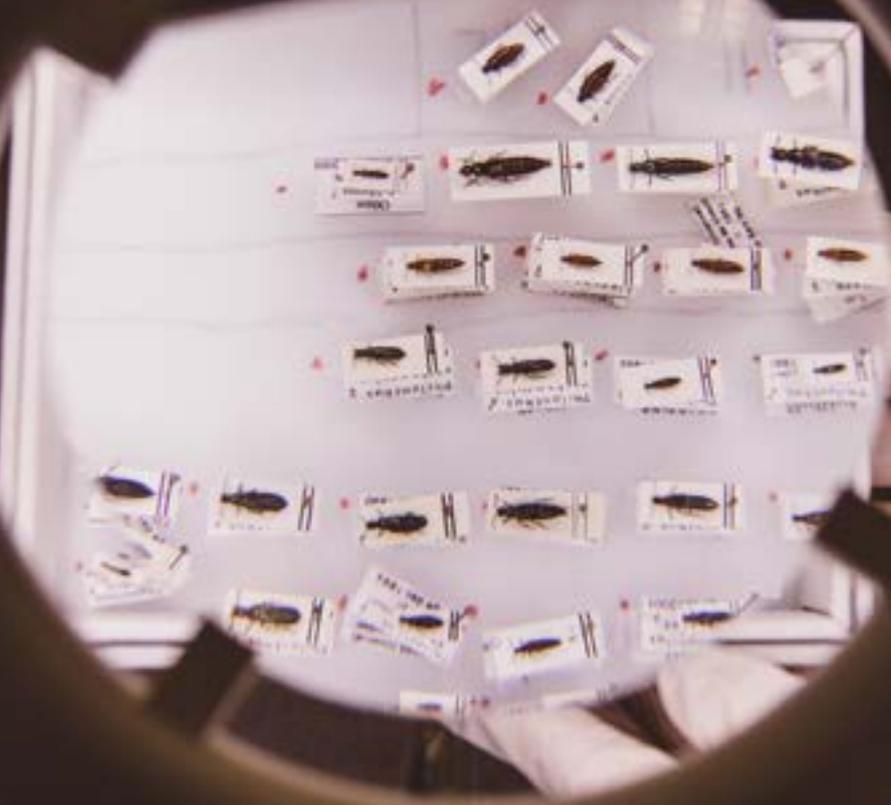


Removing objects from the Introduction gallery.



Setting up Rethinking Collections, the first temporary exhibition in the newly created space (19 January-29 September 2024).

# 02



# RESEARCH

# The RMCA as a scientific institute: research into the societies, biodiversity, and geology of Africa

The Royal Museum for Central Africa is a research institute with internationally recognized expertise. More than 80 scientists and around 100 African PhD students and trainees conduct research into past and present societies, biodiversity, and geology of Africa. They rely on the museum's unique collections, fieldwork, and collaborative networks with international, and in particular African, institutions. The RMCA is active in more than 20 African countries and emphasizes the exchange of knowledge with its African partners, as well as capacity- and institutionbuilding of our African count. Contributing to the sustainable development of Africa is a priority in the research programmes, with a significant environmental, social and economic impact.

[The RMCA has three research departments >>](#)



I. Oti © RMCA

# 1. CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY & HISTORY

**FOCUS** Societies of the past, the colonial past, political systems, cultural expressions, languages and music of peoples in or from Africa.

The Cultural Anthropology and History department covers various disciplines dedicated to African societies of today and the past, in particular how they functioned and what they achieved. The researchers study languages, deep history and archaeology, the colonial past, cultural expressions, and music of population groups in or from Africa. The fieldwork is done in Africa, but also among the African diaspora.

# 2. BIOLOGY

**FOCUS** Biodiversity of animal species and sustainable management of the tropical rainforests in Africa.

The Biology department enhances the knowledge of the biodiversity of animal groups in Africa. The biologists study the taxonomy and phylogeny of different groups of vertebrates and invertebrates. The wood biologists unravel the structure and function of wood, as well as the role of trees and fauna in African ecosystems, and contribute to the sustainable management of the tropical rainforests in Africa. The fieldwork goes hand in hand with the study of the vast and unique collection.

# 3. EARTH SCIENCES

**FOCUS** Mineral resources, geodynamics, surface environments and risks of natural hazards in Central Africa.

The scientists in the Earth Sciences department study the geology, geodynamic processes, and natural (mineral) resources in Central Africa with a view to sustainable management and enhancing the favorable impact of extraction on human societies. They study volcanoes, seismic events, and landslides for the effective management of associated risks. By determining the soil change in Africa, they evaluate the impact of global changes on the natural environment of the continent.

**A selection of the most important research activities from 2023 is highlighted.**

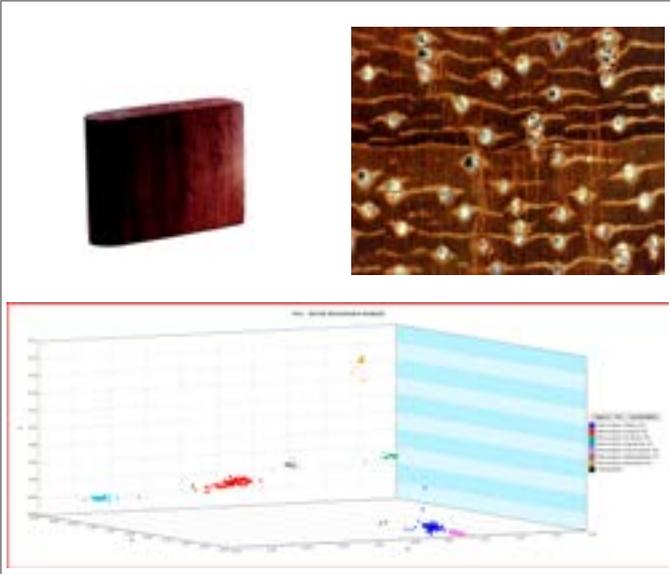
## ENFORCE: Joining the fight against the illegal timber trade

Over a quarter of all tropical roundwood and sawn wood that enters the European Union is imported via Belgium, mainly through the port of Antwerp. However, 15% to 30% of the global timber trade is conducted illegally, with figures reaching as high as 90% in tropical regions. Belgium thus has a responsibility to monitor the timber trade and build research capacity for timber identification in an enforcement context.

ENFORCE, a new Belgian center of expertise for forensic wood research, is run by the AfricaMuseum's Wood Biology service. Its xylarium is one of the largest in the world, with over 80,000 wood samples from more than 13,000 species in its reference collection. A principal partner for the research of the ENFORCE project is the Wood Biology laboratory and the collection of reference samples, managed by INERA, in Yangambi, DRC. ENFORCE scientists offer wood identification services to Belgian authorities and European companies, provide training, and carry out scientific research to modernize, improve, and automate techniques. ENFORCE consults its stakeholders regularly and collaborates with other wood forensic centers around the world to exchange knowledge and complement forensic methods.

In 2023, ENFORCE acquired two important tools to assist in digitizing the Tervuren wood collection and develop new methods and techniques for wood ID and provenancing: a COBOT robotic arm to speed up processing of wood specimens of all shapes, and a DART-TOF mass spectrometer that can extract chemical signatures directly from wood slivers. The latter is the first of its kind in Belgium, and was immediately used as an expert assessment tool upon its installation. In addition to conducting some 80 expert assessments to a wide range of clients, the team continued its various research projects on forensic methods and reached out to the general public to explain the importance of its work.

ENFORCE has been funded for 2022-2024 by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO).



When scientists re-examined specimen 'Tw1', one of the oldest accessions in the Tervuren xylarium, they performed a chemical analysis of the sample using the new DART-TOF Mass Spectrometer. The result, along with a close study of Tw1's wood anatomy, confirmed that Tw1 was actually a piece of *Pterocarpus soyauxii* - allowing the researchers to rectify a century-old case of mistaken botanical identity.

## Provenance research from a gender perspective

Provenance research attempts to clarify the history and, if possible, the context of the acquisition of collections, and concerns both objects and people.

The archival material on the ancient colonial collections hardly mentions the role of women. Yet preliminary research for the Provenance Trail (accessible to museum visitors) uncovered stories and experiences that relate to the lives of women and sometimes children, revealing the potential for taking a gender perspective in such investigations.

2023 marked the start of the 'Provenance Research for Museum Audiences' (PROMA) project, in which researchers focus primarily on the diverse and singular women in Africa and Europe who shaped the collections.

PROMA also seeks to confront the AfricaMuseum as a gendered space in terms of the visitor's experience of the permanent exhibition. What message is given by the content and presentation of the biographies of female personalities? Are the cultural objects on display characteristic of the genders they represent?

PROMA is funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office for the 2023-2026 period.



Anon. (Léopold Gabriel?), 'Le sultan Lupungu du Kasai venu au camp de l'Union minière pour examiner ses sujets', Chief Yakaumbu Kamanda Lumpungu with his wife Mfute Lushiya, who is wearing a necklace that is currently on display at the AfricaMuseum. February 1929. AP.0.2.9958.

See also:  [https://www.africamuseum.be/en/learn/provenance/this\\_is\\_not\\_the\\_Tippu\\_Tip\\_necklace](https://www.africamuseum.be/en/learn/provenance/this_is_not_the_Tippu_Tip_necklace)

## Sustainable management of Central African mineral resources

The geology of Central Africa has gifted the region with a great diversity of mineral deposits. Some of these mineral geo-resources are crucial for energy transition. For instance, cobalt, manganese, lithium, and tantalum are needed to make batteries. Yet the use of such essential resources has not contributed sufficiently to the region's development.

The GeoRes4Dev project aims to improve expertise and academic research on the geodynamic setting of mineral resources and their environmental and societal impacts in DRC, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi. To do so, it engages in capacity and institution-building activities with their universities and research institutes in the areas of training, research and services to society. With stronger local research capabilities, these four countries will be better equipped to tackle all aspects of resource enhancement and use.

Project activities continued in 2023. Seven Ph.D. and eleven DEA/Master scholarships were awarded: eleven in DRC, three each in Burundi and Republic of Congo, and one in Rwanda. Several lectures, seminars, internships, and geological field missions were organized this year. The first edition of the international conference 'Geology and natural resources in Central Africa, societal impact and sustainable development' was organized on 5-7 December 2023 at the Université Marien Ngouabi in Brazzaville.

 <https://www.georessourcesdurables.org/>

Funded by the Belgian Development Cooperation (DGD) for the 2019-2023 period, the GeoRes4Dev project is a cooperation of the AfricaMuseum with the Université du Burundi, Université officielle de Bukavu, Université de Lubumbashi, Université de Kinshasa, the Centre de Recherche géologique et minière, Université Marien Ngouabi and Ghent University.

 <https://geores4dev.africamuseum.be/en>



Closing session of the conference of the GeoRes4Dev project in Brazzaville: 'Geology and natural resources in Central Africa, societal impact and sustainable development', 5-7 December 2023, Republic of Congo.

## African small barbs: a complex evolutionary history of undiscovered diversity

The African small barbs (*Enteromius*) of the Cyprinidae family, which encompasses carps and related fishes, have long been outshone by the better-known and well-studied cichlid fishes. The mostly river-dwelling small barbs display little variation in colour pattern, reproductive behaviour and morphology, yet they differ substantially in their mitochondrial DNA and are the world's third species-richest fish genus. DNA-barcoding studies on species from the north-eastern Congo basin and parts of East and West Africa indicate that *Enteromius* may well turn out to be the most species-rich fish genus in the world.

AfricaMuseum researchers and colleagues from RBINS and KU Leuven set out to study the diversity and evolutionary history of *Enteromius*, especially in the Lake Edward region (Uganda and DR Congo) and adjacent areas. They obtained morphological and genetic data, and found a total of 14 genetic lineages that probably correspond to real species, nearly all of which are new to science. These species differ much genetically but are highly similar in morphology. They also discovered a recurring geological pattern in three species complexes of the so-called sawfin barbs, with one species occurring in low altitudes and another in higher altitudes for each of the complexes. In the coming years, the researchers will focus on the biogeographical distribution of *Enteromius* from the Lake Edward system with an extension to the eastern part of Africa, and continue to investigate the complex genomic architecture of selected *Enteromius* specimens.

