What questions do we ask in exploring the human past and its contemporary significance? And how do we gather and understand various kinds of information to answer these questions? In this exhibition, we invite you to peek into the nuts and bolts of the many disciplinary approaches and methodological paths we take in studying and interpreting the ancient world. For instance, have you ever thought about how to photograph a kilometer-long expanse of an excavated town site or asked why it’s important to be able to see the site in this broad way? Have you wondered how the physical characteristics of ancient texts as well as their contents can help us to figure out their original context? What do we do if important artifacts are in a poor state of preservation? Or have you considered exactly how we determine what people ate more than 4,000 years ago and where that information fits into discussions of society, economy, and ethnicity?

Not all of the work leading to answers for these questions is done in the field or with a shovel. The 15 Kelsey Museum-affiliated research projects highlighted in this gallery vividly illustrate that the term researcher should be defined in the broadest sense possible: fieldwork we considered in archives, in museums, in libraries, and at archaeological sites worldwide. And the innovative questions guiding these investigations draw their shape from the wide range of disciplinary perspectives represented here: anthropology, art history, classics, science, conservation, history, papyrology, cuneiform, and so on.

Join us in the process and pleasure of discovery.

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Robert L. and Mary G. Butler and their many years of discovery.
DISCOVERY!
EXCAVATING THE ANCIENT WORLD

What questions do we ask in exploring the human past and its contemporary significance? And how do we gather and understand various kinds of information to answer these questions? In this exhibition, we invite you to peek into the nuts and bolts of the many disciplinary approaches and methodological paths we take in studying and interpreting the ancient world. For instance, have you ever thought about how to photograph the kilometer-long expanse of an excavated town site or asked why it’s important to be able to see the site in this broad way? Have you wondered how the physical characteristics of ancient texts as well as their contents can help us to figure out their original context? What do we do if important artifacts are in a poor state of preservation? Or have you considered exactly how we determine what people ate more than 4,000 years ago and where that information fits into discussions of society, economy, and ethnicity?

Not all of the work leading to answers for these questions is done in the field or with a trowel. The 17 Kelsey Museum–affiliated research projects highlighted in this gallery richly illustrate that the term excavation should be defined in the broadest sense possible: fieldwork we undertake in archives, in museums, in libraries, and at archaeological sites worldwide. And the innovative questions guiding these investigations draw their shape from the wide range of disciplinary perspectives represented here: anthropology, art history, zoology, information science, conservation, history, papyrology, cuneiform studies, fine arts, classical studies, biology, and sensory archaeology.

Join us in the process and pleasure of discovery.

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Edwin E. and Mary U. Meader and their own voyages of discovery.
TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Archaeologists in the field use tools ranging from old fashioned pencils and notebooks to digging tools like trowels. Measurements of ancient sites, architecture, or objects can be taken by rulers, plumb bobs, and tape measures, and also increasingly using GPS-enabled devices like this field computer. We also need protection from the elements, including wind and dust, sun, and sharp rocks.
Where did people live, and how do we reconstruct the landscapes they inhabited? Archaeological sites amount to more than a simple, one-to-one reflection of the activities that produced them. Most often, researchers confront only fragments of the entire picture of a house, or town, or region. Some settlements are buried below meters of sediment, others are still visible above the surface and often dominate even modern landscapes; some are tightly clustered, others widely dispersed; some preserve abundant elements of material culture, while others preserve only very ephemeral traces, often invisible to the naked eye. Scholars must therefore devise different strategies to address research questions on the basis of different types of data.

Art historians and archaeologists affiliated with the Kelsey Museum deal with settlement remains ranging from villages of small huts to opulent villas, urban neighborhoods, and entire royal cities. The study of these contexts requires sophisticated mapping techniques, whether of standing remains or of distinctive magnetic or chemical patterns created by subsurface features. The projects featured in this section of the exhibit demonstrate a number of ways the resulting data from mapping projects can be used: to guide further research (including excavation), to reconstruct the spatial, material, and experiential patterns of habitation, and to relate these patterns to specific social and cultural behaviors.
During the last centuries of the Roman Republic, country villas often served as quiet retreats where senatorial elite left behind the pressures of city life to pursue leisure activities and work the land. With Rome’s expansion, military victories yielded enormous wealth and power. Many elite villas became luxurious stages for social and political competition. From the mid-1st century BC to Vesuvius’s eruption in AD 79, large reception halls with impressive wall paintings and colonnaded walkways framing gardens ornamented with sculptures in marble and bronze became the norm along the Bay of Naples. Yet the ideal of country life remained symbolically important to aristocratic Romans, whose ancestral wealth lay in productive land. Even lavishly ornamented estates could have vineyards and olive groves that yielded a good income.

My research focuses on the role of artworks in such villas. Kelsey Museum visitors can see a large replica of the famous frescoes from the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii. “Villa A” at Oplontis near Pompeii likewise preserves important murals. Since 2012, I have worked at “Villa A” with a team from the University of Texas led by John R. Clarke. While doing research for a book and preparing an exhibition for the Kelsey, I am also helping to reconstruct wall paintings from Room 15, one of the villa’s most spectacular reception spaces. The owner would have entertained important guests in this room, among them perhaps the infamous emperor Nero, whose in-laws (the family of his second wife, Poppaea) have been tentatively associated with this villa.

Elaine Gazda

Plan of the excavated parts of “Villa A” showing numbered rooms. Room 15 is circled (courtesy the Oplontis Project).
1. Fragment of a Border with Vegetal and Architectural Elements
White, red, and yellow pigments on a plaster and mortar ground
Puteoli (Pozzuoli), Italy. Giuseppe De Criscio collection 1923. KM 93586

Troy Samuels noted that the vegetal and architectural forms on this fragment resemble those on decorative borders found on a ceiling of one of Nero’s palaces in Rome, the so-called Domus Transitoria. He suggested that the Kelsey fragment is from the upper zone of a wall, similar to the one shown in the illustration.

2. Fragment of a Decorative Border
Blue, red, and white pigment on plaster and mortar ground
Pompeii, Italy. F. W. Kelsey gift 1893. KM 309

For many years, Egyptian blue was considered a rare and expensive pigment, but recent research indicates that it was, instead, very common. Supporting this newer view, Gregory Tucker noticed that on this fragment blue was used as the background color, with the red and white pigments painted on top.
3. Fragment of a Decorative Border with Framed Rosettes
Red, green, gold, and white pigment on plaster and mortar ground
Probably from Pompeii, Italy. F. W. Kelsey gift 1924. KM 1988

Alison Rittershaus proposed that this fragment differs enough in the width of the bands and the execution of the floral motifs from two similar fragments in the Kelsey’s collection to suggest that, while all three may have come from the same room or even the same wall, they would have been from different parts of the overall composition.

4. Fragment of Abstract Lotus and Geometric Border
Red pigment (probably cinnabar) with purple, green, gold, and white pigment on a plaster and mortar ground
Provenance unknown. Mrs. David Dennison gift 1977. KM 1977.3.11

Prized for its brilliant hue and rarity, cinnabar red was used for murals only in the most expensive villas or townhouses. Elements of the design on this fragment suggest that it belonged to a vertical border framing a large section of a wall that had a figural composition at its center, as Nicholas Streicher proposed in his reconstruction.
Items from a Roman Villa in Boscoreale
Bronze, iron, wood and unidentified debris
Roman Period
Boscoreale near Pompeii, Italy. Michigan State Millers’ Association gift 1923

All of the pieces shown here come from one of the villas at the site of Boscoreale near Pompeii. Some of them are easily recognizable. Others are not.

