

From the Sands of Time to the Worldwide Web, Digital Projects at Abydos



Removing sand along the ancient mudbrick walls of the royal cultic enclosure
of king Khasekhemwy, the Shunet el-Zebib, February 2012.

Photograph by Greg Maka for the IFA expedition

Abstract: Abydos is one of the oldest and most important archaeological sites in Egypt. The earliest kings of Ancient Egypt (of the 1st and 2nd Dynasties) were buried here, and the remains of their sumptuous funerary monuments have been the focus of the Institute of Fine Arts Excavations since the late 1960s. Since then, and especially with the transition to digital photography, the project archives have grown exponentially. More recently, efforts have been made to open up a range of the visual material from the collection to the larger community of scholars, students and museum professionals, with the belief that current concerns in archaeology can best be addressed across institutional and disciplinary lines. The present paper reflects on the influence of digital technologies, and the platforms they offer for the distribution of visual documentation of the type encountered in the Abydos collection. One key question is whether the gradual transition to primarily digital archives is indeed stimulating fundamental changes within disciplines previously isolated within their practice.