Recent Acquisitions

The Penn Museum recently acquired a small-scale reproduction of a Roman barge, which replicates one of Caligula’s boats from Lake Nemi, Italy. This model of a barge was probably made in the 1930s–1940s after the original was found in Lake Nemi. Made of wood, metal, and plaster, the barge is 60 cm high by 120 cm long, about 2 by 4 feet. The barge had been restored by its owner, including the replacement of many missing oars. In time, the Mediterranean Section may be able to add this model to the Roman Gallery, since the marble statuary found adjacent to Lake Nemi constitutes a prominent part of the existing gallery.

The reproduction of Caligula’s barge includes statuary and other decorative elements. (Museum object #2012-28-1)

The model may also be used in Penn classes associated with Roman literature, history, art, and archaeology. Caligula was Roman Emperor from 37 to 41 CE, when he was assassinated. He initiated many major construction projects and public reforms during his reign, but is remembered today primarily as a tyrant.
Puppies at the Museum: The Seeing Eye Dog Training Program

When Seeing Eye puppies reach the age of 7 or 8 weeks, they are delivered to the homes of volunteer “foster families” who nurture and care for their charges until they are about 13 to 15 months old. Families in New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, Delaware, and parts of Maryland and New York give the dogs abundant affection, teach them basic obedience, and expose them to a variety of social situations they will later encounter as working dogs. This year, the puppies will visit the Penn Museum as part of their socialization training. The first stage will take place on Mondays, when the Museum is closed, so that the puppies can adjust to the unfamiliar environment. Then, the puppies and their handlers will go on a group visit during Museum operating hours to expose the puppies to new social environments. For more information about becoming a puppy raiser, visit The Seeing Eye website at www.seeingeye.org.

Widener Lecture Room Reopens for Academic, Public, and Rental Events

In spring 2013 the Penn Museum was pleased to reopen one of the grandest interior spaces of its original building, following renovation made possible by lead support from Ingrid and Donald C. Graham, the Graham Foundation, with generous additional support from Peggy and Bruce Mainwaring and others.

Named in honor of a contribution to the Museum’s original building in 1899 from Peter Arrell Brown Widener—prominent Philadelphia philanthropist, City Treasurer, and founder of several public transit companies—the Widener Lecture Room was one of the first, certainly the most beautiful and, for many years, the largest lecture hall on the University of Pennsylvania campus, used for public and academic lectures as well as life drawing classes. Lost to public view for several decades during its use as the offices of the Department of Anthropology and as the woodshop for the Museum’s Exhibitions Department, the Widener Lecture Room is poised to once again become a signature space for lectures and symposia, and—thanks to state-of-the-art audio-visual capabilities including a projector system and screen, surround sound, and a mobile camera system—can now also host film screenings and concerts. Widener Lecture Room is also available for private rental events, along with the adjacent second floor William B. Dietrich and Kintner Galleries.

Renovation of the Widener Lecture Room and Dietrich and Kintner Galleries, including climate control, was a major component of the multimillion dollar West Wing Renovation Project, launched in 2010, to update and restore the western half of the Museum’s magnificent original building and its embellishments for an enhanced visitor experience in the 21st century.
The Kolb Foundation Continues to Support Penn Graduate Student Research

The 8th Annual Kolb Junior Fellows Spring Colloquium was held on April 30, 2013, continuing a tradition of showcasing the research of Kolb Junior Fellows who are poised to graduate from Penn. This year six graduate students from Anthropology, Ancient History, and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations presented their dissertation research in a series of talks that ranged from the Paleolithic period in the Old World to the 19th century in the New World. Each year, new Junior Fellows are elected to the Kolb Society by Penn faculty Senior Fellows. These graduate students are supported by the Kolb Foundation, which was founded through a bequest by Katherine Kolb Paanakker in honor of her father, Colonel Louis J. Kolb, a prominent Philadelphian and 1887 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania.

In 1981, the Kolb Foundation began its mission to provide fellowships for exceptional Penn students in academic disciplines associated with the Penn Museum with a single undergraduate from the Department of Anthropology. Since then, the Foundation has focused on graduate education and has funded more than 80 Junior Fellows primarily in the departments of Anthropology, Art History, East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and in the Art and Archaeology of the Mediterranean World and Ancient History Graduate Groups.

The Kolb Foundation seeks to facilitate and promote dissertation research by the elected Junior Fellows, who are encouraged to travel, excavate, gain museum experience, lecture, and publish their work. The research interests of fellows of the Kolb Society relate to ancient, pre-industrial cultures and modern, non-industrial peoples of the world. Graduate student and faculty Fellows are actively engaged with material culture and archaeological research in a wide range of disciplines, cultures, and time periods. Once the Junior Fellows graduate they become lifelong Fellows of the Kolb Society. In the approximately 30 years since its inception, the Kolb Society Fellows—prominent archaeologists, anthropologists, art historians, Assyriologists, and ancient historians—have made their mark throughout the United States and the world, leading excavations, teaching, lecturing, curating, researching, and publishing.
In the Artifact Lab Attracts Visitors from Far and Wide

In the Artifact Lab: Conserving Egyptian Mummies, which opened in the Museum’s renovated 3rd floor galleries in September 2012, has proved highly popular with visitors, who especially enjoy the two half-hour slots each day in which opened windows in the lab allow them to ask the conservator questions.