Can you identify the mystery pieces?

Look for clues among exhibit cases in the other gallery spaces on this floor of the museum. Then write your answers on a card, and drop it in the ballot box on the table. Be sure to include the item number on your card.

Thank you for helping the Kelsey Museum discover more about its collection!
Much research has been devoted to the public buildings of Classical Athens—on the Akropolis and around the ancient market square, for example. But where did the people who built them live? And what can we learn about their lives by looking at the city’s residential quarters?

My project aims to address these questions by exploring an area southwest of the Akropolis that in Classical times was part of the residential districts of Koile and Melite. Extensive excavation during the mid-19th century by French archaeologist Émile Burnouf revealed at least 600 rooms of houses. His publications note that steep terrain forced the main streets for cart traffic to follow the valley bottoms or climb slowly up the hillsides. Drains running alongside carried away excess rainwater. Minor roads were little more than flights of steps giving access to houses carved into the slopes. In some neighborhoods houses were aligned in neat rows, while in others they seemed scattered on different orientations.

This ongoing project moves beyond such general impressions, looking at Burnouf’s unpublished notes, along with 19th-century maps of visible ancient remains by German scholars (Ernst Curtius, Johannes Kaupert, and Walter Judeich) and recent plans of the ancient streets. Together, these offer a more detailed picture that sheds light on the lives of the ordinary residents of these neighborhoods. The widest thoroughfares divided houses into separate clusters within which residents—especially women, whose social contact was restricted—could have gone about their daily business with little interruption from outsiders.

Lisa Nevett
1. Attic Red-figure Pyxis with Lid
Clay, paint
5th–4th century BC
Greece. Mrs. David Dennison gift 1977. KM 1977.3.2a,b

2. Attic Red-figure Lekythos
Clay
Ca. 430 BC
Greece. Marburg Collection 1923. KM 2603

This volume of the French journal *Revue générale de l'architecture et des travaux publics* (1878) contains Émile Burnouf’s most detailed surviving account of his work in the Koile valley. The plan shows the contours of the landscape, peppered with rock-cut foundations from ancient houses. The Kelsey’s two vases show the kinds of activities that might have been carried out in an ancient Athenian house.

The *lekythos* (oil bottle) shows a woman spinning. She stands by a *kalathos* (wool basket) holding a distaff in her left hand and a spindle in her right.

The *pyxis* (cosmetic container) shows a woman attended by a maid and (far right) a winged cupid, who bring caskets to her. The inclusion of the cupid is a reminder that these images are viewed through the eyes of the painter and should not be regarded as photographic records of Athenian households.

3. Journal Volume, *Revue générale de l'architecture et des travaux publics*
Published 1878
Property of University of Michigan Library
How do archaeologists find sites and decide which ones are worth excavating? Challenges in locating sites can vary, depending on the materials used to build houses and larger structures, and on local environmental conditions that affect how these remains are preserved, covered up, or destroyed.

Nubia, located in the Nile Valley stretching from southern Egypt to northern Sudan, was home to cultures that interacted with both ancient Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa. In the past, archaeologists working on ancient Nubia tended to focus on burials and monumental stone-built temples, largely because these sites provided museum-quality objects. Settlement sites—the places people built their houses, ate their meals, and lived with their families—can be very difficult to find.

A new Kelsey Museum project aims to recover the settlement at El Kurru, a lost royal city of Nubia. El Kurru’s cemetery, excavated by George Reisner in 1919, proved to contain pyramid burials of the Nubian dynasty that conquered Egypt in the years after 750 BC. Reisner noted extensive settlement remains in the area and sketched a few buildings in his notebook. These remains are completely invisible on the ground today, perhaps covered by silt deposits from high floods, obscured by sand, or concealed by modern construction. Locating the city could give new insight into the social, political, and economic underpinnings of the Nubian dynasty that conquered Egypt. Using tools such as infrared satellite and magnetometry, in 2013 our project set out to find the lost city of El Kurru.

*Geoff Emberling*
Colchis in modern Georgia was famously the “farthest shore” in Greek mythology, the land of the Golden Fleece and home of Medea. In 2009, a team of U-M archaeologists began a new field project in the region of Vani in Colchis, an archaeological site near the river Phasis (after which the pheasant is named).

Vani was the center of a local chiefdom, occupied throughout the 1st millennium BC. It encompassed an area of about 15 acres, surrounded by imposing stone fortifications. The goal of our project was to improve our understanding of Vani’s regional context by examining the surrounding territory. Were there other settlements nearby, and if so, what kinds of administrative, commercial, or religious connections did they have with Vani? In 2009–2010 we catalogued 95 archaeological points of interest, ranging from isolated graves to substantial villages.

One of the most interesting sites lies in the village of Shuamta, 5 km west of Vani, where villagers had reported finding pottery and other artifacts in their fields. After examining and mapping the site, we carried out geophysical surveys of select areas using a “flux gradiometer,” which measures disturbances in the earth’s magnetic field caused by buried archaeological features. We then followed up with a series of test trenches, which revealed pits dug to quarry earth for use in wattle and daub construction.

Continued research of this kind around Vani and throughout Georgia will shed new light on the past of this fascinating and beautiful frontier land.

Christopher Ratté
What did people choose to write down? Those of us who study literate societies of the past benefit not only from material evidence but also from written records. These might be inscribed in temples and tombs, painted on walls, or literally set in stone. They could be letters, accounts, funerary books, labels, and legal, political, philosophical, biographical, fictional, or teaching texts, written on a variety of media. Ancient documents offer details we cannot necessarily deduce from material remains and sometimes give us a real sense of the personalities who created them.

Earlier researchers often focused exclusively on either textual or material evidence, writing historical narratives from texts and inferring lifeways and visual culture from archaeology. But this practice ignored the interdependence of text and context, which supply different data streams that can fill each other’s silences. Many scholars today take a holistic approach to the full range of evidence available.

Textual evidence carries specific issues of preservation and bias. Not everyone could read or write in ancient societies; most texts reflect the viewpoint of more elite, literate individuals. Also, in some regions the business of life tended to be written on perishable materials such as papyrus, while elsewhere more durable media such as clay tablets were used. Finally, as early archaeologists discovered them, texts were often divorced from their contexts either because their beautiful, exotic scripts were thought worthy of museum display or because only their contents were considered important. The projects in this section show the rewards of translating context together with text.
An object containing text passes through many hands, from its creator and reader in antiquity, to archaeologists, through conservation, to papyrology, and on to ancient history. The papyrus featured in the video here (video stand) shows one of the technical problems of reading texts—restoration often must occur before a text is legible. In this case the object was literally unraveled by a conservator before a papyrologist could unravel the meaning of the text.