*Swimming in the shadow of cichlids: the enigmatic species richness and evolutionary history of the African small barbs* is funded by the Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek. The PhD project is coordinated by the AfricaMuseum with the participation of RBINS and KU Leuven.



© Heleen Maetens  
Sorting specimens of *Enteromius* caught in the Nyungwe National Park (Rwanda).



© Emily Pauls  
Electrofishing in a small stream in the Akagera National Park (Rwanda).

## HARISSA: Tools and skills for dealing with the forces of nature

Landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and flash floods are natural hazard processes that cause significant direct and indirect damage to people, infrastructure, and livelihood in Central Africa. True figures are underreported because of the lack of local expertise, as well as inadequate reliable and up-to-date data. HARISSA attempts to address these challenges, acting at different levels and across disciplines in partnership with various African institutions and stakeholders.

HARISSA (Natural HAZards, RISks, and Society in Africa: developing knowledge and capacities) is a multi-year project on the assessment of natural hazard risks and the reduction of their incidence. Funded by the Belgian Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD), the project continues to build on its prior achievements. The HARISSA team provided doctoral training to researchers from DRC, Burundi and Uganda on various components of the risk equation, from the physical processes at work, to how these hazards actually affected lives. A novel approach with citizen observers was also set up to collect basic data, giving stakeholders responsible for hazard response a clearer picture of the situation in Nord- and Sud-Kivu and south-western Uganda.

The Institut géographique du Congo (IGC) now has expert cartographers in the provinces of Kivu, Maniema, and Kinshasa. As part of their ongoing training, these 21 technician staff members have already produced more than 150 administrative and thematic maps. Such maps are vital land management tools for DR Congo and its vast territory of over 2 million km<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, raising awareness among stakeholders, from civil society to decision-making authorities, is essential for disaster risk reduction. To this end, the awareness-raising tools HAZAGORA and Chukuwa for primary and secondary schoolchildren were developed in close partnership with the Civil Protection Department. Two educational centres were also set up - the Volcano Museum within the Goma Volcanological Observatory, and the Centre de Recherches sur les Risques Naturels (CIRRINA) on the premises of the Université officielle de Bukavu. CIRRINA is becoming a recognized centre of expertise in the region and played a key role in the assessment of recent flash floods and landslides that affected thousands of people.



Blaise Mafuko Nyandwi defended his PhD 'Volcanic risk mitigation in Goma: Risk perception, protective actions, awareness raising before and after the 2021 eruption of Nyiragongo (East DR Congo)' on 12 October 2023 at the AfricaMuseum.



The Hazagora board game, developed by VUB and AfricaMuseum, is used by Civil Protection as a tool to raise awareness regarding volcanic risks among students of secondary schools in Goma (DRC).

## Reviving a forgotten music practice in northern DRC

The AfricaMuseum holds an important collection of *manza* xylophones, a forgotten musical instrument of the customary chiefs and notables of the Azande people in northern DRC. The instruments were collected during Belgian expeditions in the late 19th century and the start of colonisation, and have become the silent witnesses of disrupted cultural heritage and colonisation ever since.

2023 saw the start of the project 'Resounding the Musical Heritage of the Xylophone Collection from RMCA' (ReSoXy), which seeks to reinvestigate, revive and recreate the music practice of the *manza* xylophone. ReSoXy aims to configure 'a different same' for the instrument collection and re-establish contemporary meanings for these objects and communities that have been irreversibly erased and reshaped by colonisation.

To do so, researchers will focus on a triangular interdisciplinary methodology to unmute the instrument collection with creative and participatory approaches, including music experimentation (music sampling, building replicas and historical sound recordings), participatory creative actions (co-creation and co-experimentation with source and diaspora communities, researchers, students and musicians in Europe) and ethnography (archive studies, interviews, and field studies). Apart from breathing innovative ideas to the forgotten instruments, the project will bring impact to the academic and public in terms of heritage preservation and restitution, decolonial and multi-cultural values, and musical creativity.

Funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office for the 2023-2026 period, ReSoXy is led by the AfricaMuseum, in collaboration with the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp.



Azande chief Senza and his brother Kanga playing the manza in Bili. EP.0.0.14694, collection RMCA Tervuren; photo mission A. Hutereau, 1913.



Manza. Xylophone of Azande chief Guga from Bondo. MO.0.0.14308, collection RMCA Tervuren; CC-BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



On Ying Adilia Yip plays the electronic xylophone replica developed for the ReSoXy project.

## BopCo project named a Centre of Expertise

Since 2015, the Barcoding Facility for Organisms and Tissues of Policy Concern (BopCo) has been handling requests to identify organisms with an impact on policy or society - from endangered animals to invasive species that form a potential economic or health threat, or even organisms involved in food fraud, specimens analyzed in a legal context, and so on. BopCo is jointly run by the AfricaMuseum and the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences.

In 2023, through the BopCo project, museum scientists identified pest specimens found in the museum collections, fruit flies, protected plants intercepted at customs and at bpost, birdstrikes, and invasive alien species.

BopCo has grown significantly in users, partners and expertise since its creation, and became a BELSPO-financed Centre of Expertise in 2023. The growing demand for accurate species identification of organisms of policy concern drives BopCo-CE to foster new opportunities and expand collaborations and partnerships in Belgium and internationally.



I. Otto © RMCA

## The spiders of Mayotte

Like Madagascar, Mayotte is one of the 34 biodiversity hotspots on the planet. There is, however, very little information available on the spiders of Mayotte. Only specific studies on a handful of species have been published over the last century.

Under an agreement with Mayotte's Direction de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement (DEAL), AfricaMuseum researchers were asked to carry out an in-depth inventory of the arachnological fauna in the island's various habitats (mangroves, forests, degraded habitats, wetlands). The mission was organized over a 4-week period during the rainy season (October-November 2021), which is an ideal period to observe spiders.

In 2023, scientists continued to work on collected specimens. Preliminary results show the presence of at least 37 families of spiders on Mayotte, revealing an unsuspected diversity. Work in progress includes:

- revision of the Mygalomorphs of Mayotte, with the description of two new species;
- redescription of the species *Vulsor bidens*, with the discovery of the hitherto unknown male;
- study of the Pisauridae and the Nephilidae, in collaboration with the National Institute of Biology, Ljubljana, Slovenia.



The male of *Vulsor bidens*, observed for the first time since the species was described based on a female in 1889.



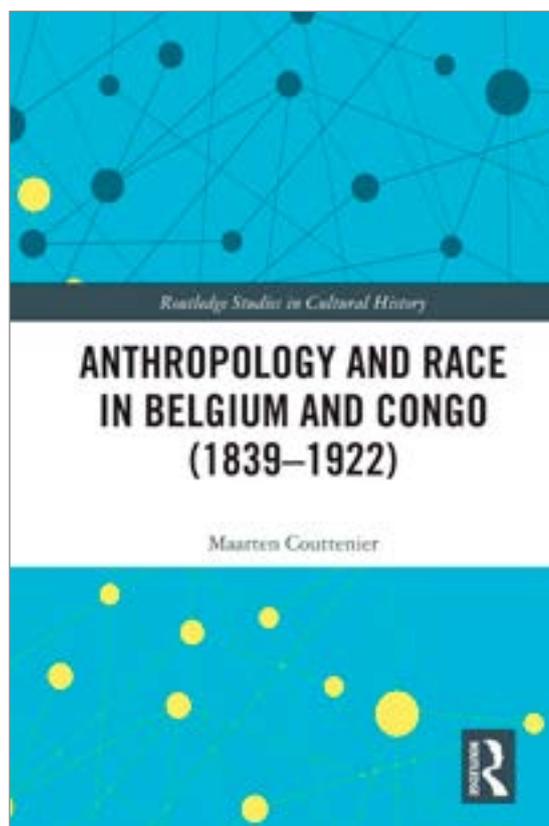
A new species of tarantula from the Entypesidae family, found lodged in its tubular web under a stone on Petite île.

## ***Anthropology and Race in Belgium and Congo (1839-1922)***

*Anthropology and Race in Belgium and Congo (1839-1922)* examines the history of Belgian physical anthropology in the long nineteenth century and discusses how the notion of 'race' structured Belgian pasts and presents as well as relations between metropole and empire. The latest book by AfricaMuseum historian and anthropologist Maarten Couttenier was published by Routledge in November 2023 (online) and January 2024 (hardcover).

The 19th century was a time of competing European nationalisms, and Belgium was not to be outdone. Its anthropologists used skull form, hair and eye colour, and other physical characters to delimitate the different 'races' believed to exist in a permanent manner. Their claim of supposed racial superiority was particularly telling about their own origins and physical attributes.

It is often assumed that such views were then transferred to the colony, but Belgian colonial administrators turned out to be reluctant - at least in theory - to use the idea of permanent 'races' because they needed the possibility of 'evolution' to justify their actions as part of a 'civilising mission'. Colonisation, though, was founded on military occupation and economic exploitation, to devastating effect. The book analyzes how, in this context, widespread racial prejudices not only gave colonisers free rein to behave in inhuman fashion, but also dehumanised Congolese, reducing them or their body parts to objects that could be measured, photographed, cast, and 'collected'.



## The Directorate-general for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD)

The Directorate-general for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) is a long-standing structural partner of the AfricaMuseum, providing funding for the museum's development cooperation activities through a multiannual framework program. The current period runs from 2019 to 2028 and is divided in two 5-year phases.

At the behest of BELSPO-DGD, an external evaluation of the 2019-2023 Cooperation program was conducted by consultancy firm ALESOPI. They interviewed AfricaMuseum personnel as well as African visitors and partners, and visited African partners during field missions in RDC and Burundi in the first half of 2023.

The evaluators praised the results obtained in institutional capacity strengthening and the development of citizen science and long-term African partnerships. They also made several recommendations, in particular regarding institutional capacity-building for the African partners as well as the program's monitoring, sustainability, and impact, all of which were duly noted by the program team and the AfricaMuseum directorate. The ALESOPI external evaluation report was presented on 29 June 2023 during a workshop in the AfricaMuseum with online participation of the partners in Africa.

In order to implement a number of recommendations of the evaluator, a new series of Cooperation Focus Workshops was launched in October 2023. These quarterly workshops, organized for AfricaMuseum personnel active in the DGD-funded cooperation program, aim for more interaction and exchange of lessons learned, solving difficulties between African and European promoters, and promote best practices, in order to achieve a more program-based approach with greater impact and better cooperation leading towards true scientific partnerships.

## Study visits and training courses for African researchers

The financial support of Belgian Development Cooperation (DGD) has allowed the AfricaMuseum to organize study visits and training courses for early-career African researchers for many years now. These mainly take place at the museum and, for projects set up in Africa, in the field. Project goals and the capacity-building programme are designed around the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SGD).

There is a wide range of capacity- and institution-building activities on offer. In addition to scientific and technical training courses for individuals or groups, there are also grants for students pursuing masters, doctoral, and post-doctoral degrees; funding to participate in conferences; and residencies for artists and journalists.

Five African scientists went on study visits as part of the MbiSa Congo II project, and several of them attended the seventh Pan-African Fish and Fisheries Association (PAFFA) conference in Brazzaville's Université Marien Ngouabi.

The École du Patrimoine africain (EPA) in Benin organized an intensive training seminar in historical research for ten (pre-)doctoral students. In South Africa, Stellenbosch University continued to provide local training in the use of advanced tools for African fruit fly pest ID and monitoring, this time to ten trainees. Sokoine University (Tanzania) also conducted a training course in the taxonomy and systematics of African pollinating flies for 12 participants. Scientists from AfricaMuseum served as advisers to all three schools.