Strong media coverage in print, television, and web outlets has taken the conservators’ voices to a much larger national and international audience through an Associated Press story that ran throughout the United States, internet video features, and blogs. Television viewers in Ireland were able to participate “in the lab” through an interview by Skype for the Elev8 television show in Dublin, which aired in January 2013.

In the Artifact Lab was initially announced as a year-long project, but thanks to a generous gift from Overseer John R. (Rick) Rockwell and his wife, Frances, the Penn Museum is pleased to announce that the lab will remain open for a second year through September 2014.

And from the Artifact Lab Blog... Molly Gleeson, the conservator most often found working in the Lab, maintains a blog about the ongoing treatments, research, and experiences of carrying out this work in a public space. Here is an excerpt from April 18, 2013:

One of my favorite parts of my job is meeting our visitors on a daily basis. This kind of interaction is really rewarding for me, and I hope that the feeling is mutual for those who do get a chance to stop by the Artifact Lab during open window sessions. So you can imagine how pleased I was to
find an envelope addressed to “Miss Molly” in my mailbox yesterday.

As soon as I saw it, I knew exactly who it was from. Last week I was visited by three brothers, Sean, Aidan, and Quinn. Their Granddad brought them to the Museum for the day, and after doing his homework, specifically came up to the Artifact Lab for our 11:15 open window session. They had lots of questions for me, and we talked for a while about our animal mummies. I explained to them that we don’t need to unwrap these mummies to know what’s inside. X-rays show us that a rather nondescript mummy is definitely an ibis, indicated by the characteristic long curved beak visible in x-radiographs.

To illustrate this in the Lab, we printed out one of the x-ray images along with a little drawing of an ibis, and we kept it next to the mummy for comparison. As soon as the youngest brother, Quinn, saw the picture, he quipped, “I wish I could color that!” So I immediately handed it over to him and asked him if, when he was done coloring, he could share a photo of it with me to post on the blog. Well, he sure didn’t waste any time—not only did he send me his drawing (signed and everything) but the brothers also included a very sweet, and beautifully illustrated thank you note.

What wonderful artists, and very thoughtful boys. Answering questions can be hard! But with visitors like this, it doesn’t feel like hard work… it’s just fun. Thank YOU Aidan, Sean, Quinn, and Granddad Dan for visiting me in the Artifact Lab and being the highlight of my day!

Recent Grants

We are pleased to announce that the Penn Museum is the recipient of several recent grants, which will advance projects in all four of the areas identified as the “pillars” that support its new mission: education, research, collections stewardship, and public engagement.

- Lead sponsorship from the Leon Levy Foundation totaling over $1.3 million will make possible the collaborative project with the British Museum “Ur of the Chaldees: A Virtual Vision of Woolley’s Excavations,” to digitize and create a website providing scholarly and public access to the objects and archival materials from Sir Leonard Woolley’s extraordinary 1922–1934 excavations in southern Iraq. Woolley and his team uncovered the spectacular 4,500-year-old Royal Tombs and transformed understanding of Ancient Mesopotamian culture. Additional support for the project is provided by the Hagop Kevorkian Fund, which has provided longstanding support of research and publications in the Museum’s Near East Section.

- A generous, four-year grant of $496,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation will fund a curricular facilitator position and related program allowance to support faculty in developing curricula around Museum collections and expertise, and utilizing the new teaching-space resources including the Collections Study Room which came online in 2012, and the teaching and conservation labs expected to open in fall 2014.

- The Penn Museum is pleased to receive a prestigious 2013–2014 Conservation Fellowship by the Samuel G. Kress Foundation/American Institute for Conservation. The Kress Conservation Fellow will work with the Museum’s Mediterranean Section and Conservation Department to survey and perform preliminary treatment on objects excavated in 1931 by Bert Hodge Hill at Lapithos, Cyprus; the opportunity to survey and begin treatment on the Lapithos materials is particularly welcome following conservation survey and treatment of objects from the Museum’s other major Cypriot excavation at Kourion and the surrounding area by George McFadden, made possible by the McFadden Family as part of a digitization project.

- An Interpretation Planning grant totaling $82,500 from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage will support planning for an exhibition on race, built around the famed collection of approximately 1,200 human crania amassed by Philadelphia physician Samuel G. Morton in the 19th century.

- Generous grants from the J.M. Kaplan Fund, the Selz Foundation, and the Loeb Classical Library support new excavations at the Phrygian site of Gordion, near Ankara in Turkey.

- Other recent grants include $50,000 from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museums Commission and $6,672 from the Philadelphia Cultural Fund.

The Penn Museum is profoundly grateful for the above grants and all of the philanthropic support that makes possible its research, teaching, collection stewardship, and public engagement programs.