Once a text becomes readable, scholarly excitement about the translation and its possible contributions to ancient historical research can overshadow the archaeological information about the text’s context and background. But many scholars today, especially at the University of Michigan, are approaching texts in a more holistic manner, recognizing them as part of the archaeological record, thereby allowing the object and the written word to create lines of evidence for analysis in tandem.

A case study of the text-as-object approach begins with the U-M excavations at Karanis, Egypt (1924–1935). At the time of excavation objects found together were divided for distribution, with papyri going to the University Library and artifacts going to the Kelsey Museum. Only recently have there been efforts to reconnect them in studies and reconstructions. The translation of papyrus P.Mich.inv.5866b reveals that the text is an account recording rather high numbers of drachmas. The archaeological documentation shows that the papyrus was found in granary C123, in room CA (the south entryway of the building). This room yielded a surprising variety of artifacts, including jewelry, beads, a string with amulets, and several domestic implements. Because this room was a highly trafficked entrance to the building, it is unlikely that all these objects, including the papyrus, were left there by the original occupants of the granary. Perhaps they were deposited after the building was abandoned.

Visit the U-M Papyrology Collection at http://www.lib.umich.edu/papyrology-collection

Fig. 4. Plan of granary C123, with findspot for papyrus P.Mich.inv.5866b circled (Kelsey Museum Archives M8.694).
Fragment of Account
Papyrus, ink
Roman Period (3rd century AD)
P.Mich inv. 5866b. Courtesy of the University of Michigan Library Papyrus Collection
TEXT AND CONTEXT IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

Where does learning end and research begin? The Kelsey’s collection includes objects from Mesopotamia inscribed with texts in Sumerian, Babylonian, and Akkadian. These documents form a valuable resource for students learning to read these languages in the cuneiform script.

As they translate these three-dimensional texts, students can also explore the archaeological contexts in which ancient individuals originally deposited them. Through a process that began with translating a text as a training exercise, and then led to detective work inspired by its content, U-M graduate students discovered that a seemingly nondescript limestone slab in the Kelsey’s collection is actually a paving stone from the Temple of Nabû at the site of ancient Nineveh.

The Assyrian king Assurbanipal (668–627 BC) enlarged this temple during his reign, a pious act he reinforced by inscribing architectural materials used in the renovation. The original excavator of the site recovered 80 limestone slabs (ca. 60 x 60 cm each) from a large area of pavement on the southeast side of the temple but estimated they originally totaled 400. The inscribed surfaces of these slabs were set face down, indicating they were intended for the gods’ eyes only.

Several of these slabs are now in museums throughout the world. By comparing the Kelsey object to these other examples, Tayfun Bilgin and Gina Konstantopoulos were able to conclude that it is a material manifestation of an historical act: one of the “massive limestone slabs” from Assurbanipal’s extension of the Temple of Nabû, part of a pavement on which he intended to walk “for a long time.”

Gary Beckman and Tayfun Bilgin

“Proud of having “cut off the head of Teumman the King of Elam,” as described in the Nineveh inscription, Assurbanipal also recorded it elsewhere. Detail from a wall panel depicting the Battle of Til-Tuba, from the Southwest Palace at Nineveh (British Museum 124801).

Tayfun Bilgin’s translation of the Kelsey’s Nineveh slab, following W. Hallo’s 1987 translation of an almost identical text on a slab in the Israel Museum.

Limestone paving slab from the Temple of Nabû at Nineveh (KM 89808).

Gary Beckman (right) and Tayfun Bilgin in Kelsey collections storage.
A number of cuneiform documents in the Kelsey’s collection are transaction records relating to the administrative and economic life of the Ur III state. The most frequently encountered name is that of the king Shulgi, the longest reigning and best-remembered ruler of the Ur III period. The tablet featured here, written in Sumerian, is from the tax collecting redistribution center of Puzrish-Dagan in central Babylonia and is dated to the 9th month of Shulgi’s 43rd year. It records 508 sheep distributed for various purposes, including offerings made on behalf of the king, but also mentions six of his consorts. Near Eastern Studies professor Piotr Michalowski comments that Shulgi’s two main queens, Shulgi-simti and Geme-Ninlila—both mentioned in this account—seem to have been buried together with Shulgi when all three died just over four years later, possibly during a coup.

Tablets such as this lengthy list of sheep donations not only provide the details of economic and ritual life; they also allow us to piece together the roles individuals played in the Ur state.
*A list of offerings to the temple*

"x sheep (for) the kitchen on the 10th day
x+1 sheep on the 12th day
9 sheep on the 21st day
12 sheep on the 22nd day
62 sheep on the 23rd day
14 sheep on the 24th day
24 sheep on the 26th day
22 sheep on the 27th day
32 sheep on the 28th day
11 sheep on the 29th day
11 sheep on the 30th day
(for) the kitchen.
30 sheep for the regular offering of (the goddess) Gula,
30 dead sheep (for?) the account of Ilum-bani,
x+4 sheep on behalf of the king,
x sheep on behalf of Geme-Ninlila,
x sheep (for) Nin-kala,
x sheep, provisions (for) Simat-Ea,
7 sheep, provisions (for) Shulgi-simti,
7 sheep, provisions (for) Ea-nisha
14 sheep, provisions (for) Taddin-Eshtar,
20 sheep (for?) the account of Shelebum,
3 sheep (for?) the account of Ludingira,
166 sheep (for?) the various accounts of Bizeze.
Disbursal of Ur-kununa.
9th month.
The year: ‘The high priestess of (the moon god) Nanna was chosen by means of the omens’ (43rd year of Shulgi).
508 sheep."

—Trans. Piotr Michalowski
These tablets come from the large administrative archive of Shamash-hazir, who was a high official in the southern city of Larsa after its conquest by Hammurapi in 1763 BC. After discovery, the group of tablets was divided; and now, piecing together the full story of the archive involves researchers and publications across many institutions. Written in Old Babylonian, the Kelsey tablets consist mainly of letters written to Shamash-hazir, and one letter from Hammurapi himself, on display in the Kelsey’s permanent Near Eastern gallery downstairs.

The Kelsey letters to Shamash-hazir all discuss the assignment of fields. The land belonged to the state, and it was assigned to people for cultivation in exchange for rent or was given as a reward to high officials. Occasionally these exchanges were heated, as witnessed by the aggravated tone of the tablet whose translation is provided above.

A Letter of Complaint
Trans. Tayfun Bilgin
KM 89476

“Speak to Shamash-hazir, thus says Lu-Ninurta: May Shamash keep you in good health! As for the field of Azi’el, it is a permanent field of his wife’s father. The king told me, ‘I(!) gave (the field to him). Why did you give (it) to another?’ Return the grain and the field to him, and give him the field of the fullers that he inspected for you. When I have written to you concerning my business, do not treat the matter lightly! Send me a reply to my letter.”
Once an archaeological site has been excavated, its potential for informing future research is only as good as the records kept by its excavator. Producing careful drawings, detailed descriptions, and representative photographs, in addition to many other forms of documentation, may seem pedestrian. But documentation is a critical dimension of what we do, both of sites and artifacts and ecofacts (biological remains) as they emerge during survey and excavation, and of objects held in museum collections. Research on objects in museums can also be an “excavation,” as the details of the original context may not be preserved, may be inaccessible, or may never have existed given the dislocation caused by centuries of antiquarian collecting.

