Digital Engagement With Archives
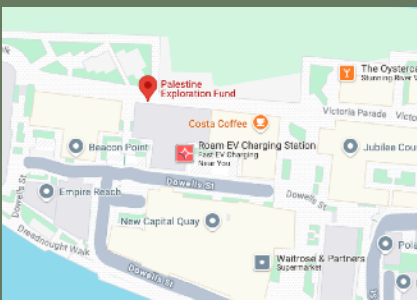## Workshop

BILNAS/D54/10/2

A game played using pieces of clay, called 'el kharbga'
malaklajeli 5 months ago

Friday 4 April 2025
11:00-16:00

Palestine Exploration Fund

Dreadnought Walk, Greenwich SE10 9FR

Click here for directions

This workshop is an opportunity to discuss case studies and best practices about the use of accessible digital technologies to make archival collections, and in particular depictions of heritage, more diverse and inclusive. The event will be divided into three main sections. In the first one, we will comment on examples of engagement with local communities, and the challenges that these practices pose, especially in terms of ethical exchanges and long term sustainability.

The second section will explore the introduction of low-threshold digital technologies for engagement, and will look more closely at using these tools, and other available open infrastructures, to enhance and diversify the collections. In the last section, we will expand on how to integrate community contributions to catalogue management, discussing some of the biggest challenges but also existing guidelines and current progress.

The workshop is meant to be participatory, all the short presentations will be followed by discussions. Lunch will be provided. Participation is free but booking is essential as we will only be able to accommodate a limited number of participants on a first come first served basis. The workshop can also be joined remotely. A link will be provided to registered attendants.

The event is funded by The National Archives and kindly hosted by the Palestine Exploration Fund. It is organised by the British Institute for Libyan and Northern African Studies.

Click here to register

Programme

11:00-11:15 **Welcome**
Valeria Vitale and Felicity Cobbing

1. Engaging Communities

11:15-11:35 Hiba Alkhalaf: Towards Equitable Partnerships: Rethinking Archival Collaborations in Conflict and Post-Conflict MENA
In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), archives serve as vital repositories of history and cultural identity, yet they are often at risk in conflict and post-conflict contexts. This presentation examines the dynamics of collaborations between European institutions and indigenous researchers and organisations, focusing on how to establish fairer, more ethical partnerships. By highlighting the role of women-led initiatives and community-driven archival practices, it explores strategies for mutual knowledge exchange, equitable resource sharing, and decolonized research approaches that prioritise local agency and long-term sustainability.

11:35-11:55 Reem Furjani, Valeria Vitale, Felicity Crowe: "Look again". Libyan perspective in the BILNAS archive.
In this talk we will discuss the outcome of a series of small-scale focus groups that we conducted with Libyan participants where we asked them to re-interpret selected photos in the BILNAS archive, from non-archaeological perspectives, using digital annotations and spoken contributions; in order to improve and diversify the BILNAS archive metadata, making the collections searchable, and reusable, in different ways..

11:55-12:15 Samantha Paul: The Peterborough Archaeological Archive Enhancement Project: a non-practitioner centred data creation project.
The Peterborough Archaeological Archive Enhancement Project aims to secure the sustainability of the archaeological collections at Peterborough Museum, while supporting curatorial work to widen accessibility and outreach activities through knowledge creation and digital cataloguing. Significant involvement by non-practitioners was essential for discerning and creating meaning and order within the stored archaeological collection, supporting increased access through the creation of detailed catalogue entries and searchable datasets.

Discussion 12:15-12:40

12:40-13:15 Lunch

2. Digital tools for engagement

13:15-13:35 Anne Hunnell Chen: Archaeological Archives as Inclusive Learning Laboratories: the International [Digital] Dura-Europos Archive (IDEA)
Colonially inflected archives don't have to march unchallenged into the digital future; with low-barrier technologies, they can become spaces for connection and dialogue across divides (geographic, linguistic, class, disciplinary) and learning laboratories for building more equitable familiarity with digital methods. This talk introduces IDEA, an ongoing project funded by the US's National Endowment for the Humanities. The talk will reflect on how the project's creative use of Linked Open Data (LOD) methods is being leveraged to provide pedagogical and digital justice-oriented opportunities in relation to one of archaeology's colonially-entangled Big Digs.

13:35-13:55 Nurdan Atalan Çayırezmez: Creating Linked Open Data for GLAM: Digital Repository and Wikimedia Projects at the British Institute at Ankara
The BIAA Digital Repository stores, manages, and preserves digitised data and born-digital content from projects. It is currently developing controlled vocabularies to enhance metadata and create an open access and FAIR repository. While doing this, it is also using Wikidata to develop linked open data infrastructure. This presentation will highlight the collaboration between GLAM institutions and the Wikimedia User Groups to organise workshops and create guidelines for person data on Wikidata, including an example to prepare museum data in Türkiye.

13:55-14:20 Discussion

14:20-14:35 Break

3. Preserving digital contributions

14:35-14:55 Karyn Williamson: Digital Preservation Made Easy: Debunking myths of technology and processing.
Digital Preservation is more of a spaghetti junction than a straight road. Many tasks are situation and context dependent, and it can be difficult to know where to start and what the best route to take is. This presentation aims to debunk some of the myths around digital preservation and make it easier to make progress on your own journey.

