


The University and the Museum

THE FORMAL NAME, the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, clearly connects our museum to the larger Penn community. This connection to the University also defines our mission as one of both education and research. From the Museum's founding in 1887, our mission has been to study modern and ancient cultures and their material remains.

This founding and close connection to a university makes this museum unique and defines our collections in many important ways. The Museum does not exist to gather beautiful objects of the past, nor do we display the cultural artifacts in our collections as singular art objects. We are interested in the context of these objects—not simply their beauty or value. We want to study human societies and cultures as a whole and therefore understand how material remains represent these societies.

It is only through preservation, ongoing research, and interpretation that we can learn more about our own past. With a firm grasp of our past, we can better understand today's world and the great cultural complexities of a fast-paced, global society.

Our holdings are study collections that will continue to provide insights into an entire range of human societies. For the most part, these collections came to Philadelphia as the result of research in association with governments and communities in many parts of the world. Since we strongly believe that the preservation of cultural properties throughout the world is of great importance, our collections are now stable, not growing.

This Museum has always been on the forefront of cultural preservation. In 1970 we led the way with the Philadelphia Manifesto that clearly stated the importance of preserving the cultural heritage of the world within national boundaries. Today I reaffirm this concept of preservation and pledge that this Museum, unlike many others in the United States, will continue to work for the preservation of both important heritage sites and cultural artifacts throughout the world. 



RICHARD M. LEVENTHAL, PH.D.
The Williams Director