



14th International Congress on the Archaeology
of the Ancient Near East

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Digging through the Stores: Challenges and Prospects of New Research on Old Collections

ACHOUCHE I. ², BANGSBORG THUESEN M. ¹, INVERSI E. ^{1,3}, KAINERT C. ^{1,4}, RUSO G.^{1*}, WOLFF-HEGER L. ¹

¹ Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

² Lie University, FRS-FNRS, Lie, Belgium

³ British Museum, London, United Kingdom

⁴ Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin, Germany

*Corresponding author

Abstract

Archaeology has long been centered around discoveries through excavations and surveys. Over a century of archaeological fieldwork in Western Asia has produced substantial material necessitating analysis, appropriate conservation, and long-term storage. Nevertheless, the disparity between the material generated by fieldwork and the available resources and facilities for storing, studying and curating collections has led to a "conservation crisis" in archaeological repositories and museums.

To facilitate accessibility for researchers and the public, museums and research institutes are digitizing their collections and creating online databases. However, many "old collections" remain un(der)studied in stores, holding potential for discoveries and new knowledge. These collections present specific challenges; some may lack provenance, while others originated before modern fieldwork techniques and documentation standards were established.

In this workshop, we will explore the potential and challenges of collections from the 19th and 20th centuries. We will tackle the following questions:

- How can "old collections" be used to address new research inquiries?
- What obstacles do legacy collections present to research, and what new methodological and theoretical approaches have been implemented to overcome them?
- What factors affect the visibility of existing and/or un(der)studied collections? How can their accessibility to researchers be facilitated?
- How can new research on legacy data inspire innovative ways of communicating and displaying the past in and beyond museums?

This workshop will provide a platform for PhD students, early career and senior researchers to discuss and compare research practices and methodological approaches. This is not just a practical issue in the study of old data; new research on "old collections" is relevant to ongoing and future fieldwork and museum work.

Keywords

Accessibility, Museums and collections, Methodologies, Recontextualization, Communicating the past

Program

Welcome by the organizers

SLOT 1

- *The Halaf-Ubaid Transition in Northeastern Mesopotamia: The Potential of Museum Collections* Michael Campeggi, Università Milano, Italy
- *JUMP (Tall-e Jari B & Tall-e Mushki Pottery Restudy Project): Shedding New Light on the Old Collections in the University Museum, the University of Tokyo* Takehiro Miki, Keio University, Japan
- *Old Conflict, Old Collections: Working around the Cypriot Problem to Study the Early Bronze Age Transition* Maria Hadjigavriel, Leiden University, the Netherlands
- *A Case Study on the Handling of "Old Collections". The Seleucid-Parthian Period Pottery from Babylon in the Vorderasiatisches Museum (VAM) in Berlin* Elisabeth Katzy, Pilecki Institut Berlin, Germany
- *'Minor Objects' and their Stories: Reassessing and Reinterpreting Clay Figurines from Ur in the British Museum* Enrica Inversi, British Museum, United Kingdom, and Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
- *The Elephant in the Room: New Research on Ivories from Nimrud in the British Museum* Hannah Gwyther, British Museum, United Kingdom

SLOT 2

- *Something Old, Something New: Recontextualizing the Assyrian Roundel from Tell Tayinat* Kiersten Neumann, ISAC Museum Chicago, USA
- *Re-assembling and Re-telling Kish: New Approaches to Research and Display in the Ashmolean Museum* Nancy Highcock, Ashmolean Museum, United Kingdom
- *Unveiling the Past: Advanced Technologies and New Perspectives on the Mesopotamian Collection at the Museum of Antiquities of Turin* Elena Devecchi, Filippo Diara, Stefano de Martino, University of Turin, Italy
- *Impressive Impressions: Seals, Impressions, and Copies in Museum Collections and What to Do with Them* Pinar Durgun, The Morgan Library and Museum, USA
- *Urartian Inscriptions in the Museums of Iran: Challenges and Results* Maryam Dara, Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, Tehran, Iran
- *The Re-edition of Mesopotamian Celestial Divination: from Tablets to Internet* Maria Teresa Renzi-Sepe, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

Final discussion

Session

3. Heritage and archaeology

Type of paper

Workshop