The residency programmes in Tervuren also welcomed two participants each. The scientists-in-residence trained in collection management; the artists focused on traces of Christianity in Congolese collections and productions; and the journalists-in-residence on special topics for Burundi and Rwanda, respectively.

## DGD-funded training and study visits at the RMCA for African researchers



## PUBLICATIONS

In 2023, AfricaMuseum released new volumes in its ongoing print and open-access services, and continued to offer print-on-demand services to customers wishing to obtain hard copies of digital publications.

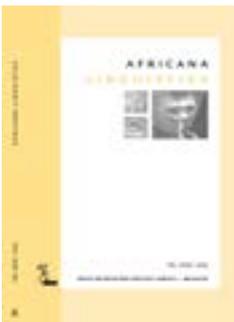
While museum publications can be purchased directly from the Publications service, their main sales channels are commercial distributors in Belgium and abroad. The museum's AfricaShop offers these books to visitors in Tervuren as well. Run by a private concession, the shop also carries a large selection of titles in Dutch, French, and English from other publishers, and is fast becoming a reference bookstore for Africa. An analysis by the concessionaire found that customers came primarily for these books, a fairly unique position for a Belgian museum shop.

The Publications service also helps early-career African researchers prepare and submit manuscripts for publication. These capacity-building workshops were provided to trainees at the AfricaMuseum and RBINS in Belgium, and to university and PhD students and new teachers in Kinshasa, with a total of 189 participants.



Group photo, October 2023 workshop, Unikin. Most participants are from the faculty of Anthropology and contribute to the journal *Le Carrefour congolais*, whose editor-in-chief requested the workshop.

## Results for two scientific journals



*Africana Linguistica's* impact factor for 2022 (published in June 2023) stands at 0.3, compared with last year's 0.067.

The 2022 impact factor for *European Journal of Taxonomy*, also published in June 2023, is 1.20. In comparison, its direct competitor *Zootoxa* has an IF of 0.9.

*EJT* also introduced a new submission platform for authors in July 2023. Called NESTOR (New Editorial System Tool for Research), the platform was entirely developed in-house by the academic publisher EDP Sciences. The latter and the *EJT* consortium share a vision of scientific accessibility and dissemination, and the switch to NESTOR will support *EJT's* long-term commitment to the diamond Open Access model.

Thanks to the work of the scientific board (which includes 3 section editors from RMCA) and the production team (10 desk editors from 7 European countries, managed by the RMCA head of publications), *EJT* published 7,951 pages and 60 volumes (corresponding to 160 papers) in 2023.

## Consultations of the AfricaMuseum institutional repository

To meet requirements for green open access, the AfricaMuseum has its own repository to archive the publications of its scientists. In 2023, the platform received about 100 one-on-one requests for a full text. The museum's reference data have also been migrated to the ORFEO repository of the Belgian Science Policy Office.

 <https://orfeo.belnet.be/handle/internal/10>

 <https://www.africamuseum.be/en/research/discover/publications/repository>



## Book donations for Kinshasa

Local access to recent publications remains very limited for Congolese project partners. AfricaMuseum pursued its book donation policy in collaboration with the libraries of the Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles and the Espace culturel Bilembo, both located in the heart of Kinshasa.

## Book launches

The catalogue presenting the grand rotunda and its artworks, published in late 2022, was officially launched on 4 February, with a book signing session by the artists Aimé Mpane and Jean Pierre Müller in the rotunda, amidst the veils they designed.

*(Re)Making Collections*, with chapters by researchers from Congo, Belgium, and elsewhere, was launched in Kinshasa in October 2023.



Titles are added every year to the collection of books published by the AfricaMuseum. Here, it is presented to the public by Richard Ali A Mutu, head of the Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles library in Kinshasa (La Gombe), and the head of the AfricaMuseum Publications service.



Artist Aimé Mpane signing a copy during the book launch for The Grand Rotunda.



In Kinshasa, Congolese researchers and chapter authors Placide Mumbembele Sanger and Henry Bundjoko Banyata present *(Re)Making Collections* to the public.

## LIST OF RMCA PUBLICATIONS 2023\*

### Exhibition catalogues and guides

/

#### Social Sciences and Humanities

Kahola Tabu, O. 2023. *Célébrer son mariage à Lubumbashi. Mutations des cérémonies matrimoniales*. Series 'Cahiers africains', no. 100. Paris/Tervuren: L'Harmattan/RMCA, 176 p. (PR)



Jamar, A., Samnick, D.A., Ramazani Kalyongo, L. & Chemouni, B. (eds) 2023. *Conjonctures de L'Afrique centrale 2023*. Series 'Cahiers Africains', no. 101. Paris/Tervuren/Antwerpen: L'Harmattan/RMCA/CRE-AC, 334 p. (PR)



Van Beurden, S., Gondola, D. & Lacaille, A. (eds.) 2023. *(Re)Making Collections: Origins, Trajectories & Reconnections/ La Fabrique des collections : Origines, trajectoires & reconnections*. Series 'Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities', no. 181. Tervuren: RMCA, 328 p. (PR)



#### Zoology

Louette, M. 2023. *The bird species from the type collection*. Series 'Collections of the RMCA'. Tervuren: RMCA, 180 p. (Also available in French: *Les Espèces d'oiseaux de la collection de types* & Dutch: *De vogelsoorten uit de typeverzameling*) (PR)



#### Various

*Jaarverslag/Rapport annuel/Annual Report 2022*, 70 p.



### Online publications

/

#### Open Access

Devos, M. Maniacky, J. (eds), *Africana Linguistica*, vol. XXIX, 223 p. (IF 0.3)



*European Journal of Taxonomy* (published by a European consortium including the RMCA), vol. 856 to 916. (IF 1.20)



Gijanto, L., Cornelissen, E. & Nikis, N. (eds), *Nyame Akuma* 98: 92 p.

Nikis, N. & Gijanto, L. (eds), *Nyame Akuma* 99: 71 p.

# THE SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE IN FIGURES

## Who?

**3**  
departments

**80**  
researchers

More than  
**15**  
disciplines

**70**  
partner institutions and  
universities

## What?

In 2023

- **Around a hundred ongoing projects** including 11 begun in 2023
- **168 presentations** in scientific conferences
- **206 publications**, of which 99 were peer-reviewed \*

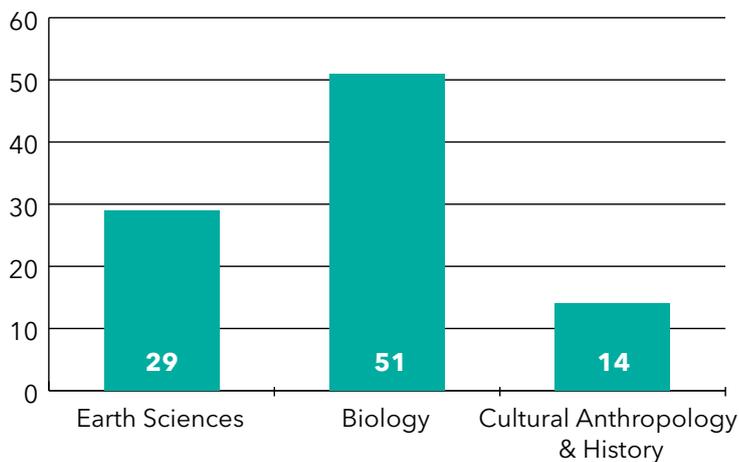
## Doctoral theses

- **5 doctoral degrees completed** in 2023
- **94 ongoing doctoral research projects** in 2023
  - including 12 begun in 2023
- 66% of doctoral students are from 13 countries in Africa
- 37% of doctoral students are Congolese
- 23% are Belgian
  
- Supervision of **39 master's or DEA students**

## 486 researchers came to the RMCA

to conduct research and/or consult the collections, archives, or libraries.

Number of doctoral students per department



\* (see p. 38)

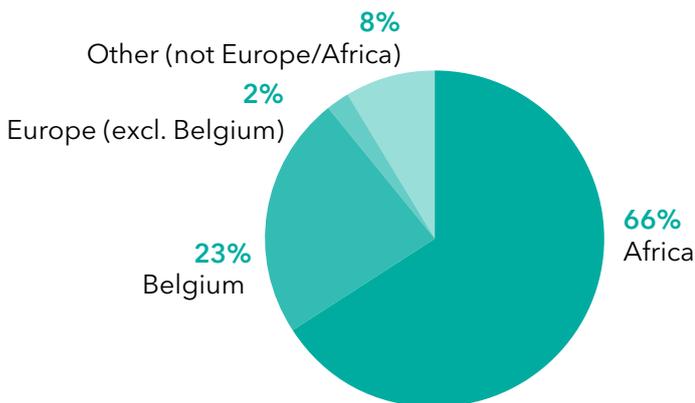
## COMPLETED DOCTORATES

The following researchers completed their doctoral studies in 2023 with the scientific and logistic support of the RMCA:

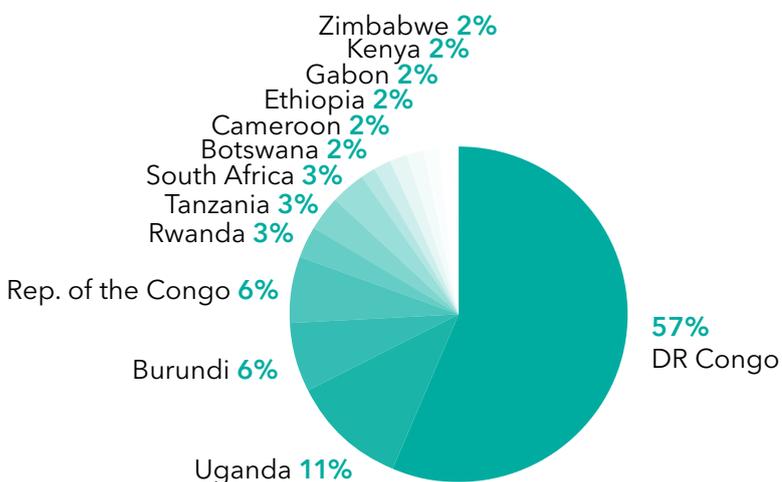
Doctoral students by nationality



Origin of doctoral students



Country of origin of African doctoral students



### Earth Sciences

#### Jean-Claude Maki Mateso

*Interactions between landslides, land use and management: a case study on the Rift flanks west of Lake Kivu (DR Congo)*

Advisors: Charles Bielders (Université catholique de Louvain), Olivier Dewitte (RMCA)

Defended on 23 February 2023

#### Liulsegad Belayneh Bunre

*Gully erosion in the Southern Main Ethiopian Rift: characteristics, spatial-temporal distribution, and sediment yield*

Advisors: Matthieu Kervyn (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Olivier Dewitte (RMCA)

Defended on 27 June 2023

#### Blaise Mafuko Nyandwi

*Volcanic risk mitigation in Goma: Risk perception, protective actions, awareness raising before and after the 2021 eruption of Nyiragongo (East DR Congo)*

Advisors: François Muhashy Havyaremye (Université de Goma), Matthieu Kervyn (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Caroline Michellier (RMCA)

Defended on 12 October 2023

### Biology

#### Cyril Hammoud

*Unravelling the role of Bulinus gastropods as intermediate hosts in Schistosoma disease transmission with state-of-the-art molecular techniques*

Advisors: Dirk Verschuren (Universiteit Gent), Tine Huyse (RMCA)

Defended on 21 June 2023

#### Chadrack Kafuti

*Tree performance, population demographics and distribution of Pericopsis elata*

Advisors: Jan Van den Bulcke (Universiteit Gent), Joris Van Acker (Universiteit Gent), Hans Beeckman (RMCA), Nils Bourland (RMCA)

