

A Season of Insight

Dear Friends,

Though the summer may be a quiet period for many within the academy, most of you know that this the Museum's busy season for fieldwork, with Museum-affiliated researchers around the world working on projects that will yield new insights about human history. This summer it was my pleasure to visit the Museum's Gordion Project in Türkiye, where Museum-affiliated scholars have been working since 1950. It was a thrill, as always, to visit this site of over four thousand years of human habitation; I even had a chance to stand on the spot where we believe Alexander the Great cut the famous Gordian Knot. As is the case with all Museum research sites, Penn students and international collaborators play an important role at Gordion; it was my pleasure to spend time with Penn undergraduates, who shared my excitement at the new material we were unearthing, and with our Turkish collaborators from the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, who are essential partners in the project. I'm also pleased to report that, after a long application process, Gordion's status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site has been approved—a designation that will undoubtedly bring added and well-deserved attention to this remarkable excavation.

The research we do here at the Museum stretches beyond the field sites themselves; it's a network of collaboration, connecting the field to the Museum and the Museum to other institutions and scholars. This issue of *Expedition* demonstrates our central place in a vast nexus of scholarly work—a fact that Laura Hertz Stanton makes clear in her article on how the collections are used by researchers around the world (p. 38). In this issue, you'll get a window into this research network, offering you insights from Italy about the decipherment of an Etruscan stele that will transform our understanding of that ancient civilization (p. 50) as well as a glimpse into the history of Museum research conducted during the Great Depression, under the auspices of the WPA (p. 28)—featuring extensive work by women, in a time when the field was still overwhelmingly male, as well as showing the historical roots of our Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials (CAAM) laboratories. On a lighter note, you'll enjoy a small paean dedicated to the



humble receipt, including its ancient roots in Sumerian tablets (p. 20)—the sort of unexpected connection between past and present that I know Penn Museum Members appreciate. Naturally, we also have updates on some of our recent events here at the Museum, like our annual Leadership Dinner, as well as upcoming opportunities for exclusive, Members-only events throughout the fall.

Having seen our fieldwork firsthand, I returned to the Museum for the fall semester with a renewed appreciation for all the work this institution does. When the public imagines a museum, they often think of a static place: objects in glass cases, silent hallways. Nothing could be further from the truth. This issue of *Expedition* demonstrates that our Museum is a dynamic hub for research, education, and insight, involving scholars, students, and visitors from around the world. Thank you for your support of the Museum and its mission, and for being part of a community dedicated to advancing understanding of our common human story.

Warm regards,

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WILLIAMS DIRECTOR