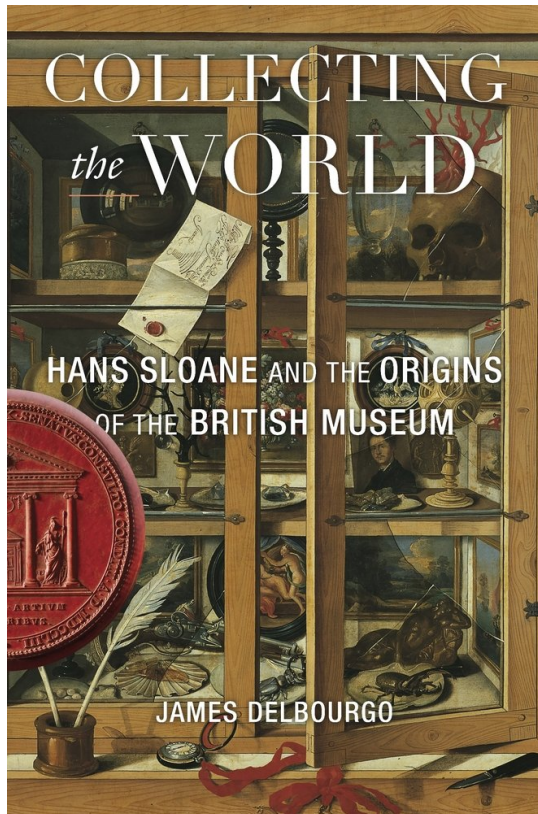


# Collecting the World: Hans Sloane and the Origins of the British Museum

Lecture by James Delbourgo (Rutgers University)

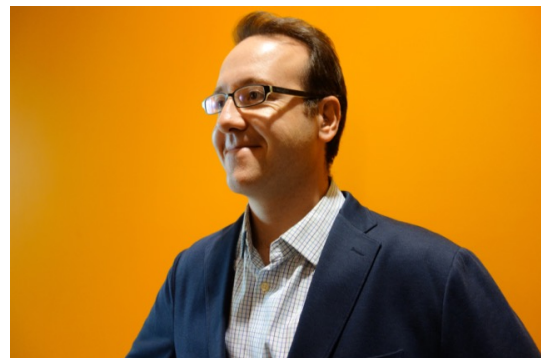
November 15, 2017, 4:00 PM,

UCSB Library, Instruction & Training, 1312, 1st Floor Mountain Side



*In 1759 London's British Museum opened its doors for the first time – the first free national public museum in the world. But how did it come into being? This talk recounts the overlooked yet colorful life of the museum's founder: Sir Hans Sloane. Born in 1660, Sloane amassed a fortune as a London society physician, became president of the Royal Society and Royal College of Physicians, and assembled an encyclopedic collection of specimens and objects – the most famous cabinet of curiosities of its time – which became the foundation of the British Museum. Slavery and empire played crucial roles in his career. Sloane worked in Jamaica as a plantation doctor and made collections throughout the island with help from planters and slaves. On his return to London, he established a network of agents to supply him with objects of all kinds from Asia, the Americas and beyond: plants and animals, books and manuscripts, a shoe made of human skin, the head of an Arctic walrus, slaves' banjos, magical amulets, Buddhist shrines, copies of the Qur'an and more. The little-known life of one of the Enlightenment's most controversial luminaries provides a new story about the beginnings of public museums through their origins in encyclopedic universalism, imperialism and slavery.*

The lecture is based on Delbourgo's new biography of Sloane entitled *Collecting the World*, published by Penguin in the UK and the Belknap Press in the US, which has been named Book of the Week in *The Guardian*, *The Times* (London), the *Daily Mail* and *The Week* (UK).



The event is co-sponsored by the History Department and the UCSB Library



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