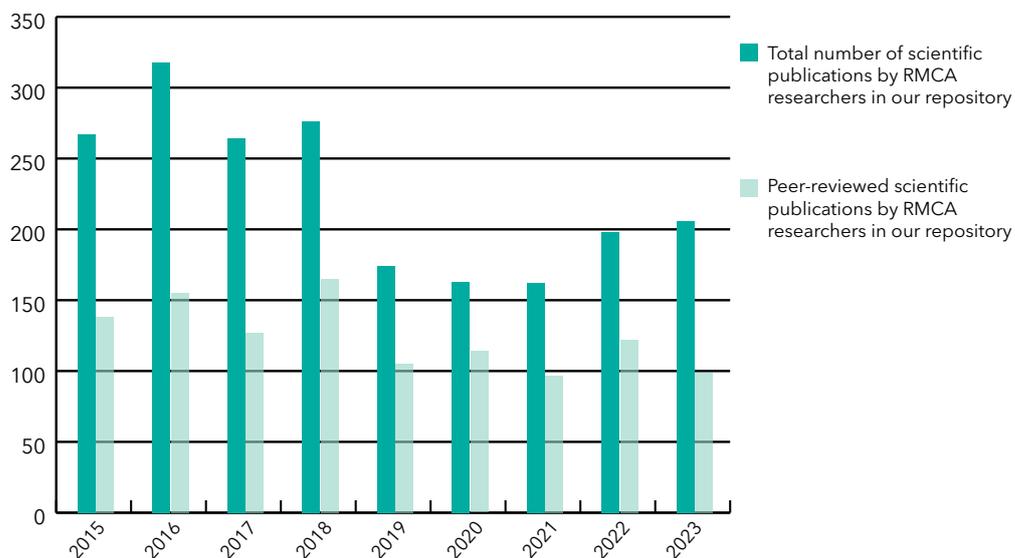
Defended on 7 December 2023

## PUBLICATIONS OF RMCA SCIENTISTS

Every year, the researchers of the museum publish articles in scientific journals or books, monographs, etc. with prestigious international publishers. In 2023, they published 206 texts, of which 99 were peer-reviewed.

References to these publications by RMCA staff members can be consulted on our website.

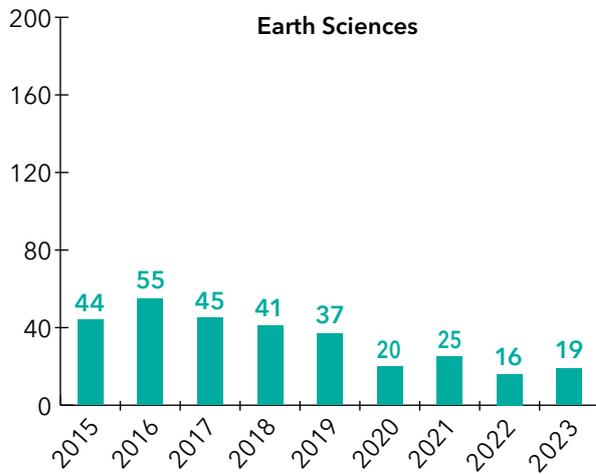
<https://www.africamuseum.be/en/research/discover/publications/repository>



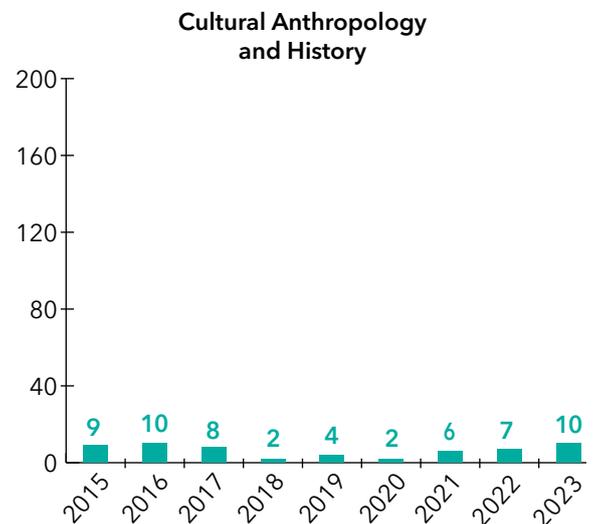
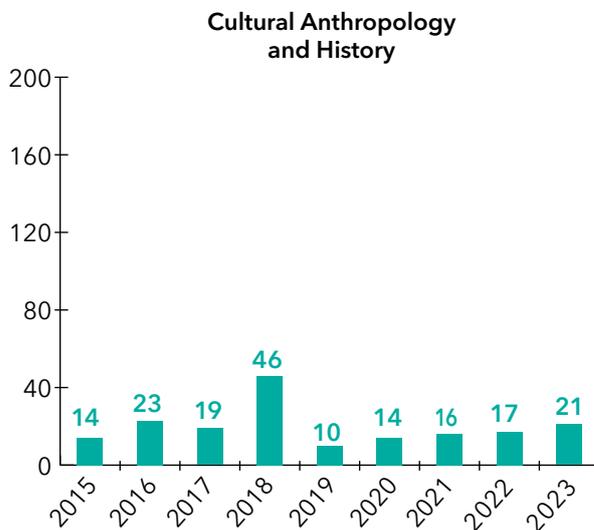
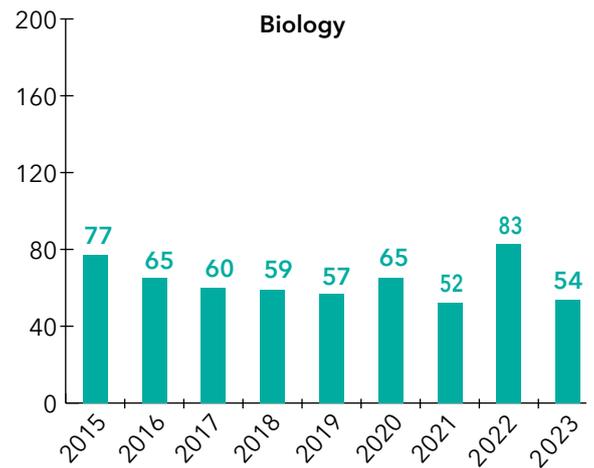
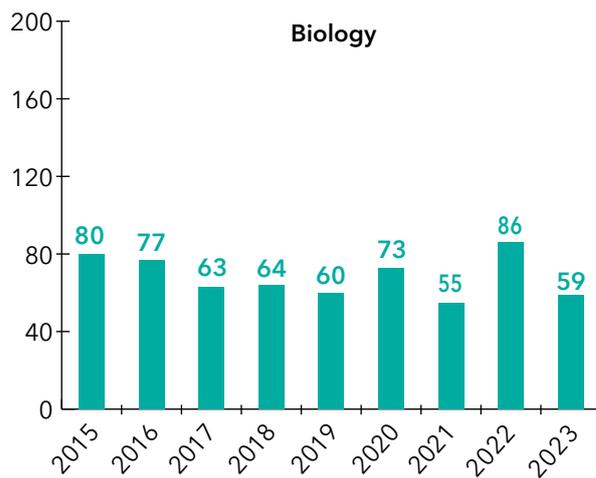
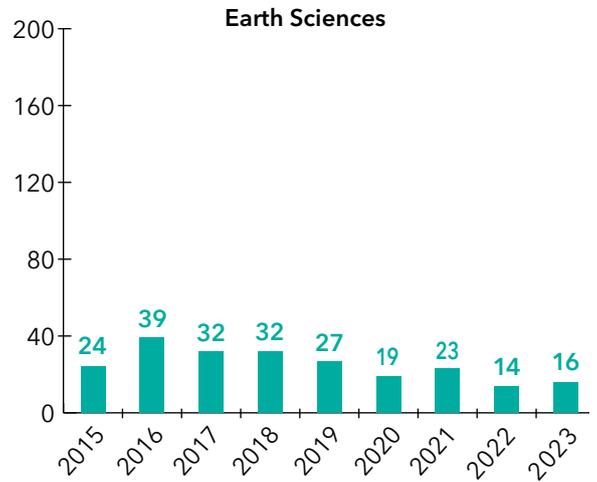
### Statistics per discipline and per type in 2023

	Earth Sciences	Biology	Cultural Anthropology and History	TOTAL	
<b>Total number of peer-reviewed scientific publications</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>99</b>	> <a href="#">Detail 1</a>
Articles in scientific journals	16	54	10	80	> <a href="#">Detail 2</a>
Chapters in (edited) book	0	3	11	13	
Books and catalogues (as author or editor)	0	0	0	0	
<b>Total number of non-peer-reviewed publications</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>107</b>	
Journal articles	4	2	6	12	
Maps	0	0	0	0	
(edited) books/catalogues	0	1	2	3	
Chapters in (edited) book	0	0	1	1	
Chapters in (edited) catalogue	0	0	0	0	

**Detail 1: Number of peer-reviewed scientific publications**



**Detail 2: Number of articles in scientific journals**



# 03



# COLLECTIONS & LIBRARIES

**The AfricaMuseum's international reputation is based on its vast expertise and unique collections in the humanities and natural sciences, from the Central African region, under its care. These collections are both valuable heritage and of great scientific value. They form the basis for the large range of research projects. The fact that less than 1% of the collections can be seen in the new permanent exhibition gives an idea of its size.**

The museum is responsible for the physical management of these diverse and extensive collections, to conserve and digitize them. It makes its collections available to the public in various ways, increasingly through digital avenues. The collection is promoted through research, exhibitions, publications, and databases. Collection pieces are loaned out all over the world for exhibitions or scientific research. In addition, researchers can consult documents or analyze artefacts and specimens on-site.

The collection continues to grow. These days, it expands primarily in the context of research projects in collaboration with African universities and museums. The museum also has a library covering various disciplines within the humanities and natural sciences. The complete collection contains more than 130,000 books and several thousand of journals, as well as valuable historical works. Digitalization of this collection is ongoing.

## COLLECTION FIGURES

### Cultural Anthropology & History

<b>122 000</b>
ethnographic artefacts
<b>75 000</b>
archaeological artefacts
<b>9000</b>
musical instruments
<b>4000</b>
ancient maps
<b>500 000</b>
historical photographs
<b>20 000</b>
historical objects and Western artworks
<b>3 km</b>
historical archives
<b>70</b>
historical films on the Belgian Congo, Rwanda and Burundi (1940-1960)

### Biology

<b>10 000 000</b>
specimens among which:
<b>6 000 000</b>
insects
<b>1 200 000</b>
fishes
<b>500 000</b>
butterflies
<b>300 000</b>
spiders
<b>195 000</b>
amphibians
<b>150 000</b>
birds
<b>135 000</b>
mammals
<b>80 000</b>
wood samples
<b>62 000</b>
reptiles
<b>17 000</b>
snakes

### Earth Sciences

<b>264 000</b>
aerial photographs
<b>160 000</b>
rock samples
<b>25 000</b>
maps
<b>22 000</b>
palaeontological specimens
<b>19 000</b>
minerals
<b>1 km</b>
geological archives

## Digitizing archives and historical photos

Digitization efforts continued in 2023 and centered primarily on the historical & institutional archives and photo collections.

Among historical archives, the main focus was on archives related to Rwanda as part of the RwandaArchives project. In cooperation with the State Archives and other partners, about 100,000 scans of the annual reports of the Ministry of Colonies were completed.

With regard to the institutional archives, work mainly continued on digitizing various series of collection file cards. These cards contain valuable information on the provenance history of the collections. Digital access facilitates research for the PROCHE and BeMUSIC projects, among others. In total, some 600,000 scans were made of various archival series.

Finally, work continued on the digitization and digital reconstruction of the InforCongo photo archive and the historical photo archives. About 22,000 photos were digitized in high resolution and registered in the collection management system.

## Unlocking the library's resources

The library migrated the catalogue to a new open source library management system, allowing for more flexible and more efficient data entry and providing a more user-friendly environment for the library users and researchers. More intensive retro-cataloguing will be pursued in the coming years, enriching the library catalogue and improving the accessibility of our heritage collections. In addition, the journal *Mouvement Géographique* was digitized in collaboration with Ghent University and the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences.

