



Excavation inside a recently discovered Ptolemaic tomb for ibis mummies at Abydos, Egypt.

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Issues of collection and dissemination of digital data from the Brown University Abydos Project

The Brown University Abydos Project has been excavating since 2008 in an ancient cemetery in southern Egypt. One of the principal finds of the project is an underground set of linked mud brick vaults that were used for the burial of sacred ibis mummies in the Ptolemaic period (332-30 BC). This structure and its finds have presented numerous problems for the collection and dissemination of data, and the approaches we have taken illustrate both the pitfalls and the promises of digital data for a modern archaeological excavation. The problems range from simply finding lines of sight in order to survey to worries about encouraging looting stemming from open access to images of valuable artifacts discovered. Presentation even of less sensitive data is also controlled by agreements between the project and the Egyptian government, which has the right to publicize all finds made in Egypt. Furthermore, multiple universities run excavations at Abydos, and data sharing and consistent archiving of information have proved problematic despite the best intentions. Not all of these problems have been solvable, and in particular dissemination will remain an issue while Egypt is in a period of political transformation. However, new strategies for surveying, photographing, and building and sharing 3D models of the structure, have shown the promise of collaboration across academic units for using archaeological data from an exciting context to reach a wide range of people inside and outside the academy.