The Burke Museum cares for and shares natural and cultural collections so that all people can learn, be inspired, generate knowledge, feel joy, and heal.

About the Museum

Founded in 1885 and declared the Washington State Museum in 1899, the Burke is the premiere museum of natural history and culture in the Pacific Northwest. It serves the campus and the community with scientific and cultural exhibits, educational programs for all ages, nationally ranked collections, and research. The Burke is part of the University of Washington's College of Arts and Sciences and is supported by the Burke Museum Association, a non-profit organization.

Collections and Research

Totaling more than 16 million objects, the Burke collections are actively used by students, scientists, scholars, public agencies, tribal and community members, and museums throughout Washington State and around the world. In each of its areas of study, the Burke holds the most extensive research collection of its kind in the Northwest, and some special collections rank among the best in the nation: Northwest Coast and Alaskan Native art, Northwest botanical specimens, fish, birds, and frozen tissues for genetics research.

Faculty curators, jointly appointed by the Burke and the UW, oversee care and development of the collections and conduct research on topics such as the evolution of plants, animals, ecosystems, climates, and Native American cultures and art.

Education and Public Programs

Burke educational programs serve and inspire learners of all ages. Subjects range across the museum’s diverse disciplines and include archaeology, fossils, biodiversity, rocks and minerals, Native cultures of Washington State and the Pacific region, and environments of the Northwest.

Pre-K–20 Schools: On-site and outreach programs for preschoolers and K-20 students deliver over 105,000 student experiences a year. They include guided, self-guided, and hands-on discovery tours; summer programs; teacher workshops; classroom curricula; and “BurkeMobile” and “Burke Boxes,” which send Burke collections and educators into classrooms across the state.

Lifelong learners: The museum also offers an active calendar of events and activities geared to family audiences and lifelong learners. They range from popular family science days and cultural festivals to lectures, films, workshops, and special member events.

www.burkemuseum.org
New Burke Museum

The Burke Museum is temporarily closed to the public as we finish moving collections and installing new exhibits in the new building (opening fall 2019).

The New Burke will be a flagship natural history and culture museum that inspires wonder and pride about the Northwest and our place in the world. Designed by Tom Kundig of Olson Kundig Architects, the new, 113,000 sq. ft. building will be 66 percent larger than the old building. Exhibits and learning areas will be integrated with working spaces throughout the museum, inviting everyone to uncover the depth and breadth of the museum’s collections and experience the thrill of daily discoveries generated at the Burke. State-of-the-art labs will serve more students, researchers, and artists. Larger collections storage spaces and climate control will ensure the Burke can properly care for the objects that make up our shared heritage for generations to come.

Outreach

Service to the University: Located on the UW campus throughout its history, the Burke Museum supports the University’s diverse missions of research, education, and community service. UW faculty in many departments make use of the collections for teaching and research; UW undergraduate and graduate students benefit from classes held at the museum and research opportunities in its collections; and Burke exhibits and programs introduce public audiences to UW research. The museum welcomes UW students, faculty, and staff with free admission, discounted memberships, and a variety of special programs.

Service to the State: The Burke Museum serves schools and communities around Washington through educational outreach programs, including classroom visits, online curricula, and study boxes designed to help meet Washington State learning requirements. The Burke cares for state collections of natural and cultural heritage, as well as numerous collections held in trust for state, local, federal, and tribal agencies. Related research projects, such as surveys of native and invasive plants, expand the collections and support the work of state agencies.