## Towards common access and curation of European natural science collections

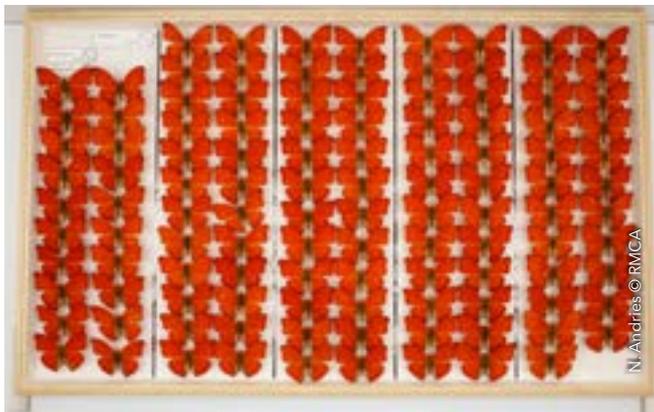
The Distributed System of Scientific Collections (DiSSCo) is a new world-class research infrastructure for natural science collections. DiSSCo represents the largest-ever formal agreement between natural history museums, botanical gardens and collection-holding universities in the world, grouping 1.5 billion specimens, 5,000 scientists, and 170 institutions in 23 countries.

DiSSCo aims to digitally unify all European natural science assets under common access, curation, policies and practices, ensuring that all the data is easily Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (the FAIR principles).

In Belgium, the Institute of Natural Sciences and the AfricaMuseum house nearly 50 million natural history specimens, one of the biggest collections in Europe. The DiSSCo Fed project helps the digitization efforts of both institutions.

Digitization efforts focus on type specimens. These specimens were used to describe species for the first time and have a high scientific value.

During the 2019-2023 period, the Institute of Natural Sciences and the AfricaMuseum produced 39,126 pictures of boxes/drawers, 9,146 pictures of specimens, 12,165 stacked images, 60 multi-spectral acquisitions, 2,362 3D surface models and 5,735 micro-CT files. Specific protocols were also developed in order to maximise the scientific value of the digital models.



Digitized drawers of butterflies.

## Digitizing natural science collections



Digitized holotype of the brown forest cobra (*Naja subfulva*) by micro-CT scan.



Focus stacking imaging of a Steudner's dwarf gecko (*Tropicochetes steudneri*) in ethanol.



Micro-CT scan of the fish *Paramormyrops tavernei*.



Fossil tooth of the extinct shark *Galeocerdo mayumbensis*.



Focus stacking imaging of fruit flies (up to down: *Dacus pallidulatus*, *Dacus inornatus* and *Bistrispinaria magniceps*).

## Citizen rescuers for collections

The RMCA and the Institute of Natural Sciences (Brussels) conserve some of the largest natural history collections in Europe.

In the citizen science project Citizen Rescuers for Collections (CRESCO), a team of researchers and curators from both institutions joined forces with 26 citizen scientists to make collection data accessible.

During the six months of the project, citizen scientists photographed 3,000 birds and 1,000 wood samples. Without citizen scientists, these specimens would have remained invisible for much longer. Thanks to their contributions, researchers can train AI identification models for tracking protected wood species entering Belgium.

The citizen scientists in the CRESCO community come from five different countries and speak at least eight languages between them. Yet they managed to find a common language while collaborating with RMCA researchers.

Because they combine scientific, educational, communication and engagement expertise, museums are ideal spaces for the development of citizen science initiatives. In 2024, CRESCO will continue to bring communities closer to museum collections and make the invisible visible.

CRESCO was part of the first IMPETUS Accelerator for Citizen Science programme, funded by the European Union.



*Olha from Ukraine enrolled in the CRESCO project to 'do something meaningful and give something back to the Belgian people'*



*Olayemi, a Nigerian national, is delighted with enriching the reference image database of protected wood species and 'contributing to scientific advancements that have the potential to shape a more sustainable and greener future'.*

## Relocation of the collections and library of the Stanley pavilion to the CAPA building

For many years, the Stanley Pavilion was the working environment of the former Colonial History research section. This building housed a large number of collections, including historical weapons, popular paintings, watercolours and maps, colonial objects, the Stanley archives, and several larger busts and furniture. It also housed the library of the Colonial History section.

The Stanley Pavilion is now in need of extensive renovation. As a result, in 2023, volunteers joined the AfricaMuseum Building Management, Collection Management, Colonial History, and Exhibition services to begin the arduous task of moving the collections to the CAPA, a building within the AfricaMuseum complex.

While some collections were well inventoried and could be moved without major problems, others needed a thorough inventory, registration and cleaning before they could be moved to their new repository.

During spring and summer, weapons were inventoried, cleaned, disarmed and moved with the aid of colleagues from the War Heritage Institute. Watercolours were registered, photographed and packed for the move. All large sculptures, paintings and historical objects were evacuated from the building - no easy feat given the stairs and corridors and the weight and size of these objects. Museum staff caught up with the photography, registration and inventory of the historical collections: out of more than a thousand objects processed, 200 were registered in the digital database for the first time.

In autumn, most of the library holdings of the Colonial History section was transferred to the Central Library in the CAPA building. Given the size of the collections, the actual move was carried out by a specialized firm. In total, about 250 running metres of library works were transferred. As a result, a centralized library system is now available to our users and researchers.



© RMCA  
*Sorting out orphaned collections.*

## FIGURES FOR THE COLLECTIONS, ARCHIVES, AND LIBRARIES

### Loans

**486**

persons visited the RMCA  
for research purposes  
and/or to consult  
the collections, archives,  
or libraries

**920**

ethnographic and  
historical objects  
consulted by  
external visitors

**5000**

More than  
zoological  
specimens on  
research loan

**304**

objects on loan,  
in particular

**10**

for  
exhibitions  
in Belgium,

and **1**  
in Senegal



© RMCA

*Analysis of a Woyo mask, in the framework of the EPITOX project. Funded by BELSPO, this project carries out analytical research on toxic materials in the ethnographic collection, in order to obtain knowledge about the handling and preservation of the collection.*

---

## Expertise and services

**180**  
assessments of  
ethnographic objects

Identification of **100**  
wood samples

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## Acquisitions

More than **20,500**  
zoological specimens,  
including

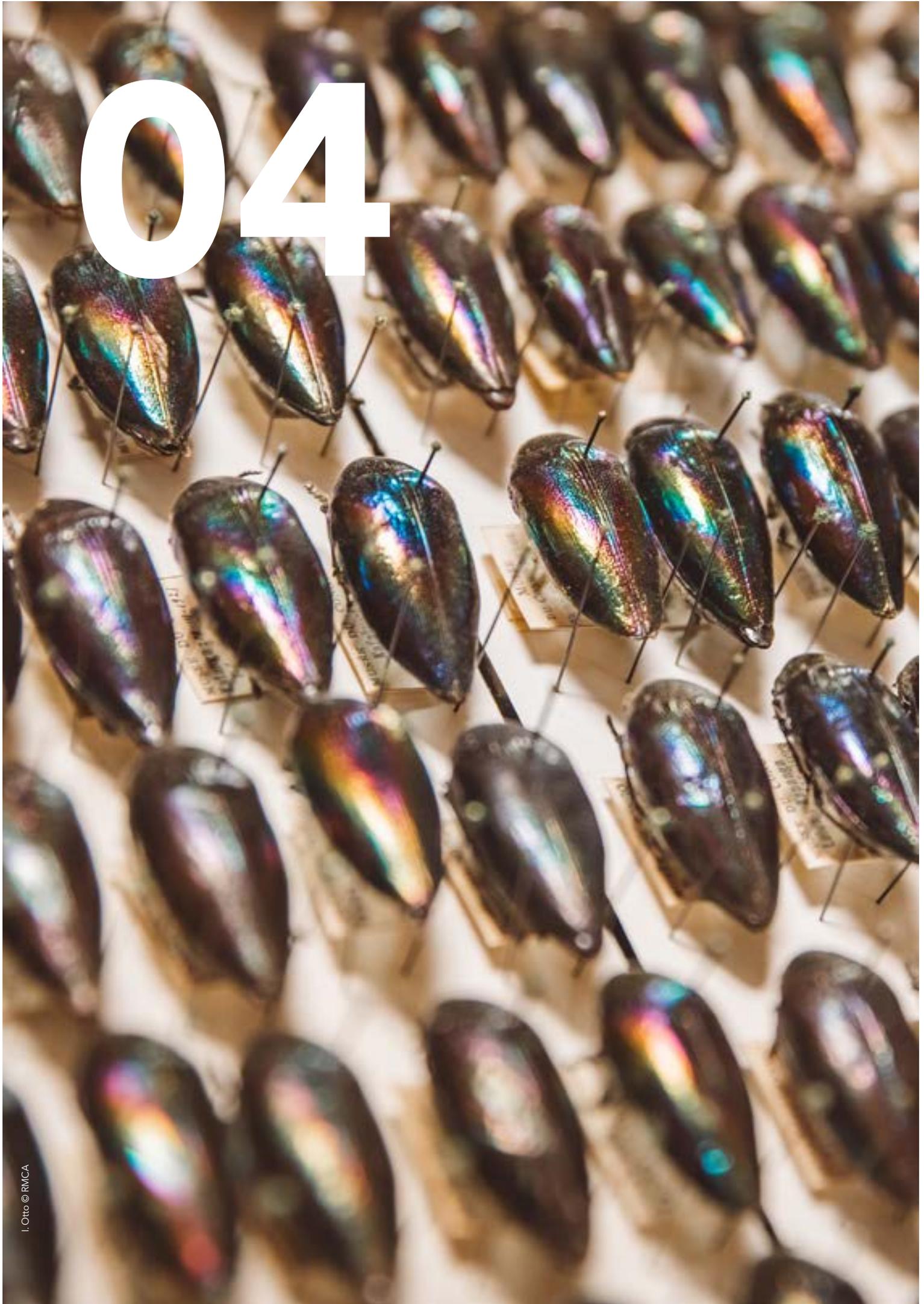
**931**  
type specimens

**871**  
wood samples

**81**  
archive documents,  
photo albums,  
postcard collections,  
paintings,  
etc.

**20**  
GB of  
audiovisual material  
from Rwanda  
for musicological  
collections

# 04



# THE MUSEUM IN FIGURES

# FINANCIAL REPORT

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Expenditure and revenue (in k€)</b>					
Revenue	19 561	16 605	17 522	20 719	23 250
Expenditure	18 127	16 058	17 864	20 355	22 607
<b>Balance</b>	<b>1434</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>-341</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>643</b>
<b>Sources of revenue</b>					
Human resources envelope	_(2)	_(2)	_(2)	_(2)	_(2)
Endowment	10 197	10 587	10 730	12 176	13 737
Own funds	3382	1237	1440	1884	1978
Projects	4967	4727	5240	6452	6027
Other	1015	52	111	207	1506
<b>Total</b>	<b>19 561</b>	<b>16 605</b>	<b>17 522</b>	<b>20 719</b>	<b>23 251</b>
<b>Expenses by source (in k€)</b>					
Personnel	11 985	11 294	11 780	12 823	15 864
Human resources envelope	0	0	0	0	0
Personnel own funds	0	0	0	0	0
Statutory personnel	5841	5337	5540	5983	6886
Contractual personnel	6144	5957	6239	6840	8978
Operations	5328	3927	5570	6924	6157
Equipment and library	814	836	513	607	585
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 127</b>	<b>16 058</b>	<b>17 864</b>	<b>20 355</b>	<b>22 607</b>

(1) Deficit and derogation from ESA balance with the approval of the Minister for the Budget

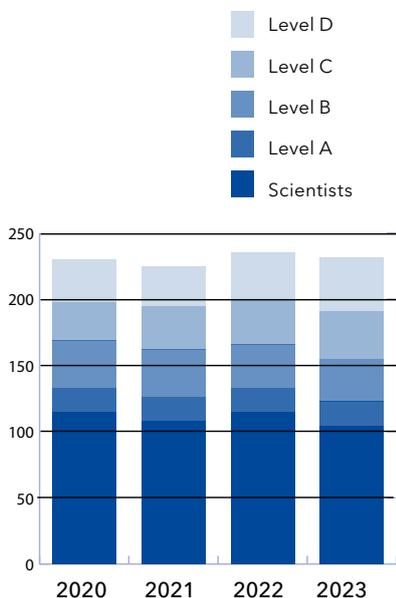
(2) Since 01.01.2018, endowment and human resources envelopes have been merged