This section of the exhibition highlights the use of photography in research on the human past. Taking pictures of sites and objects is not as straightforward as it sounds: deciding what exactly needs to be photographed, and how, involves a complex process of choice and methodological strategy. What happens when an excavation area is too large to be photographed efficiently from the ground? Or when a feature is too detailed for a simple picture to do it justice? Or, finally, when the evidence is so fragmentary that patterns can only be reconstructed by attempting hundreds of combinations between individual pieces? As detailed here, faced with challenges like these, scholars deploy situation-specific methods such as using blimps, adding a third dimension to pictures, or constructing remarkably detailed composite images.
Archaeology only begins in the field. In 1933–1934, University of Chicago investigations of Persepolis, the heartland capital of the vast Persian Empire, yielded an archive of over 20,000 clay tablets bearing cuneiform writing and the impressions of many seals.

Translations of 2,087 of these texts appeared in a landmark publication in 1969. The texts bear dates within the reign of King Darius the Great (522-486 BC) and record disbursements of food commodities to people ranging from royals to camel drivers.

A Michigan project initiated in 1978 has now documented the 1,600 different seals ratifying those 2,087 texts. Most are cylinder seals, rolled out so their designs can vary greatly depending upon many factors. The reconstitution of all these seal images, coordinated with the tablet texts, gives us glimpses of social lives in empire.

Queen Irtashduna [ear-tash-DOOna] was a daughter of the founder of the empire, Cyrus the Great, and the favorite wife of Darius. She created a crazy-quilt of over 50 fragmentary, overlapping impressions of her large and sumptuously carved seal on only 11 tablets. Rich in imagery of fertility, it features the infant Horus perched in a papyrus thicket—referring to an Egyptian myth of dynastic succession. The Greek historian Herodotus suggested that a political marriage may have taken place between an Egyptian princess and Irtashduna’s father, Cyrus. Modern scholars have dismissed this tale. Does Irtashduna’s seal now give it some validation?

Margaret Cool Root

Photographs (three times life-size) of impressions of Irtashduna’s seal on selected surfaces of two tablets

Composite line drawing of Irtashduna’s seal (at actual size and at three times life-size).
We first made a photographic dossier of every sealed surface of every tablet, using three different lighting angles for each shot. Using enlargements at three times life-size, we traced the impression that provided the best overall design template for each individual seal. We then overlaid that preliminary tracing on a photograph of every other impression of the seal to incorporate additional details.

You can replicate our process below, using the seal of Turribadda [tour-ee-BAHda]. He was a supplier of grain, flour, and beer to a lot of people. He applied his seal carefully to 18 tablets. His signature creature has multiple heads emerging from both ends of its body. The design allows it literally to talk to itself when it is rolled so that we see the space where two ends come together. What is your favorite among all the heads on this bizarre creature? Do you notice what it has on its legs?

Turribadda’s choice of this creature to represent his identity reflects his sense of humor. This quality also shows up when he fools around with another person who is applying his seal to the same tablet. Do you see on this photo where the bug-eyed head with the big nose is poised to gobble up a star? This star actually belongs to the seal of another person. The visual play he and Turribadda created was deliberate: two human beings doing business but having a laugh at the same time.

*Margaret Cool Root*
AN ACTUAL CYLINDER SEAL OF LAPIS LAZULI

Drawing at actual size and at three times life-size
Museum-made display impression
Akkadian Period (ca. 2350–2193 BC)
Seleucia, Iraq. University of Michigan excavations. KM 94533

Three humanoid heroes grapple with creatures
   Can you locate all three heroes?
   Do you see the lion?

A star punctuates the complete image cycle.
   Can you find it in two places?
TABLET FACSIMILE IMPRESSED WITH THE KELSEY SEAL

These impressions show how an ancient owner of this seal might have rolled it out on tablets like those from Persepolis.

Thousands of ancient seals are known, and thousands of ancient impressions of seals are known. But only four or five examples have been identified of an actual preserved seal that is also documented through impressions made by the seal’s ancient owner.

If we had to piece together a complete drawing of this cylinder seal with access only to disparate and often fragmentary impressions on tablets like this facsimile, we would proceed using enlarged photographs of each individual impression—just as we did for the Persepolis project. To render this drawing, graphic artist Lorene Sterner used a three-times life-size photograph of the display impression shown next to the actual seal in this case.
TRY MAKING YOUR OWN DRAWING OF TURRIBADDA’S SEAL

STATION 1—BEGIN HERE

Position your sheet of transparent paper on top of this photo so the pre-printed bar lines up with the bar indicated on the photo.

TASKS:
Trace the outline of the multiheaded creature on Turribadda’s seal. (You will notice that the lowered head at the far right is destroyed. You will be able to complete this feature at Station 2.)

Then try to add some interior details to the bug-eyed, big-nosed head appearing at the lower left of this image.

Take your drawing and proceed to your left ←.
STATION 2

Do you see the place at the far right of this photograph where the two ends of the creature look at each other? Position your drawing on top of this photograph so that the lowered neck at the bottom of the right end of the seal design matches up with its occurrence here.

TASKS:
Now you can complete the outline of this head!

Then add the repeat of the bug-eyed, big-nosed head you see to the right. This job gives you the space the seal carver left between one end of the multiheaded creature and the other end.

Proceed again to your left ←.

STATION 3

Position your drawing so it matches up with the partial impression you see here.

TASK:
Try to add new details to the two heads at the right end of the seal design—especially the ram-head.

All this close looking takes practice. Congratulations on your results! 😊
Kedesh of the Upper Galilee is a large tel (22–25 acres) located on the border of modern Israel and Lebanon. Since antiquity the site has been home to a changing tapestry of ethnic groups, including Canaanites, the Israelite tribe of Naphtali, Phoenicians from the nearby city of Tyre, Jews, Greeks, and Romans. The Kedesh excavations focus on the interactions of these groups from about 300 to 64 BC, when Greeks controlled Phoenicia and the Galilee. Our primary goal is to assess how Phoenician material culture continued and changed in the face of interaction with that of Greeks and others. We frame this research in light of the long-running debate about how, and even if, the material record can be validly linked to social identity in ancient times.

Between 1999 and 2012 we uncovered an enormous administrative building (PHAB, about 5,000 m²) that was constructed around 500 BC and occupied until the 1st century BC. In one corner of it an archive room held over 2,000 tiny seal impressions (1–2 cm). These sealings display a complex mix of Greek, Phoenician, and Roman images and ideologies. The contrast between the enormous tel and PHAB and the minuscule seal impressions demanded that we use a wide range of archaeological recording tools to do justice to the finds—everything from magnetometry to blimp photography and artifact scanning. Such disparate specialties entailed extensive collaboration among excavators, photographers, artists, architects, and surveyors.

Sharon Herbert

SITE MAPPING FOR EXCAVATION

1. Air view of Kedesh from the southwest before excavation (Richard Cleeve).
2. Results of magnetometry, used to target excavation areas. Outline of PHAB circled (Lew Somers).
3A. Functional plan of PHAB (architects Sara Rabe and Molly Lindorfer in consultation with Andrea Berlin and Sharon Herbert).
3B. Air view of PHAB looking north (Skyview).
DIVERSE METHODS AT KEDESH

PHOTOGRAPHING LANDSCAPES USING BLIMPS

Skyview blimp arriving from north (Sharon Herbert).
Andrea Berlin orienting Skyview team (Sharon Herbert).
Tethering blimp at dawn (Sharon Herbert).

