

A DAY WITH THE UCL INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY LIBRARY: 29TH JULY 2011

August 5, 2011 Katie Meheux Anglo-Saxon, Archaeological Prospection, Conservation, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Digital Archaeology, Early Medieval, Education, Egypt, Environmental Archaeology, Iron Age, Medieval, Museum Archaeology, Osteology, Palestine, Periods, Post Medieval, Prehistory, Roman, Romano-British, Science, Survey, Viking Ahmed Ouda, Antiquaries Library, Archaeological Data Service, Archaeology, Archaeology Data Service, Book, Christmas, Claudia Zehrt, Coca-Cola, Council for British Archaeology Research Reports, e-book, e-books, e-resources, editor, education, Edwards Egyptology Library, free online journals, I. Our, Institute library, Institute of Archaeology, Internet Archive, IOA Library, Jan Picton, Lesley Bushnell, Library, Lin Majewski, long-term solution, Marketing, Mediterranean, Near East, online versions, Paul Majewski, precious oil, Ricky Estwick, Sam Stevens, Science, Scott Foulon, Scott Stetkiewicz, sought after products, Stuart Brookes, supervisor, the Institute's 75 th anniversary, Tom Williams, UCL Institute, UCL Institute of Archaeology, UCL Institute of Archaeology Library, United Kingdom

Books, books, books. Journals, conference proceedings, technical reports, e-resources. And lots more.



*Institute of Archaeology
Library*

You might wonder why a library wants to contribute to the Day of Archaeology and what our relevancy might be. But libraries, especially specialist libraries like the [UCL Institute of Archaeology](#), are vital for archaeological research and have been part of archaeology since the beginning – the [Society of Antiquaries Library](#) was founded in 1751! Researchers – students, academic staff, commercial researchers and even interested members of the general public – come to libraries to find the factual information and the theoretical frameworks that drive and structure their work. It's also here that the final published results of excavations and fieldwork – site reports – end up!

So if you want to find out a little bit more about what we do and what our customers use our facilities to research, read on!

Our day...

My day starts at 8.30 a.m. I have an hour before the library opens and I usually take this time to open up, sort out the 'reshelving' (books used in the library or returned during the previous day) and have a look round for any problems, potential areas of work or to get ideas about how to improve our working space and collections. Ian, one of our shelvers, has been working on periodicals (journals) 'weeding' and created some extra space for both the periodicals and the



Egyptology shelves

Edwards Egyptology Library. I work through the Egyptology collection, assessing where we need to shift the books to leave space for growth – I estimate we have space for 3-5 years' growth overall that can be distributed amongst the shelves. Most humanities and social sciences research libraries have space problems and we're no exception. Because so many of our books and journals are used for research as well as teaching, we can't send older material to Stores, as it needs to be on the shelves for researchers to consult. We're trying to make space where possible by sending journals that are also available electronically to Stores – 'weeding them'. Electronic access means that we can still provide access to key resources, but we don't have to have them physically on the shelves.

Yu-ju Lin and Paul Majewski, two of our library assistants, arrive and the library opens at 9.30 a.m. Paul starts work on the virtual exhibitions page we're building to accompany a [Friends of the Petrie Museum](#) exhibition that will be opening in the library in September.



Yu-Ju and the missing book

Yu-ju goes out to look for missing books. In a library with over 70,000 books and 800 periodical sets (I've no idea how many actual individual volumes of these we have!) books can easily become mislaid. So shelf tidying and looking for books reported missing to us each week is a vital part of our work. It's a good day – she finds an important missing book needed by the Ancient History department straight away.

I look through my emails and answer any enquiries. These can be from our current students and staff about their library records and our collections, but also from other researchers asking about our archive material (which is held by [UCL Special Collections](#)), staff and students from other universities asking about using our collections or from members of the public who just want answers to archaeological questions. There aren't too many today, so I start working through our Accessions List (the list of new books that have arrived in the library that month) highlighting some for our [Ancient World/Archaeology blog](#). Once I've done this, I continue some on-going work with free online journals. I have a long list of free electronic resources from AWOL ([Ancient World Online](#)) that I'm working through looking for digital duplicates of our paper resources. Where possible, we try to always provide digital access to resources – students and staff can get to the 24/7 and pressure on our paper copies – both in terms of use and preservation (general state of repair) – is lessened.

Ricky Estwick comes with our delivery of mail from elsewhere in [UCL Library Services](#). Although we're a library in our own right, we're also part of UCL Library Services and our work flows and patterns fit in to

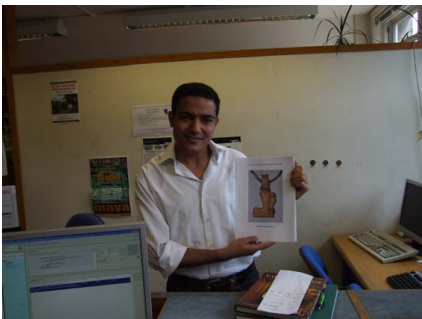


Ricky Estwick

the larger structure of the organisation. We don't for example, do our own cataloguing. This is done in a central cataloguing unit to ensure standardisation across UCL's library collections and so our material is in line with global information standards. Ricky brings books and periodicals that have arrived for us from different libraries, as well as materials from cataloguing, acquisitions and Stores.