# STAFF FIGURES

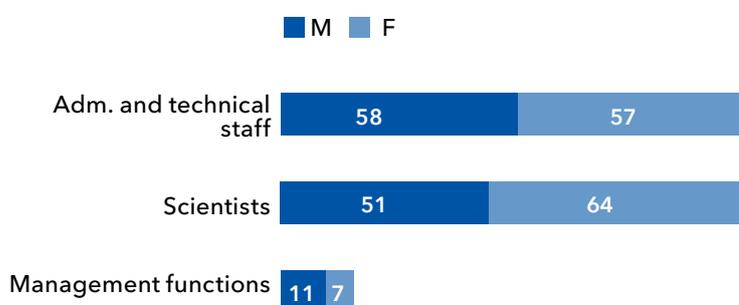
## Distribution of statutory and contractual staff by level

	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Scientists</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>115</b>
Statutory	34	30	30	30
Contractual	70	85	78	85
<b>Level A</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
Statutory	12	11	11	11
Contractual	7	7	7	7
<b>Level B</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>
Statutory	23	26	29	28
Contractual	9	7	7	8
<b>Level C</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>29</b>
Statutory	19	20	19	17
Contractual	17	14	14	12
<b>Level D</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>
Statutory	1	1	0	0
Contractual	39	34	30	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>230</b>

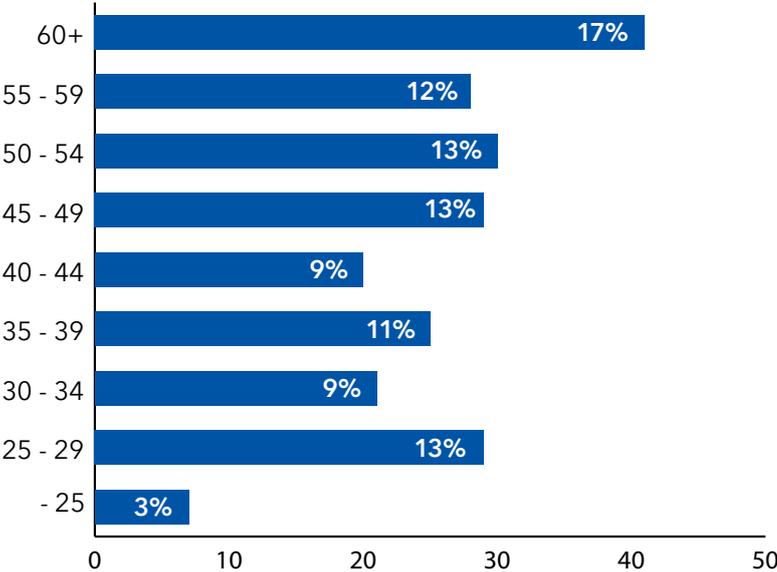
### Distribution by level



### Distribution M/F



# Age pyramid



# PUBLIC SERVICES

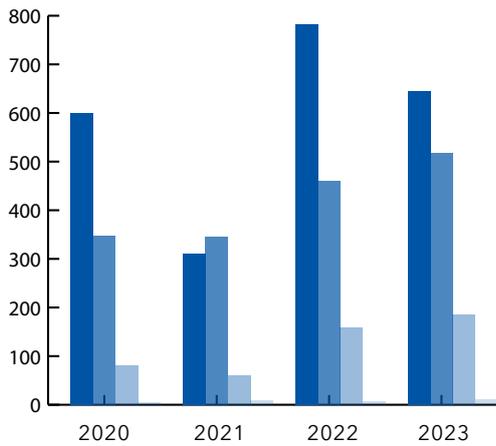
## Visitors

- AfricaMuseum welcomed **131,881** visitors in 2023.

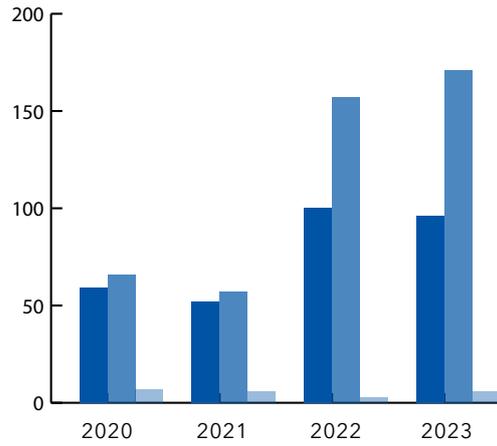
## Guided tours

- There were **1360** guided tours and **273** workshops in 2023.

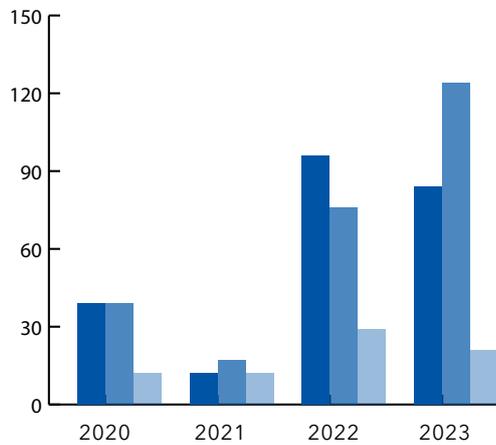
Guided tours 2020-2023



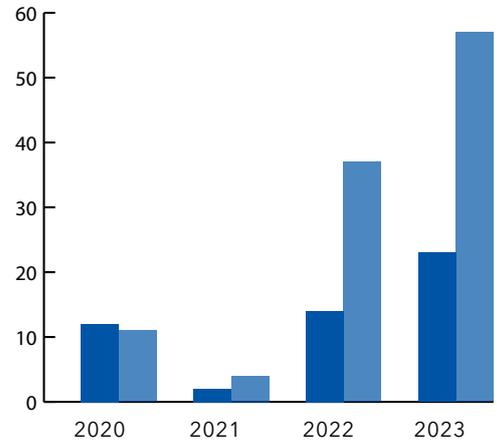
Workshops 2020-2023



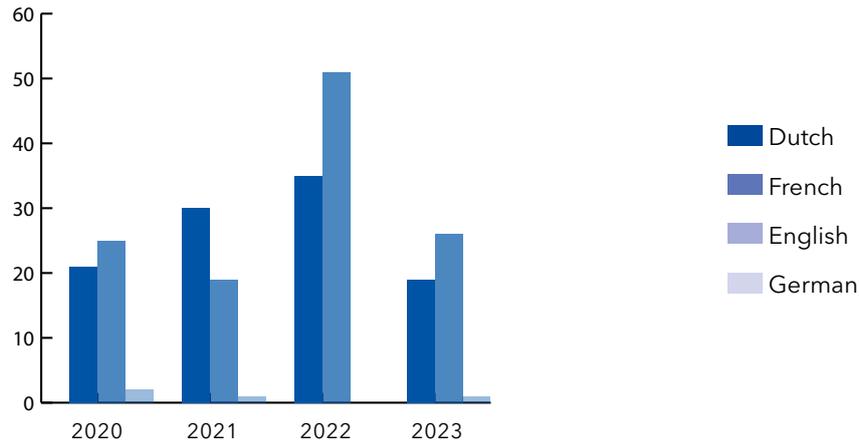
Guided tours History 2020-2023



History workshops 2020-2023



Muziki workshops 2020-2023



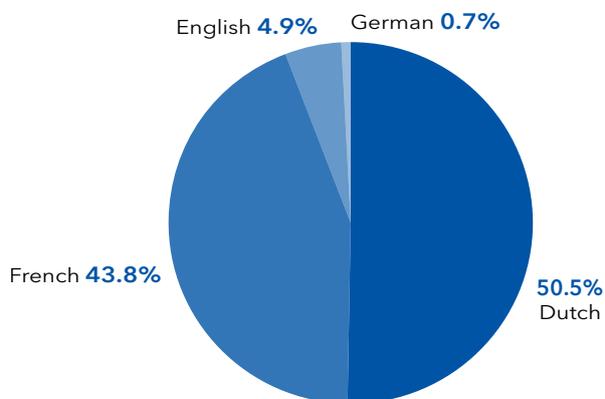
## Media coverage

Total number of articles published: 618

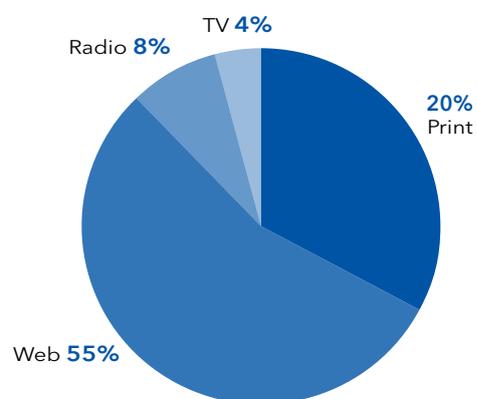
- Belgian media: 834 (decrease of 26% compared with 2021)
- International media: 15 (decrease of 69% compared with 2021)

### Belgian media

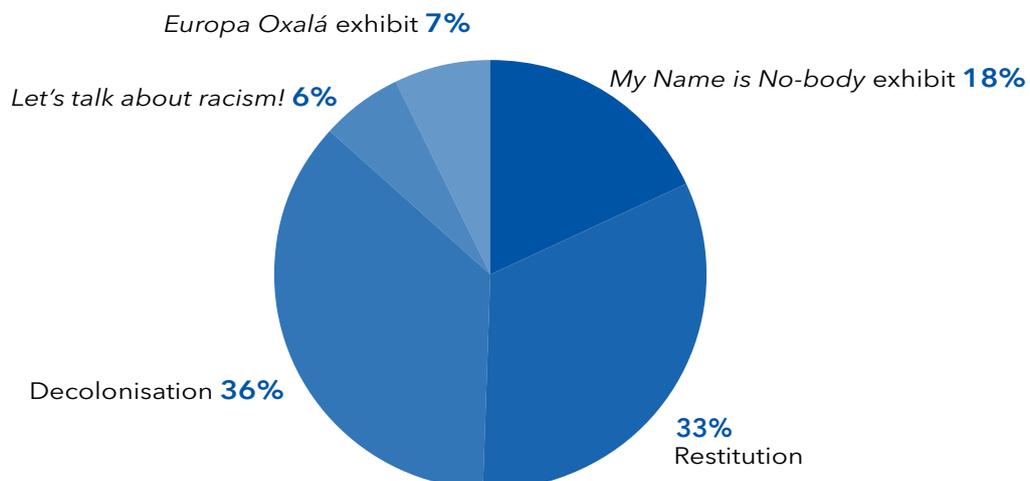
Articles by language



Articles by media type



### Topics covered



## Website

**In the past, we used Google Analytics for website statistics. However, an update carried out in July 2023 meant we had no longer access to previous data. A complete analysis of 2023 with Google Analytics can therefore no longer be made. For this annual report, we used a different method. A comparison with previous years would not be relevant given the different data collecting techniques.**

In 2023, we had a total of 1,025,667 visitors.

- A total of 183,166 unique visitors (IP addresses) visited the website, with an average of 2,810 visitors per day.
- A total of 10,541,695 pages were viewed, representing an average of 28,881 pages per day and 10 per visitor.

