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Accomplished Museum Administrator Selected to Lead Bishop Museum

Prominent Natural Scientist Kristofer Helgen to replace outgoing CEO Dee Jay Mailer

Honolulu, Hawai‘i — A distinguished scientist with more than two decades of experience in museum administration will lead Hawai‘i’s Bishop Museum through the next phase of its ambitious strategic plan, the Museum’s Board announced today. Kristofer Helgen will assume his post on August 1, replacing Dee Jay Mailer, who is completing her three-year leadership commitment.

Helgen currently serves as chief scientist and director of the Australian Museum Research Institute (AMRI) at the Australian Museum in Sydney, where he oversees 120 research and collections staff. Born and raised in Minnesota, Helgen’s scientific career has been centered in the Pacific region and focused on biodiversity, environmental impact and conservation. Helgen is also affiliated with universities and museums around the world. Helgen was selected after a five-month-long, international search, which drew more than 50 applications.

“We were delighted to receive a huge response to our search from within and beyond Hawai‘i,” said Patrick Kirch, museum board member and chair of the selection committee. “Kris stood out in many ways, but especially for his vision regarding the importance of museums in our contemporary world. His strong experience in museum administration combined with outstanding scholarship and research in the natural sciences in and around the Pacific makes him the right choice to lead our museum into the future.”

Helgen has been familiar with Bishop Museum since 2002, when he studied the museum’s mammal collections while doing research as a student at Harvard University. He became a Research Associate at the Museum in 2007, and over nearly two decades has helped to reidentify many of the museum’s mammal specimens. Before joining the staff of the Australian Museum, Helgen worked for a decade at the Smithsonian Institution, where he was chief curator of mammals.

“Bishop Museum is known globally for its vast collection and its expertise in cultural and scientific research, and I am thrilled to be joining the team,” said Helgen. “The Museum is at the forefront of cultural and scientific knowledge and discovery regarding Hawai‘i and the broader Pacific. I look forward to learning from the staff, to sharing what I have learned in turn, and to working together to establish long-term growth and stability.”

Bishop Museum board chairwoman Ann Botticelli thanked Mailer for her strong leadership since 2023.

“Dee Jay came out of retirement to lead the Museum after a period of turmoil, and the impact of her steady and sure management cannot be understated,” said Botticelli. “She and the entire staff have established the relevance

of the Museum's collections and work in a rapidly changing world. As we welcome Kris and all he brings to our future, we extend our unending gratitude to Dee Jay for helping to create a solid foundation."

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About Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the State of Hawai'i Museum of Natural and Cultural History:

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum's mission is to inspire our community and visitors through the exploration, celebration, and perpetuation of the extraordinary history, culture, and environment of Hawai'i and the Pacific. The Museum was founded in 1889 by Charles Reed Bishop in memory of his wife Bernice Pauahi Bishop, a royal descendant of King Kamehameha I. Today, the Museum thrives as an educational center for the community and is widely regarded as the world's premier institution for Hawaiian and Pacific content.

Bishop Museum's vast collections of more than 25 million objects and specimens represent nine disciplines and include more than 22 million biological specimens, over 2 million cultural objects, 115,000 historical publications, and 1 million photographs, films, works of art, audio recordings, and manuscripts. These collections tell the stories of the cultures and biodiversity of Hawai'i and the Pacific as well as the proud legacy of scholarly research spanning 130 years.

Bishop Museum proudly serves more than 200,000 visitors each year, including 20,000 children on school visits.

To learn more about the Museum's research, collections, exhibits, and programs, visit [BishopMuseum.org](https://www.bishopmuseum.org), follow @BishopMuseum on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), become a fan of Bishop Museum on [Facebook](#), visit Bishop Museum's [YouTube](#) channel, or call (808) 847-3511. Bishop Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Bishop Museum is proud to be an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer, and welcomes applicants from the military, veterans, and those with disabilities. Learn about careers at Bishop Museum at [BishopMuseum.org/Careers](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/Careers) and on its [LinkedIn](#) page.

[Bishop Museum Press](#) is Hawai'i's oldest book publisher and one of the first scholarly publishers in the Western Hemisphere, and has published over 1,200 titles and distributed over 1 million books in 72 countries worldwide.

Past news releases can be viewed and downloaded at [BishopMuseum.org/NewsRoom](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/NewsRoom).