Andrea Berlin and Skyview team coordinating plan, computer, and blimp camera (Sharon Herbert).
Airview of PHAB from north (Skyview).
Airview of PHAB from the east, with students standing in for Persian columns (Skyview).

SEALINGS: DOCUMENTING MINISCULE OBJECTS

Finding the tiny mud sealing requires screening the dirt with a sieve (Andrea Berlin).
Conservator Brook Bowman examines tiny Kedesh bullae (Sharon Herbert).
Apollo sealing enlarged (Clare Amit).

Drawing of Apollo sealing. Sealings are drawn by artifact artists in order to bring out details that are not clear in photographs (Lorene Sterner).
Seventy years before the Kedesh team discovered an administrative archive, another Michigan project uncovered two roughly contemporary private archives in houses at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. The finds from these two sites—including over 30,000 found by Italian excavators in the 1960s and ’70s—now constitute more than one-third of all known Hellenistic sealings from excavated contexts. The subjects depicted on the Seleucia sealings are predominantly Greek gods. Apollo was the most popular god and was closely associated with the Seleucid rulers. Private owners of seals might choose lesser deities such as a winged Eros riding a dolphin or heroes like Herakles.

1–2. Bulla with Seal Impressions Representing Herakles and Reconstruction Showing Use of Sealings to Secure Papyrus Document

Bitumen
294–131 BC

3–4. Seal Impression Showing Apollo and Bulla with Seal Impression Showing Winged Eros Riding a Dolphin

Clay
294–141 BC
Seleucus I, a Macedonian army officer who rose to kingship following the death of Alexander the Great, founded Seleucia as the eastern capital of his empire. Macedonian identity was signified on seals by attire such as the headgear (*petasos*) featured in the king’s seal (above right). The anchor was also a royal symbol, possibly intended as a reminder of the harbors Seleucus built or as a reference to his maritime victories. Its use on seals signified the activities and officials of the royal treasury. Sometimes we can gain an especially keen sense of ancient individuals in action from such artifacts. The fingerprints preserved on the sealing to the right are the byproduct of an ancient official holding the raw material as he made an impression with his seal.

5–6. Seal Impressions Showing Hermes or King, and Anchors
Clay
294–141 BC

7. Seal Impression, Head of King
Bitumen
294–141 BC
In archaeology 3D is everywhere, from detailed models of very small objects based on photographs to terrain models of entire regions created using airborne laser scanning. But how are these hyper-realistic 3D models changing the way we do archaeology? How can they help us understand the remains of buildings, broken pots, garbage dumps, or layers of soil in new ways?

A University of Michigan excavation 11 miles east of Rome is uncovering remains of the once flourishing city of Gabii. The team uses image-based modeling techniques to build realistic 3D models of key features and contexts, from burials to beaten earth floors. Image-based modeling uses the information contained in a collection of overlapping photographs of a scene to create a detailed and accurate 3D model.

Image-based modeling allows us to record quickly and accurately, leaving us enough time to uncover large swathes of the urban core at Gabii, which in turn permits us to draw a holistic and nuanced picture of the town’s past.

The models we make of individual features are assembled into more complicated 3D scenes, grouping together features we think might have functioned together or juxtaposing features built using similar construction techniques. We share these models on site sitting around a table or over the Web post-season, and based on them we discuss, debate, and construct new hypotheses—using the 3D models to develop the future of archaeology as we explore Gabii’s past.

Nicola Terrenato and Rachel Opitz
What happens to objects after they are excavated? Because the archaeological record is a nonrenewable resource, responsible excavation and conservation is an important ethical responsibility for all archaeological projects. Conservation is the profession responsible for the preservation of cultural resources like excavated objects, and the people who do this work are called conservators. Conservators do a variety of things to better understand and safeguard archaeological artifacts and sites.

Activities that conservators undertake on archaeological sites include excavation of fragile artifacts, assessment, documentation, treatment, storage of archaeological finds, and research. Kelsey Museum conservators work in the field on excavations alongside archaeologists, historians, and scientists. Every archaeological site is unique, and individual excavations explore different questions. Each excavation also has distinct conservation needs.

Conservation in a museum setting is very different from conservation for an active archaeological project, but the overall goal is the same—long-term preservation of the archaeological record. Museums are repositories for artifacts that have been deliberately collected in an effort to fulfill the institution’s mission. Conserving working with museum collections treat every object as if it were priceless and irreplaceable because regardless of an item’s financial value, it holds a place in the collection and has a story to tell.
Ancient Egyptians of the later third millennium BC crafted notions of self in the world’s earliest narrative biographies, using textual, visual, material, and spatial media. How can we piece together these complex identities, when preservation factors and excavation histories have often resulted in the deterioration and dispersal of their material manifestations? U-M teams excavated two different statue deposits (serdab) in the late Old Kingdom cemetery at Abydos, the larger belonging to the 6th dynasty Governor of Upper Egypt, Weni the Elder. That serdab had first been repurposed in antiquity and then destroyed further during the 19th century, so it contained only tantalizing vestiges of Weni’s three-dimensional self-presentation.

We also discovered a far smaller serdab of an unknown 5th dynasty individual, who built his tomb in a spatially lower part of the cemetery. Although this deposit was intact, the statues were jumbled and severely deteriorated due to termites and fungi. They were held together only by paint and plaster.

*Janet Richards, Suzanne Davis, and Claudia Chemello*
IDENTITIES AND PRESERVATION AT ABYDOS

Conserving these statues was critical because they could help us to understand the identity of the people in this lower slope cemetery. Were they less wealthy regional elites, in comparison to the central government officials whose tombs lay at the top of the hill?

In 2013, Suzanne Davis and Claudia Chemello convened an international team of conservators and scientists to study the problem of wood preservation at the site. They tested excavation and treatment strategies, as well as looked at fungal spores, pigments, binders, and other factors affecting the objects. This continuing research has already helped us to understand who the occupants of the lower cemetery were. After painstaking conservation intervention, the statue of the tomb owner as a child was revealed to be a wooden artifact of such high quality that it can only have been the product of a royal workshop. So while these lower slope tombs were smaller and might seem less favorably situated, their owners wielded substantial means to signify their elite identities.

_Suzanne Davis, Claudia Chemello, and Janet Richards_

2013 wood research team in lab and field. From top, Ahmed Abdel-Azeem and Robert Blanchette (microbiologists); Gregory Smith (chemist); Claudia Chemello, Pamela Hatchfield, Suzanne Davis, and Harriet Beaubien (conservators).

Deteriorated wooden statue from the 2009 serdab deposit, during removal and before treatment (coated in cyclododecane for preservation in storage).

Left: Arm and portion of the statue's face during treatment. Right: Statue of tomb owner as a child, during treatment. The gesture of forefinger to lips is characteristic in ancient Egyptian depictions of children.