Scott Stetkiewicz comes to the Issue Desk to ask about obtaining materials from Scottish excavations for his MSc dissertation on slag analysis. We have a look through the resources available in the library and online through [English Heritage](#), the [Archaeological Data Service](#) and [Heritage Gateway](#).

Stuart Brookes comes in to borrow books for his project '[landscapes of governance: assembly sites in England, 5th – 11th centuries](#)'. Scott Foulon, one of our Library Services building officers, comes in to talk about possible dates for painting the library and for removing graffiti from the desks in the main reading room. The library 'estate' needs constant upkeep and we try to continuously improve working conditions for our customers. We decide to put the painting off until Christmas so we don't disturb our taught postgraduates during the final weeks of the dissertations. We arrange for the graffiti cleaning to take place before the beginning of term. We've improved the lighting in the library with desk lights in the main reading room and whiter, brighter lights in the stacks. The desk lights look good and feedback has been positive about them, so we're taking the opportunity to smarten the desks up as well.



Ahmed Ouda

Ahmed Ouda comes in to borrow books for his PhD project. 'Werethekau 'great magic' in the religions landscape of Ancient Egypt'. He brings in some illustrations relating to his PhD to show us – we insist on pictures!



Massimiliano Pinarello

Massimiliano Pinarello comes in for a quick meeting about the Friends of the Petrie exhibition. Max is working on this with Jan Picton, Paul Majewski and I. Our next task is to prepare the information boards for the library – we've already planned the layout, route and events that will accompany the exhibitions. UCL Library Services is

keen to expand its public engagement and this is a brilliant chance to work with both the general public, a society and [UCL Museums and Collections](#).

Break for lunch!

Sam Stevens, who works at the IOA Library in the afternoons, arrives – he's taking over from Yu-ju. Sam is working on weeding the [Council for British Archaeology Research Reports](#). We have two sets of the complete run of CBA reports, but they are growing all the time, and so are the British Series BAR Reports, which are shelved in the same area. We're running out of space, so we've decided to send one set of the CBA reports to Stores. We feel we can do this because many



Sam Stevens

of the early reports are now freely available online through the CBA. We don't have many e-books for archaeology, as e-book production for the subject is still limited compared to the hard sciences, such as medicine, physics or chemistry. But there are increasing numbers of online versions of older materials being made available, either through their publisher, or with copyright expired material, the [Internet Archive](#). We love the Internet Archive! Many of our older Egyptology and Near East books date to the 19th and early 20th centuries and are becoming very much the worse for wear – Victorian industrially-produced paper does not age well and is very

brittle. We don't want to banish this material to Stores, as it is still widely used. We have specialist handling advice (produced by Sam) and book supports, but digital facsimiles produced by the Internet Archive are our best long-term solution. We've arranged for links to the books on the Internet Archive to be build from our library catalogue by our cataloguing team – we can't wait for them to complete this.

Paul works on processing the new books. Books arrive in the library from cataloguing (brought by Ricky), we classify them (give them shelf locations) and then Paul processes them – stamps, stickers, security tags, shelf labels. These books



Paul Majewski

then go out on a special 'New Books' shelf so that our academic staff and students can browse through them. Processing is one of our major library jobs, as we have thousands of new books each year and all need to correctly labelled and marked. If the labelling is incorrect, in a library the size of ours, a book may become lost until our shelveers notice it is in the wrong subject area.

Sam waters our plants. We have plants all over the library – to make it look welcoming and to improve the air quality. The students like the plants and we often get plant donations when overseas students are going home and can't take their plants with them. They know they are going to a good home where they will be appreciated. Some of the plants are getting a bit too big now, but we can't bear to part with them.

Tom Williams, who is editor of the '[Papers from the Institute of Archaeology \(PIA\)](#)' comes to talk to me about a paper on our archives for the jubilee issue of the journal – it's the Institute's 75th anniversary next year. We look at the material available in Special Collections using the [archives catalogue](#) and decide that we will focus on papers from the Mortimer Wheeler archive relating to the founding of the Institute.

Lesley Bushnell, one of our PhD students comes in. Lesley loves our library and is excited by the Day of Archaeology. She emails me a piece to add to our entries and some pictures.

Lesley's entry:

‘Before the invention and widespread use of glass bottles, precious liquid commodities were kept in small, decorated ceramic juglets. During the Bronze Age, these highly sought after products these were distributed all over the eastern Mediterranean. They probably contained perfumed oils and seem to have been widely used in funeral ceremonies, although some of the Cypriot juglets look so much like upside-down poppy seed heads, it has led to speculation that the precious commodity within was opium. Whatever the contents, there was a lively trade in these juglets over several hundred years and like the Coca-Cola™ bottle of today the different styles may well have been ancient brands.

In my research, I have found literally thousands of these delicate little pots, not in the ground, but in the Institute library. My favourite publications are the really early excavation reports, some over a hundred years old with their wonderful drawings and descriptions. So many of the photographs showing the juglets in-situ, usually in graves, and very often telling sad human stories particularly for the infants who buried with this single juglet offering of precious oil. The other end of the scale by far the easiest books to use are the more accurate and detailed modern reports, sometimes with electronic data tucked handily in the back cover ready for extraction. So much information! It is all there just waiting to be dug up. ‘

It's 5.00 p.m. and we have a shift change. Paul and I get to go home, while Sam stays and Claudia Zehrt, one of our colleagues, who is also a PhD student at the IOA in Maya Archaeology comes to act as evening supervisor until 7.00 p.m.

Another day in the IOA Library!