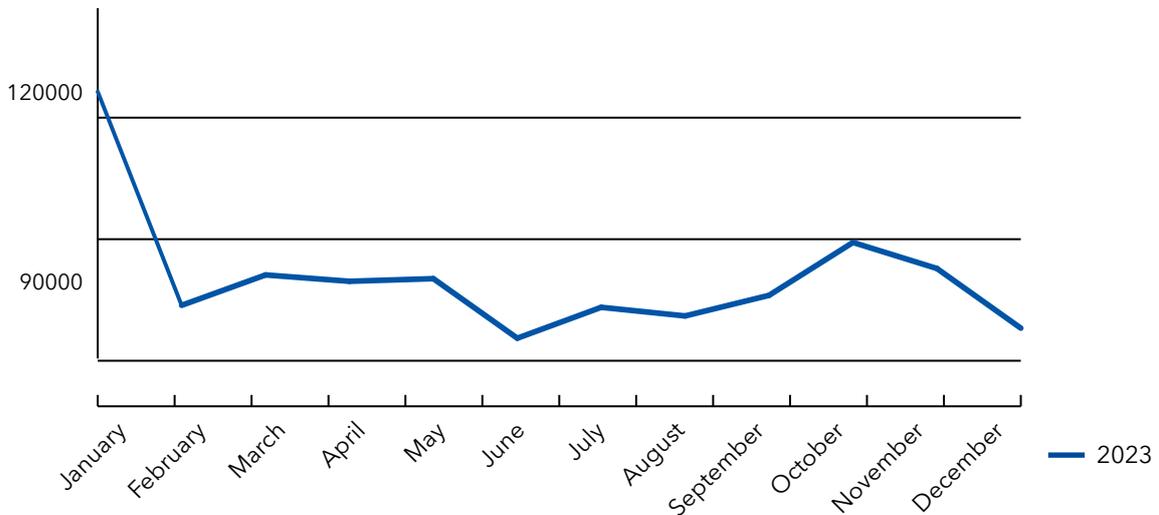
The month of October saw the highest number of page views, with 1,594,753 pages, while January saw the highest number of visitors to the website: 122,126.

- A visit session lasted 6:21 minutes on average.
- More people visited the website from a desktop (62.25%) than from a mobile device (34.61%).

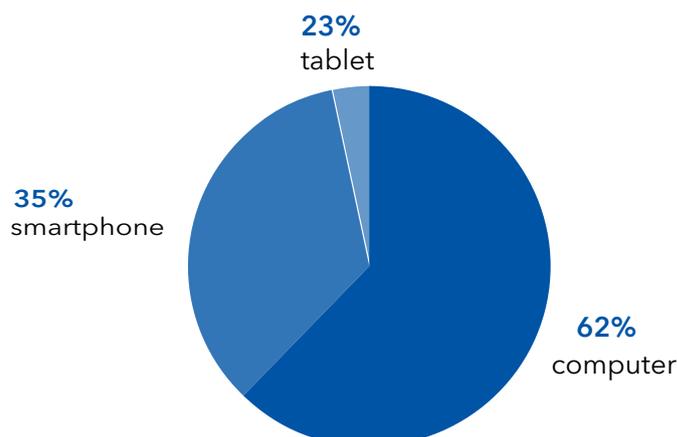
The most popular pages were the English homepage with 186,555 visits, followed by the Dutch homepage with 106,532 visits and French homepage with 84,412 visits.

- 28.50% of visitors viewed the website from Belgium.
- The second largest group were visitors from the United States (23.50%), followed by France (4.39%) and China (2.95% from China). Only 0.85% of visitors surfed from the DRC.

### Website consultations



### Device type

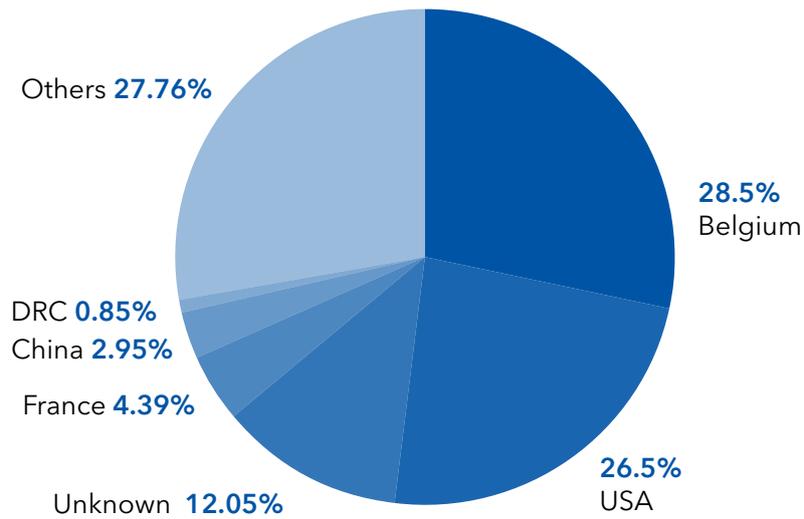


### Origin of website visitors

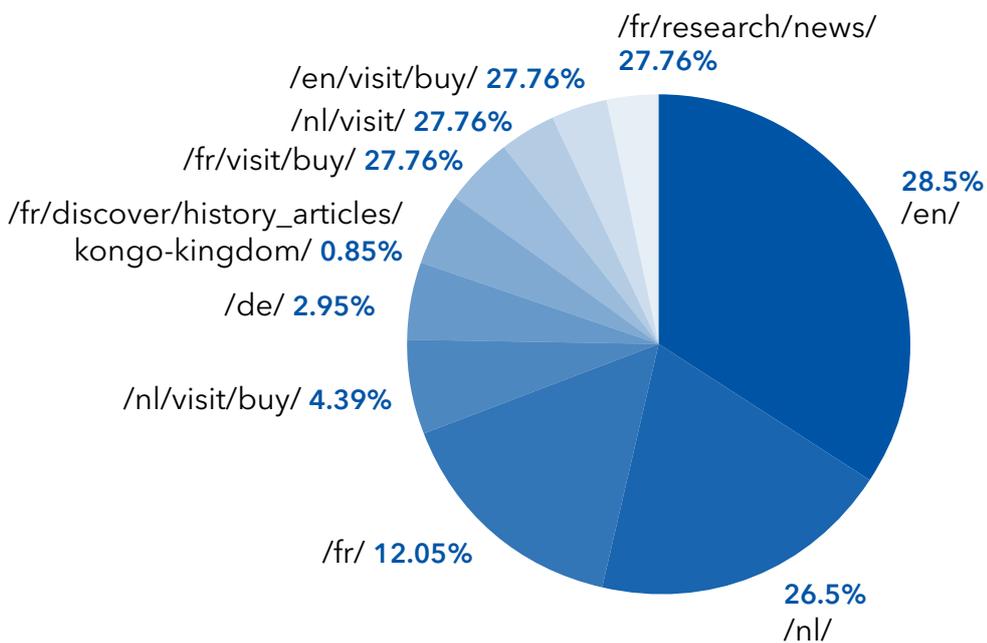
28% of visitors viewed the website from Belgium.

After the USA (26.5%) and France (4.39%), China (2.95%) and the DRC (0.85%) accounted for the greatest number of visits.

### Origin of website visitors



### Most visited pages

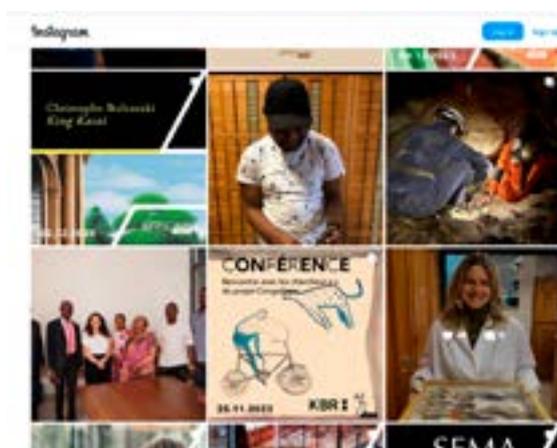
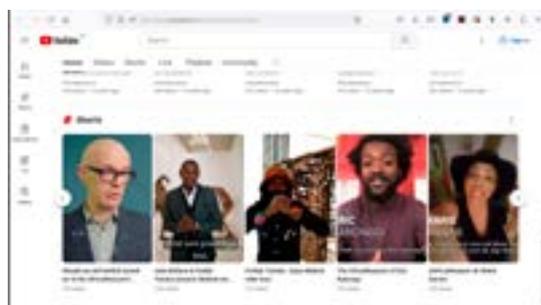
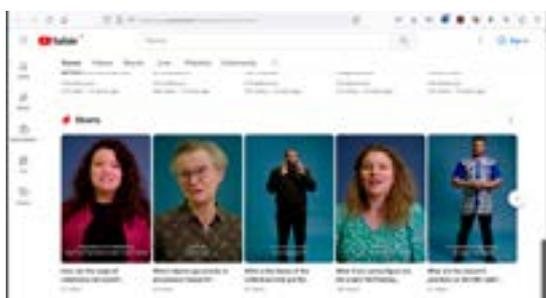


## Social media

In 2023, the museum's social media accounts posted the following figures:

- The Facebook page AfricaMuseum EN went from 11,650 to 11,821 followers, a 1.5% increase.
- The Facebook page AfricaMuseum België went from 2,648 to 2,970 followers, a 13% increase.
- The Facebook page AfricaMuseum Belgique went from 3,522 to 4,302 followers, a 22% increase.
- The Instagram account went from 5,850 to 6,590 followers, a 13% increase.
- The X (formerly Twitter) account went from 7,139 to 7,432 followers, a 4% increase.
- The LinkedIn account went from 2,098 to 2,763 followers, a 31% increase.

We also had 173,839 views on our YouTube channel.



More traffic on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and other channels.

# 05



**WHO WE ARE**

## Vision

As a museum and research centre, the AfricaMuseum is a forum for study and dialogue on societies and the natural environment in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The AfricaMuseum is a place of memory and tells the history of the colonial past but also works with and on the Africa of today and tomorrow.

The AfricaMuseum is committed to generating interest and promoting social involvement in the challenges of today and tomorrow.

The staff of the AfricaMuseum do not walk that path alone: the AfricaMuseum builds sustainable partnerships, in Belgium, in Europe and especially in Africa.

## Mission

The vision of the AfricaMuseum is realised through attentive management of the collections in our care. Through our research, our collaborations and partnerships and with the organisation of exhibitions, events and education we widely share these collections and the knowledge and values they bring.

In its relationships with the public, and with youth and the African diaspora in particular, the AfricaMuseum aims to be accessible and inclusive. As a forum for study, education and dialogue, the AfricaMuseum adopts a participatory approach, striving for co-creation.

## Director's Council

### Members:

- Karel Velle, Director General a.i. (until 30/04/2023)
- Bart Ouvry, Director General (from 01/05/2023)
- Bambi Ceuppens, Scientific collaborator Culture and Society Service (from 01/10/2023)
- Els Cornelissen, Head of Department a.i. Cultural Anthropology and History (until 31/10/2023)
- Marc De Meyer, Head of Department a.i. Biology
- François Kervyn de Meerendré, Head of Service and Head of Department a.i.
- Jacky Maniacky, Head of Culture and Society Service (until 31/10/2023) and Head of Department a.i. Cultural Anthropology and History (from 01/11/2023)

- Didier Van den Spiegel, Head of Biological Data and Collection Management Service (until 31/10/2023) and Head of Department a.i. Collection Management (from 01/11/2023)
- Patricia Van Schuylenbergh, Head of History and Politics Service (from 01/01/2024)

## Governance and advisory bodies

The RMCA is a federal scientific institution under the aegis of the State Secretary for Science Policy. Administratively speaking, the RMCA is an independently-managed public institution with three governance bodies and one advisory body.

### Financial Management Committee

The management committee is responsible for the financial, material and administrative management of the RMCA, and serves the same function for the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences. Chaired by a representative of the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office, it is made up of four external members (university academics and management experts), the managing directors of each institution, and two representatives of the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office.