Can you see that his eyes have been inlaid with metal and semiprecious stones?
Sometimes we make discoveries about artifacts as we are preparing them for display. Because of her striding posture, this wooden statue of a female servant was probably originally part of a model procession of offering bearers (such as the example from the tomb of Djehutynakht at Bersheh, shown right). One of her feet entered the Kelsey under a different accession number and for years was assumed to be part of a group of stray limbs acquired by the museum in a group purchase. During installation Suzanne Davis and Elizabeth Hart realized the foot actually belonged with the statue.

1. **Statue of a Female Servant**  
   Wood  
   First Intermediate Period–early Middle Kingdom  
   Egypt. Department of Antiquities 1935. KM 88735

2. **Foot Fragment from a Tomb Figure**  
   Wood  
   First Intermediate Period–early Middle Kingdom  
   Egypt. David Askren purchase 1934–1935. KM 88579

3. **Arms from Wooden Statues**  
   Wood  
   Late Old Kingdom–Middle Kingdom  
   Egypt. Department of Antiquities 1935. KM 88754–KM 88758
Ancient Egyptians of the late Old Kingdom–Middle Kingdom periods produced wooden models of boats, food and cloth production, metalworking, and other activities representing all the nourishment, adornment, comfort, and entertainment they wished to enjoy in the afterlife. The individual figures from such models have often entered museum collections with no provenience, leading to misidentification. We piece together an understanding of their original context by comparison with excavated examples such as the intact deposit in Djehutynakht’s tomb at el-Bersheh (excavated by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1915).

4. Miniature Paddle, Possibly from a Food or Cloth Production Model  
Wood  
Late Old Kingdom–Middle Kingdom  
Egypt. Department of Antiquities 1935. KM 88756

5. Figures from a Model Granary Scene  
Wood, paint  
First Intermediate Period–early Middle Kingdom  
Egypt. Department of Antiquities 1935. KM 88747–KM 88748  
Saqqara, Egypt. Purchase from Phocion Tano 1952. KM 88804h

6. Vat or Basket from a Model Granary Scene  
Wood, paint  
11th–12th dynasty (2040–1783 BC)  
Saqqara, Egypt. Purchase from Phocion Tano 1952. KM 88804h
Although part of the same purchase probably in the 1930s or 1950s, these two statues almost certainly did not come from the same serdab deposit. Clues leading to this conclusion are different styles and dissimilar levels of preservation (note the greater preservation of paint on the right-hand figure).

What appear to be wedges on the feet of these statues would actually have secured them into wooden or limestone bases, as seen in the *ka* statue of Djehutynakht of el-Bersheh to the right. Tomb owners often included multiple statues of themselves in their serdabs lined up facing eastward to the rising sun—a key symbol of daily rebirth. Should his body be destroyed, the tomb owner’s *ka* could reside in these statues.

7. *Ka*-statues of Tomb Owners
Wood, pigment
Late Old Kingdom/First Intermediate Period
Egypt. Kelsey Museum Collections. KM 88196 and KM 88197
In 1935 the necropolis of Terenouthis was excavated by the University of Michigan. Hundreds of burial mounds were uncovered, many adorned with a limestone stela. A group of nearly 200 of these stelae are preserved at the Kelsey Museum. Carved with a depiction of the deceased, accompanying deities, and inscriptions, the stelae serve as important sources of information to scholars of Graeco-Roman Egypt.

But many of the stelae are in poor condition. Stone delamination, surface powdering, biological staining, and a peeling, darkened coating are the principal forms of deterioration. Chemical spot tests have indicated the presence of soluble salts, and collaborations with the Detroit Institute of Arts conservation science lab have helped confirm these results. Ongoing analysis in collaboration with the James Mycology and Electron Microbeam Analysis Laboratories at the University of Michigan has allowed us to begin to characterize biological staining, extant pigments, and the limestone from which the stelae are carved. This information has helped us create a protocol for treatment.

A number of conservation techniques have been tested in developing this protocol. Consolidants have been tested for the treatment of the powdering surfaces. Methods for stabilizing and reducing the coating, as well as the biological stains, have also been incorporated into the treatment. Monitoring relative humidity and temperature levels in storage and display areas has shown that environmental control will be an important factor in preventing further damage to the stelae from salt weathering, biological activity, and coating deterioration.

Caroline Roberts
Funerary Stela
Limestone and paint
Roman Period, late 2nd–early 4th century AD
Termouthis, Egypt. University of Michigan Excavations 1935. KM 21052
Human activity has a huge impact on the environment and vice versa, with implications for resources, economic activity, beliefs, and politics. Until recently, however, environmental data were underexploited in explorations of past sociocultural systems. It was not until the second half of the last century that archaeologists began to collect and analyze environmental data, such as animal bones, seeds, and pollen, systematically. Such data can help us to understand aspects of past sociocultural systems ranging from economy to ritual to identity.

The University of Michigan boasts a long and distinguished tradition of involvement in bio-archaeological investigation. Researchers affiliated with the Kelsey Museum and other units are busy reconstructing patterns of human–environment interaction in many parts of the world. Their work often involves sophisticated recovery and analytical techniques and is founded on interdisciplinary links to fields such as botany, geology, and zoology. In recent years, they have addressed important questions concerning the economies of Rome and nearby centers during the Early Iron Age, the long-term effects of human activity on the distribution of certain animal species throughout the Mediterranean (how did the African chameleon cross the Mediterranean Sea?), and status differentiations among the people involved in building the late Old Kingdom pyramids at Giza, Egypt.
The builders of the pyramid of Menkaure lived in the Workers’ Town at Giza. Investigations there have identified many functional areas within the site, including a workers’ barracks, an administration building with silos, elite housing, bakeries, work areas, and a separate, associated village.

My research at the Workers’ Town focused on meat consumption. I have found a strong correlation between status and diet. An example is from the excavation of Pottery Mound, where 85 percent of the animal bone was from cattle less than one year old. I also examined the proportions of cattle limbs, expecting a ratio of hind to forelimb fragments of about 1:1. The ratio I found was about 36:1. Where were all the forelimb fragments?

Drawings of cattle slaughtered for offerings at Giza and Saqqara show that the forelimb is cut off and carried in as an offering. I concluded that the people of Pottery Mound were consuming veal, a choice type of meat, and, although they did not get the best part (the forelimb), they ate the leftover parts of offering animals. These were clearly elite people.

Based on this study, I predicted that if we found an area of the site occupied by offering priests, it might contain predominantly young cattle forelimbs. In 2011 we excavated a building near the valley temple of Khafre. The ratio of fore to hind limb fragments is 15:1 (30:2). Could this be an area occupied by priests who made offerings for Khafre?

