Archaeology Archives and Projects at the Institute of Fine Arts
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I. Introduction

Many visual resources professionals have never seen an archaeology archive; such archives don't always fall within the parameters of what have traditionally been image collections developed strictly for teaching. However, visual resources staff who work in relatively large institutions may have both access to and responsibility for archaeology archives, be they an accumulation of years of records sponsored by our home institutions, or a faculty member's personal collection, or a library "special" collection. The Institute of Fine Arts is an institution with four such archives. While not directly under the jurisdiction of digital media/visual resources or the image archive, these archives present problems in data storage and image management very similar to those tackled every day in visual resources. Visual resources staff can make a significant contribution to the preservation and organization of these materials, and can productively collaborate with the scholars building and maintaining these archives. This paper will serve to introduce the wide variety of materials and formats to be found in archaeology archives, and to describe how visual resources staff (now the "digital media services" staff at IFA) currently collaborate with resident archaeologists, scholars, graduate students and technical services staff at IFA and throughout NYU to provide appropriate storage for and access to these wonderful research resources.

II. Where the excavations are located

IFA is currently actively involved in 4 excavations: Samothrace, in Greece; Selinunte, in Italy; Aphrodisias, in Turkey; and Abydos, in Egypt. Faculty supervise each excavation, and senior research scholars direct the field work at Abydos and Aphrodisias. Graduate students work at each site each season; many have found their

dissertation topics while doing fieldwork. Curricular materials based on each site are routinely developed by faculty, and publications are produced regularly. The answer to the question posed by colleagues at the College Art Association's New York conference, as to whether archaeological archives are used for teaching purposes, is definitively "yes;" this semester alone (spring 2013) there are six classes being taught at IFA that have some connection to one or another of the excavation sites. In addition to assisting with all images and equipment needed for teaching, Digital Media Services is directly involved with two of these excavations, Abydos and Aphrodisias, in ways to be outlined below.

III. What is in the archive

All kinds of materials are gathered during excavations: small finds, large finds, architectural remains; field notebooks, GIS data, stratographic data, geologic data, botanical data. Slides, photographs, drawings; digital images; maps, charts, diagrams; financial information, travel information, permits and paperwork required by local governments; fundraising information; e-mail, correspondence; database-structured information; even sound and moving image files. Because excavations represent an on-going process—for example, IFA has been working at Samothrace since 1938—materials accumulate as long as the excavation is active (and because of the University's long association with the excavation, the Samothrace archive is understandably extensive). Because excavation is a process, the same section of a site might be photographed, drawn, dug, measured, recorded, by multiple people over many seasons. Archaeology archives, like any active library, grow almost organically. Their need for space, both physical and electronic, is ongoing and increases with every active season or scholarly project.

IV. Where are the archives

In addition to holding materials in multiple formats, archaeology archives may be located in multiple places. This may be due to supervision of a site being shared—for

example, the Aphrodisias excavation is supervised by faculty from both NYU and Oxford—or to the fact that faculty change institutional affiliations. Should a research scholar move, his personal records may move with him, rather than stay with excavation materials that might be housed elsewhere. As a specific example: Because the senior supervising faculty of the Aphrodisias site is at Oxford, so are the hard copies of at least some of the field notebooks. Most of the rest of the hard copy materials are in the subbasement at IFA, or in faculty offices around the Institute's building. In addition, scholars and students from around the world visit archaeological sites, do their own research, then take that work home to yet other institutions that might have no formal affiliation at all with the excavation. To cite another example, there are web-based projects concerning the Aphrodisias project supported by Duke University (http://www.dukewired.org/project-archive/hadrianicbaths/). I would argue that this kind of material, too, belongs in an excavation's archive.

The Aphrodisias archive materials are not yet on-line. The field notebooks now in the UK have been scanned at Oxford, but those scans have not yet been entered into a database (and they may or may not have been scanned to a consistent resolution). To compound matters, the hard copy field notebooks include many Polaroid photographs. Polaroids are very sensitive to changes in temperature and humidity, and older Polaroid positives, if not fixed properly, will fade relatively quickly if storage conditions are particularly harsh. Many of the field notes were written in pencil, which also fades as pages are turned and abrade against adjacent surfaces. Because the field notebooks are thus unstable, they should not be put at risk and stored in the subbasement of IFA, which has no climate control, no natural air circulation, and is subject to periodic flooding (Hurricanes Irene and Sandy come immediately to mind). So, there is no great push to move the hard copies from the UK to the US, although it is hoped that their scans might be added to our local database.