14:55-15:15 Amanda Foster: Co-production and Community Heritage - collecting archaeology, creating archives and enabling access.
In this talk, Manda will discuss her work with community based archaeological projects, specifically reflecting on co-production of digital heritage content intended for long-term preservation, and in developing guidance and resources to support deposition of digital archive data which meets FAIR principles. By reflecting on key projects, Dig Digital and the excavations at Pontefract Castle, Manda will discuss participatory models of digital heritage working within professional frameworks and expectations.

15:15-15:45 Discussion

15:45-16:00 Final remarks Jennifer Baird

Our guests

Hiba Alkhalaf is a researcher, heritage consultant and award-winning architect specialising in the protection and management of historic environments, particularly in conflict and crisis settings. She integrates critical heritage studies, archival research, and community engagement to develop sustainable conservation strategies. Her work spans the UK and MENA region, combining traditional techniques with modern approaches. Beyond academia, she leads capacity-building programs, research initiatives, and cross-sector collaborations, bridging theory and practice in heritage conservation..

Nurdan Atalan Çayırezmez is a Near Eastern Archaeologist with a PhD in Information and Records Management. She is the Digital Repository Manager at the British Institute at Ankara, and her research focuses on digital archaeology and digital cultural heritage data management, open access and Linked Open Data. She has initiated and coordinated Museum National Inventory System and is the founder and coordinator of Dijital Kültürel Miras Ağı (Digital Cultural Heritage Network in Türkiye).

Jennifer Baird is Professor of Archaeology at Birkbeck College. She researches the archaeology of Roman Syria, the history of Classical archaeology including critical approaches to archaeological archives, and the relationship between Classical archaeological sites and contemporary communities. Over the past decade much of her work has focussed on supporting displaced Syrian colleagues, working extensively with the Council for at-Risk Academics (Cara) and with the Threatened Scholars Initiative of the Open Societies Research Network (OSUN).

Felicity Cobbing is Chief Executive and Curator of the Palestine Exploration Fund, where she has worked for 27 years, gaining a unique and extensive knowledge of the organisation's history and collections, She has excavated at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh in Jordan with the British Museum and has travelled extensively in the Levant. She is a specialist tour lecturer for Martin Randall Travel, with a particular interest in the region's Bronze and Iron Ages of the third to first Millenniums bce, and the history of archaeology. She has co-authored several books on the collections at the PEF.

Felicity Crowe is the Archivist at the Griffith Institute, having previously worked in the archives of the British Institute of Libyan and Northern African Studies and the British School at Athens. She is interested in participatory archiving, archaeology and the archives of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Amanda Forster has specialised in the development of policy and guidance around archives, with collaborations including delivery of the Museum and Research Institution Needs Project for the National Collection of Archaeological Archives (Historic England), the Sustainable Options for Archaeological Archives project (Historic England and Arts Council England), and the Before the Museums project (Scotland's Archaeology Strategy), Manda led the Dig Digital project in collaboration with CIfA, which updated professional standards and produced guidance and a toolkit for the FAIR management of digital data in archaeological archives.

Reem Furjani is a researcher and activist in critical heritage and cultural policies. She studies community interpretations of heritage, social contestation, and embodied site-specific performativity to inform Cultural Participation policies in heritage and cultural management. Reem is the Founder & Managing Director of Scene, a non-profit for sustaining cultural heritage in the Medina of Tripoli by nurturing community engagements through cultural instruments.

Anne Hunnell Chen specialises in the art and archaeology of the globally connected Roman world, and is committed to exploring how low-barrier Linked Open Data (LOD) can be harnessed not only to provide more equitable access to archaeological data in the digital realm, but also to empower stakeholder audiences as collaborative curators. She is the director and co-PI of the International [Digital] Dura-Europos Archive (IDEA), an archaeological data accessibility project.

Samantha Paul (PhD) has extensive experience in the professional archaeology and heritage sector. She previously held the post of Project Manager at Birmingham Archaeology and latterly as Research Fellow within the department of Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology at the University of Birmingham. Sam currently works as an independent consultant, specialising in engagement with archaeological archives, and the use of archaeology within museums.

Valeria Vitale is a lecturer in Digital Humanities at the University of Sheffield, specialising in the representation and reception of historical places. Prior to joining Sheffield, she was based at The Alan Turing Institute, the British Library, and the Institute of Classical Studies in London. As part of the Pelagios project, she investigated the potential of geo-data to enhance the connectedness of digitised collections held in different archives.

Karyn Williamson holds a master's degree in Archives and Records Management and a Post Grad Cert in Digital Information Management. She is currently a Digital Preservation Analyst with the Digital Preservation Coalition. Karyn is a previous ARA Board member, Current Events coordinator for the Business Archive Council Scotland, BAC Trustee, and Campaign Manager for the Explore Your Archive Campaign. Her research interests are outreach and advocacy and community archive collaboration.

Thanks to

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