### Members with a deliberative vote:

- Frank Monteny, Chair, Director General - PPS Science Policy
- Karel Velle, Deputy Chair, Director General a.i., RMCA (until 30/04/2023)
- Bart Ouvry, Deputy Chair, Director General, RMCA (from 01/05/2023)
- Thierry Backeljau, Deputy Chair, Director General a.i., RBINS (until 30/04/2023)
- Michel Van Camp, Deputy Chair, Director General, RBINS (from 01/05/2023)
- Ingrid Vanden Berghe, External member
- Alain Heynen, Advisor - PPS Sciences Policy
- François Mairesse, External member
- Koen Verhoest, External member
- Claude Bragard, External member

### Members with advisory rights:

- Marie-Solange Mukarwema, Accountant, RBINS
- Yves Geens, Accountant, RMCA
- Brigitte Lauwaert, Head, Mathematical Models Management Unit, RBINS

- Didier Van den Spiegel, Head of service, RMCA
- Françoise Stassart, Vice-secretary Attaché – PPS Science Policy
- Jacques Lust, Secretary, Attaché – PPS Science Policy
- Lieven Dejaegher, Inspector of finance
- Pierre De Maret, Chair, Scientific Council, RMCA
- Bruno Danis, Chair, Scientific Council, RBINS

### Scientific Council (from 25/04/2024)

#### Internal members:

- Bart Ouvry, Director General
- Bambi Ceuppens, Scientific collaborator Culture and Society Service
- Marc De Meyer, Head of Department a.i. Biology
- François Kervyn de Meerendré, Head of Department a.i. Earth Sciences
- Jacky Maniacky, Head of Department a.i. Cultural Anthropology and History
- Didier Van Den Spiegel, Head of Department Collection Management
- Patricia Van Schuylenbergh, Head of History and Politics Service
- Bruno Verbergt, Operational Director, Public Outreach

#### External members:

- Inge Brinkman, UGent
- Véronique Clette-Gabuka, ULB
- Sandrine Collard, Rutgers University
- Marie-Sophie de Clippele, UCL
- Stijn Dewaele, UGent
- Kirezi Kanobana, Head of Department, Flanders Innovation and Entrepreneurship (VLAIO)
- Amandine Lauro, ULB
- Herwig Leirs, UAntwerpen

### Recruitment and Promotion Board

The board is responsible for the selection and promotion of statutory scientific staff. It is chaired by a Federal Science Policy representative and is made up of two external experts from universities and the RMCA Director General.

#### Members:

- Robert Van De Walle, President, BELSPO
- Karel Velle, Director General a.i., RMCA (until 30/04/2023)
- Bart Ouvry, Director General, RMCA (from 01/05/2023)
- Sara Geenen, Professor, UAntwerpen
- Caroline Nieberding, Professor, UCLouvain

### Staff Consultative Committee

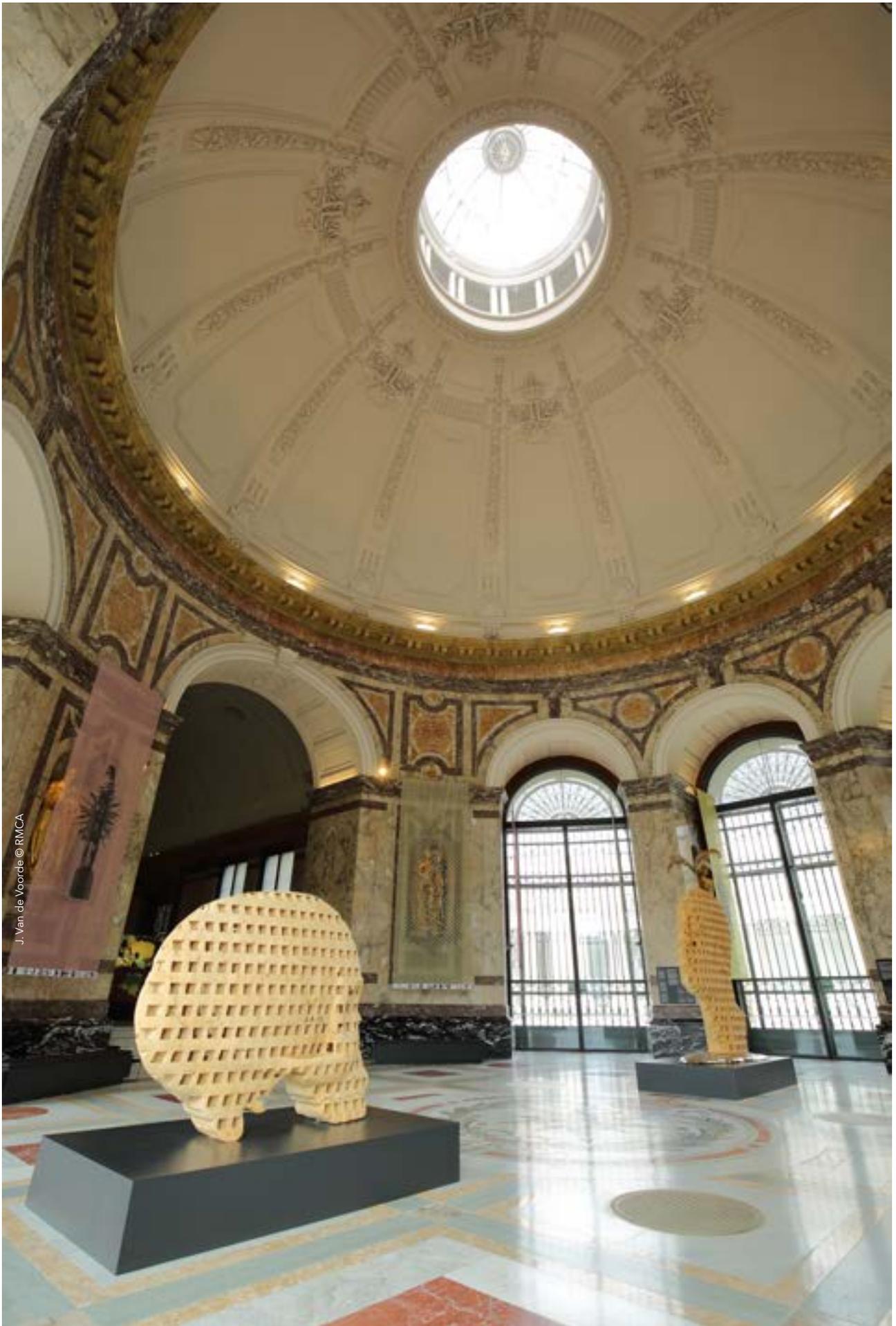
The Staff Consultative Committee is an advisory body that monitors working conditions and well-being in the workplace. Its members are representatives of personnel and labour unions.

#### Management representatives:

- Karel Velle, Director General a.i., RMCA, Chair (until 30/04/2023)
- Bart Ouvry, Director General, RMCA (from 01/05/2023)
- François Kervyn de Meerendré, Head of Service and Head of Department a.i.
- Marc De Meyer, Head of Service and Head of Department a.i.
- Isabelle Gérard, Head of Service
- Tine Geunis, Head of Service
- Mario Thoilants, Prevention advisor
- Johan Van Impe, Prevention advisor RBINS/RMCA
- Valérie Herzet, collaborator HR Service
- Didier Van Den Spiegel, Head of Service (until 31/10/2023) and Head of Department a.i. (from 01/11/2023)

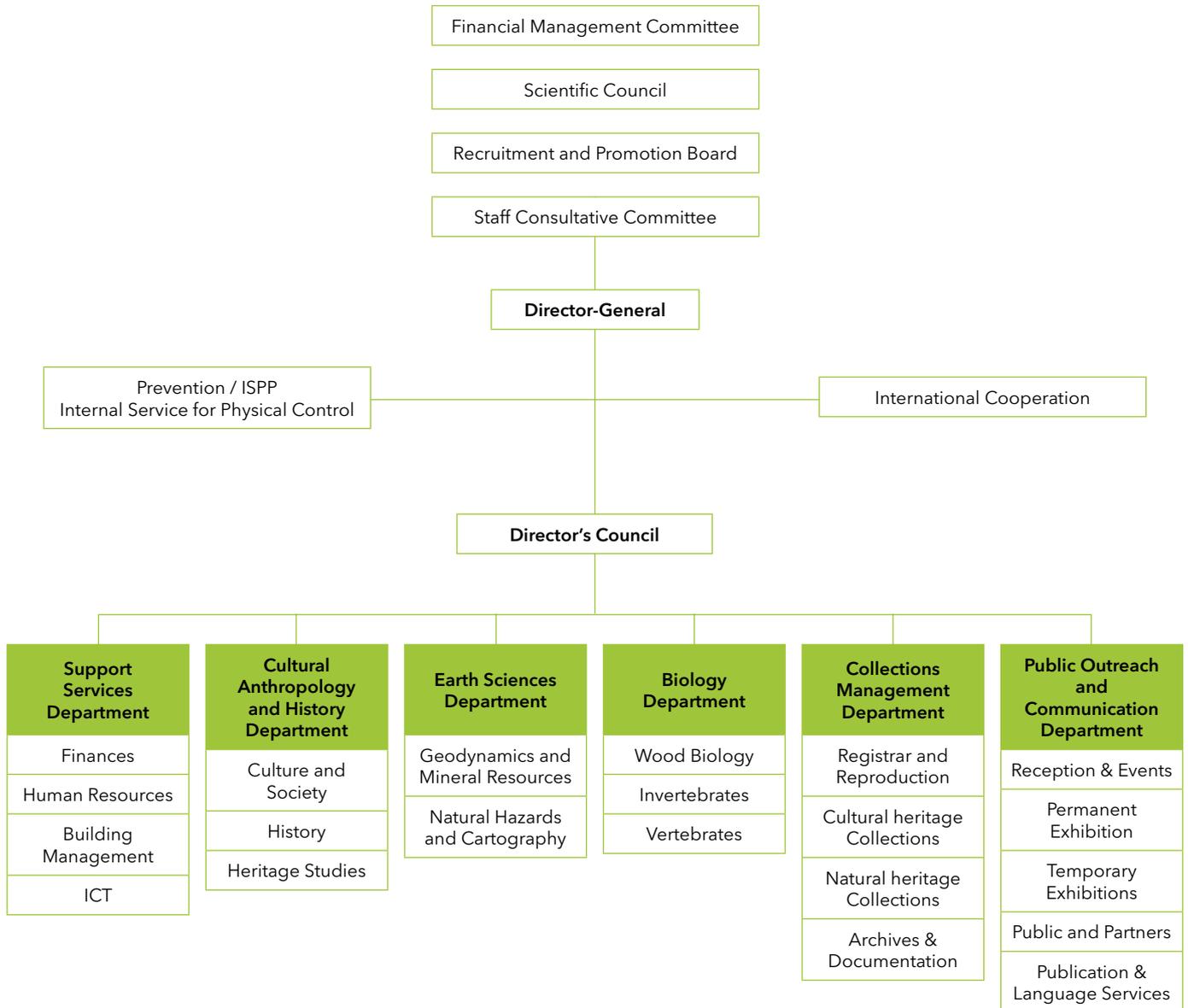
#### Union representatives:

- Valérie Demeulemeester (ACOD/CGSP)
- Muriel Van Nuffel, Collaborator Development Cooperation (ACOD/CGSP)
- Kai Saillart (ACV/CSC)
- Patricia Van Schuylenbergh (ACV/CSC)
- Jean-Christophe Vancoppenolle (ACV/CSC)
- Jimmy Verlez (VSOA/SLFP)
- Dr. Sylvie Vandeputte, Empreva occupational physician
- Dr. Christine Vets, Empreva occupational physician



J. Van de Voorde © RMCA

## Organization Chart\*



\* from April 2024

## COLOPHON

Published under the supervision of the Publications service

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Layout: Friederike Kratky (RMCA)

Cover: from left to right: Leyla Cabaux (artist), Marie-Reine Iyumva (AfricaMuseum), Salomé Ysebaert (AfricaMuseum) and Amina Odofin (Ghent University) at the inauguration of *Let's talk about racism!*, a new space dedicated to racism in Belgium.

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