Richard Redding
Ancient Egyptians included butchery scenes in decorative relief in tomb chapels and also represented this important activity in 3D models placed in tomb chambers. The Kelsey Museum’s wooden bull and kneeling butcher date to the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2000–1650 BC), but the bull is trussed up in the same fashion illustrated in Old Kingdom tombs. The kneeling butcher originally held a shallow bowl to collect blood from the bull’s jugular, as seen in the photograph of a fully preserved model of a butcher’s shop in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Although its provenance is unknown, the flint knife on display here is very similar to a well-preserved Old Kingdom butchering knife excavated from the Workers’ Town at Giza (4th dynasty reign of King Menkaure, ca. 2530–2512 BC). As you can see by comparing the object to the photo, the Museum of Anthropology’s knife is broken and is missing the tine that would fit into a wooden handle. Compare this knife to the one shown in the tomb relief on the panel.
1. Models of a Butcher and Trussed Bull
Wood and paint
Early Middle Kingdom, 2040–1650 BC
Egypt. Cairo, Department of Antiquities 1935. KM 88740, KM 88759

2. Butchering Knife
Chert
Fayum, Egypt. Museum of Anthropology 6944
BE AN ARCHAEZOOLOGIST!

Here are bones from a young bull.

Three are from a front leg, and three are from a back leg.

Using this diagram of a cow skeleton, can you figure out where these bones belong?

Can you fit any bones together at the joints?
The Economy of Early Cities

Archaeobotanical techniques have been applied to investigate production and redistribution patterns during the emergence of urban centers in central Italy. My research looks at archaeobotanical data from the sites of S. Omobono and Gabii, excavated by the Kelsey Museum, combined with that from other early Rome contexts.

Plant remains are extremely perishable and do not survive the challenge of time as well as other archaeological materials. Most plant remains are found charred in archaeological deposits, and excavators and specialists spend much time meticulously recovering them.

Charred plant material mainly originates from burnt fuel but also includes residues from agricultural and domestic activities, such as grains, chaff fragments, or weeds. Because these residues derive from refuse disposal and from incidental loss during routine activities related to crop processing and food preparation, they can be studied to reconstruct farming practices, storage systems, labor organization, and, more broadly, the ancient economy.

Examples of how this is done include looking at the proportions of weeds to grains or of chaff to grains. These ratios indicate how crop processing was structured and how the harvest was stored, which have implications for labor organization. The functional ecology of the weeds themselves can be used to investigate cultivation methods. Different types of storage within a site (household, communal, or centralized) illuminate redistribution practices and sociopolitical structure. At a larger scale, sites can be compared within a region to better understand the economic system.

Laura Motta
Archaeologists can use the ratios of food plants and weed remains to understand and reconstruct ancient food production systems. Plant remains recovered from archaeological contexts are often charred, such as the specimens to the upper left. Dried plant remains, such as those to the right, are compared with ancient remains to aid identification:

**CHARRED PLANTS**
1. Panicum miliaceum; millet (food)
2. Vicia Faba; fava bean (food)
3. Hordeum vulgare; Barley (food)

**DRIED PLANTS**
4. Hordeum distichum; barley (food)
5. Lolium multiflorum; rye grass (weed)
6. Lolium tenuisulcum; cockle (weed)
7. Triticum sp.; wheat (food)
Grains such as wheat or barley were very common food plants in much of the ancient world. Many different steps are required to turn these tiny grains into food, including harvesting, threshing, winnowing, pounding, grinding, and eventually baking or fermenting.

The mortar from Karanis on display here is a deep, sturdy dish basin used for pounding grain. The associated illustrations show how bakers used such an object. In the wooden model from the tomb of Meketre, several stages of food production are depicted, including a man using a mortar and pestle to pound the grain (far right). In this model, the mortar is set into the floor to enhance stability during use.

**Mortar**
Limestone
Roman Period (2nd–4th centuries AD)
Karanis, Egypt. University of Michigan Excavations 1935. KM 25885
RECENT INVESTIGATIONS AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA have revealed that a number of reptile species have peculiar geographic distributions. For example, the African chameleon occurs in the Egyptian Nile Valley but also in an isolated population on the Peloponnese.

In other cases, similarities in color and genetics indicate that some populations do not “belong” to a certain region but instead originated somewhere else. The Rough-tailed agamas living near Alexandria, Egypt, are more closely related to animals from the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea than to those from nearby Syro-Palestine.

Given that neither agamas nor chameleons can swim well, ecologists have been at a loss to explain the mysterious origins of these populations. To solve this biogeographical mystery, we can use evidence from archaeology and history.

**Johannes Foufopoulos and Despina Margomenou**
H umans have been living and interacting with wildlife around the Mediterranean for millennia, and archaeological, historical, and epigraphic evidence indicates that human societies have shaped biodiversity both intentionally and unintentionally. Could they be responsible for these reptile introductions? How and why?

Reptiles such as the African chameleon were likely transported unintentionally. Chameleons change color and can hide in leaves or reeds. It would be easy to transport them, for example in bundles of animal feed.

Other species may have been transported intentionally. The leopard snake, for instance, probably had symbolic significance. Different kinds of snakes were associated with gods and mythical heroes and were part of religious practices, worship, and healing.

Despina Margomenou and Johannes Foufopoulos

The two different forms of the leopard snake and geographic distribution of the species. Populations in the Crimean peninsula and southern Italy are thought to have been introduced.
Ideas and beliefs about reptiles changed through time and varied among the different peoples of the Mediterranean. The Roman coin depicts the feeding of a snake, a significant aspect of religious rituals in the ancient world.

Snakes were considered dangerous but also protectors, and they were believed to have special healing powers. Throughout the Mediterranean world snakes were connected to various underworld deities, as well as to death and rebirth.

Images of reptiles were also used in coin iconography to identify specific regions in exchange and trade networks. Coins called “Turtles” from the Greek island of Aegina were an important early trading currency.
1. Papyrus: Book of Amduat
Ink on papyrus
Third Intermediate Period (1070–656 BC)
Egypt. Samuel Goudsmit gift 1974. KM 74.1.1

2. Votive Snake Coffin
Bronze
Late–Ptolemaic Periods (525 BC–AD 285)
Egypt. H. C. Hoskier gift 1925. KM 4672

3. Roman Coin with Person Feeding Snake
Silver
AD 251–253
Adon Gordus gift. KM 1995.2.252

4. Aegina Coin with Turtle
Silver
404–340 BC
George Monks bequest. KM 1991.2.70

5. Chamaeleo africanus
Specimen on loan from the reptile collection of University of Michigan Museum of Natural History
The African chameleon is widespread in the Nile Valley but also in an isolated population on the Peloponnese.
In our studies of the past, we can learn much by establishing links between archaeological data and other lines of evidence, often through collaboration with colleagues in other fields (or in other corners of our own fields!). This can only be accomplished, however, if the information is made available to as wide an audience as possible and is organized systematically, so that it is possible to compare such disparate elements as physical artifacts, documentation of sites and features, textual and artistic evidence, and ethnographic and historical accounts.

The projects highlighted here explore the general challenges posed by constructing integrated, functional databases and consider a specific example of how archival evidence can be used to reveal the ways our disciplinary forebears thought about and approached the past. Archiving touches on socially salient themes and raises some difficult questions: Who should have access to the results of archaeological and historical research? How can we facilitate that access? How is modern research shaped by often stubborn disciplinary tendencies? How do the personal interests of researchers affect what they did or did not document, which in turn affects our perception of the phenomena they recorded?
The Kelsey Museum has a large and impressive archive of unpublished photographs from the Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Middle East, taken by George R. Swain in the early 1900s. A commercial photographer who maintained a fruitful relationship with Professor Francis W. Kelsey from 1913 to 1927, Swain also left behind a rare collection of diaries and letters, often keyed to his photographs. The richness of the archive allowed us to write an article on a single day in the life of Swain and Kelsey (December 9, 1919), recreating via letters and photographs, almost hour by hour, a trip that the two took together to Constantinople.