In addition, each of the senior research scholars for Aphrodisias has had his own idea of how materials should be organized. Each year, it seems, a new database has been created to try and organize at least some small corner of the Aphrodisias archive. These "little" databases were created without a common metadata structure; some are web-based, most are stand-alone and carried back and forth to the site on hard drives

or other portable media. Portable media deteriorate in high temperatures, when covered in dust, or when mishandled in airport security, which puts those records at risk. The current inventory of the Aphrodisias Archive, covering databases, notebooks, cabinets, and files runs to 9 single-spaced pages. This is a problem we might be able to address by initiating use of the ArchaeoCore data set and migrating all existing data into a single metadata structure, but that is an issue for another paper.

The Abydos Archive presents similar problems of variety, shared supervision, and need for storage. The excavation is visited by teams from NYU, Penn, Yale, Brown, and scholars from around the world; excavation records are in all of those places. Of the four active excavations in which IFA is involved, the Abydos archive has collaborated with Digital Media Services the longest (since about 2005). This collaboration started when the senior research scholar, Prof. Matthew Adams, came to seek our advice in organizing slides of the excavation. We helped the Abydos archive scan existing slides and build a section of the local image database dedicated to their images that eventually grew to more than 25,000 records. In 2007, we sent a student staff member to Abydos as part of the field team to help set up image databasing on the ground in Egypt. The cost of taking the student to Egypt was absorbed by the excavation; her salary was paid out of the Digital Media Services budget. This collaboration has worked so well that we have sent a DMS student staffer to Abydos in every subsequent season. That appointment is a highlight of our student staffing each year.

V. Who uses archaeology archives?

Archaeology archives, in addition to being a resource for the scholars working in the field, are a resource for faculty, students, and scholars at other institutions doing work on similar topics. Images in particular are useful for staff in publications and development—the images that are made on-site are dramatic and often compelling. Donors to and government sponsors of the excavations want to see how their money has been spent, so collected archival materials highlighted in resulting publications are particularly important to the ongoing financial health of the digs.

VI. Who helps build archaeology archives?

In the case of IFA, building, maintaining, and making archaeology archives accessible is a collaborative effort. Faculty guide the work of students and staff, including IT staff from the main campus and digital media services staff at IFA. There are the local workers—local to the countries in which the excavations are located—who provide local knowledge and muscle. (As an aside, the records of our excavations might grow to include records of our relationship with local peoples and cultures, since no matter how carefully an excavation is managed, it may be disruptive to local landscapes.) And there are the collections of scholars who visit the sites, the donors and government officials; the scientists, conservators, museum people, and so on, who visit the sites for a season (or a lifetime). The accumulated and accumulating records of all of those contributors make up an archaeology archive.

VI. How is Digital Media Services involved? What do we do for the archives?

The visual resources/digital media services staff is involved with the archive on a variety of levels. We assist with scanning traditional media, and editing the resulting scans. We consult on the construction of metadata templates and cross walks within the University's current software structure (now Shared Shelf). We coordinate the migration of data and images as database platforms change, and work with centralized technical services when problems arise. One of our most recent projects is to coordinate the creation of a 10TB storage space on NYU's High Performance Computing Group's (HPG) servers as a back-up for data accumulated at the dig at Aphrodisias. We maintain the digs' web presence as part of our overall maintenance of IFA's web site. We underwrite the salary of student staff who, after being trained by us, work in the archives of two of the digs.

We train excavation staff in how to catalog images and use the current cataloging software. We maintain the excavation's web presence, as part of our on-going responsibilities for maintaining IFA's web site. And we're now working on data

visualizations as a way to make data more accessible to scholars from beyond IFA. That, after all, is the ultimate goal: to make the information found in the archival holdings of the archaeological excavations available to other scholars, and to preserve that information for future generations eager to "excavate" the archives.

For more information about the Institute of Fine Arts' excavations:

http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/academics/archaeology.htm