The Thrill of Discovery

Since arriving at the Penn Museum in July 2012, it has been one of my great privileges as Williams Director to be able to allocate—from the Director’s Field Fund—seed funding for new and ongoing projects led by Penn Museum researchers. Through this fund, in summer 2013, we were able to support many different types of projects in Abydos, Egypt; Calakmul, Mexico; Gordion (Yassihöyük), Turkey; La Ferrassie, France; Quintana Roo, Mexico; Rowanduz, Iraq; Satu Kala, Iraq; Silver Reef, Utah; and Taos, New Mexico.

Research is one of the key tenets of the Penn Museum’s mission. In its 126 years, the Museum has sponsored over 300 excavation and research expeditions; as a dynamic institution with many ongoing research projects, it continues to be a vibrant and engaging place of discovery.

Our research projects are at the heart of the three major initiatives of our new Strategic Plan (described on page 59)—initiatives through which we invite undergraduate and graduate students, Philadelphia middle school students, and visitors to our Museum and our online content alike to join in the thrill of discovery.

Nowhere was that thrill more evident than in the culmination of the Abydos field season in January of this year, when a Penn Museum team led by Josef Wegner, working in close cooperation with Egypt’s Supreme Council of Antiquities, unearthed the tomb of a previously unknown pharaoh: Woseribre-Senebkay, and the first material proof of a forgotten Abydos Dynasty, ca. 1650–1600 BCE. King Senebkay’s tomb was close to a larger royal tomb, recently identified as belonging to a king Sobekhotep, (probably Sobekhotep I, ca. 1780 BCE) of the 13th Dynasty.

It is thus a particularly timely pleasure to welcome readers of Expedition on a journey to Abydos through this special issue, planned and mostly written long before the exciting discoveries of January, but brought up to date to include them. We look forward to continuing to share—through publications and digital media in our reinstalled galleries—the unfolding stories revealed by exploration of this extraordinary site in the coming years.

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