That trip was one of four undertaken by the two men to Europe and the Mediterranean from 1919 to 1926. Although their travels were primarily archaeological in nature, they often became absorbed in more contemporary matters. They witnessed enormous changes in the political landscape of the Mediterranean and Europe just after World War I. Swain was acutely aware that this was a time of disruption and dispossession of identities in the wider Mediterranean. He often turned his camera to the modern world—documenting occupations that soon died out, capturing picturesque scenes that reflected the tenuous economy of the day, and recording various populations whose identities he knew were threatened.

We continue to mine the extraordinary collection of archives and photos, with the aim of eventually producing a book on these pivotal years in the Mediterranean, as seen through the eyes of these two extraordinary men.

Lauren Talalay and Artemis Leontis
DISTRACTED BY MODERNITY

TRAVELS IN GREECE AFTER WORLD WAR I


5. Andros, Greece. August 3, 1926. “Looking down one of the streets of Andros towards the bay” (KM neg. no. KS385.06).

6. Patmos, Greece. May 1920. “Monastery of St. John. Four monks playing with mallets on the great ‘semandron’ in the court. A fifth monk beyond with a small semandron in his hand. The use of these wooden bars is said to have originated in a time when the use of bells was forbidden to monasteries. The great semandron is a bar of oak (25’9” long, 2” x 61.5” section)” (KM neg. no. 7.422).

1. Eastman View Camera No. 2
Wood, metal, glass
1914–1925
Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, NY
Kelsey Museum Archives

2. Selection from Swain’s Typed and Annotated Records of Travels
From 755–15 George R. Swain Papers Box 2
Kelsey Museum Archives

3. G. R. Swain Transporting Equipment to Athens
June 21, 1920
Piraeus, Greece. KM neg. no. KS209.01
Research has traditionally been disseminated through publication, and this is still the preferred method. But more data and artifacts come to light during excavations than can possibly be encompassed by publication even though researchers are interested in seeing all this information. Older excavations produced journals and maps that are stored in archives, but new projects are increasing the numbers and sizes of digital files. Both analogue and digital materials present challenges for archivists trying to share them with researchers.

As archives collect new file formats, including databases and Geographic Information System (GIS) maps, they must find new ways to make the data available. And those methods must be user-friendly yet still powerful enough to allow project members to continue their own work. Those methods also need to be searchable and constantly accessible.

While technology has evolved to make this possible, there has been no agreed-upon solution. Archivists need to work with archaeologists and information technology staff to ensure a proper solution is devised that will satisfy all concerned parties.

Sebastián Encina
Profile drawings of vessels excavated at Karanis. Thousands of these drawings are found in the Karanis archives, as well as other archaeological archives.

Screen shot of records from an artifact database. Databases are a changing, dynamic set of records. How does a project properly document its records for easier and complete discovery? How many iterations are saved? How is the database best served so it doesn’t fall into the dark, undiscoverable realm of the Internet? And how is the database saved for future research when the software that created it is no longer in business or no longer opens old files?

Archeological projects occasionally employ artists to render artifacts and architecture. Do such artworks still have a place alongside digital photography and computer imaging? Should they be preserved, even if we can produce better images using photography? Will scanning them decrease their value, particularly for those in color?
A recent perspective on the past is “sensory archaeology,” or archaeology of the senses. Throughout the gallery so far, you have been able to witness how scholars find, record, and make sense of the sites, structures, artifacts, ecofacts (biological remains), and texts that human beings created, saw, handled, discarded, or affected over deep spans of time. But can we understand their experience of moving through these spaces and interacting with both things that could be touched and “things” that could not be touched? What did people see from their houses or temples, and how did it make them feel? What did it sound like to live in an ancient Egyptian village? How did it smell? How did the food and wine taste? Did people prefer some materials to others in making objects because of how they felt, as much as how they looked or how durable they were?

If a central goal of archaeology is to understand human lives in the past, these sensory dimensions of human engagement with the world are important pieces of the interpretive puzzles we assemble. Such a focus invites researchers to consider not only the large-scale changes that occurred in human history but how they were enacted incrementally, by many individuals navigating a multitude of experiences throughout their lives. By reminding us that past worlds were full not only of things and sights but also of noises, smells, tastes, and emotions, an archaeology of the senses helps to make the past less remote—and more alive.
Sound is an integral part of most human experience, but study of the ancient world rarely takes sound into account: apart from ancient music, little work has been devoted to the sonic environments of ancient cultures. The soundscapes of the ancient world are significant, however, and cultural historians who study sound can provide new insights into ancient cultures.

The Michigan excavations at Karanis yielded a variety of contexts and materials that can reveal the sonic landscapes of this ancient village. The richness of the material culture of Karanis, and its secure and complex archaeological context, invites a focus on the artifactual evidence for understanding sound. Likewise, the acoustic environments created by the structures and landscapes of ancient Karanis provide material for both actual and virtual investigation. Textual evidence from the site and other contemporary written sources provide supplements to our knowledge of the sounds and silences of a village in Roman Egypt.

Through these sources and avenues of investigation, we hope to arrive at some understanding of the sonic environment of Karanis, grounded in the material culture and archaeology of the site. The results of this study will be disseminated drawing on the concept of “museums of sound” developed by John Kannenberg. Presenting a virtual museum installation drawing on Karanis material transcends the boundaries of traditional publication and conventional museum exhibition.

John Kannenberg and Terry Wilfong
Woven Rattle Containing Glass
Palm fiber, colored glass
Roman Period (2nd–4th centuries AD)
Karanis, Egypt. University of Michigan Excavations 1926. KM 10075

Rattles also produced intentional sounds, either in the hands of musicians as part of a performance or religious ritual, or in the hands of children for their own amusement.

Unfinished Castanet
Wood
Roman Period (1st–4th centuries AD)
Karanis, Egypt. University of Michigan Excavations 1935. KM 23932

Music—an intentional sound—formed an important part of Egyptian life and religious worship. Castenets are a percussion instrument; this castenet is unfinished, but the accompanying graphic gives you an idea of how it might have been used. A large number of castanets in the Kelsey’s collection were found in the same house at Karanis: could it have been the house of a musician?

Coins from a Coin Hoard
Billon
Roman Period, AD 256/257
Karanis, Egypt. University of Michigan Excavations 1933. KM 42901

Coins such as these, found in a banker’s house, would have unintentionally contributed to the sound environment of Karanis as they clinked and jingled when transported or dropped.
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Scott Meier and John Hummel, Design and Preparation
Peg Lourie, Editor
Lorene Sterner, Artist
Ivan Cangemi, Graduate Student Research Assistant
(Interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology)
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INVESTIGATING
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The Economy of Early Cities
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Exotic Species in the Mediterranean
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Sounds of Ancient Karanis
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Kelsey Museum of Archaeology
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Identities and Preservation at Abydos—Janet Richards, Suzanne Davis, and Claudia Chemello
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