Preserving Cultural Heritage

In recent years, the preservation of cultural heritage has moved to the forefront of archaeological and anthropological concerns. The need to manage and protect the archaeological record has become even more urgent as a result of conflict in places like Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. We realize how fragile the balance is and how important a role we all play—both in the field and in museums—in protecting sites and artifacts of the past for future generations.

This special issue of Expedition on world’s fairs is an example of the depth of our collection and the commitment of our staff to caring for and sharing objects from their sections. Indeed, the stewardship of our collection is of utmost concern. The articles in this issue will give you insight into the behind-the-scenes world of the Museum collections staff and how well they know not only the artifacts in their care but also the stories associated with them.

The Penn Museum was newly established when the objects we write about here were first exhibited at fairs around the world. Over 125 years later, we are still looking at ways we can preserve cultural heritage and present it in innovative ways. Our planning for Museum gallery renovations continues. The Kaipure Chapel, exhibited at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair, and purchased for the Museum by John Wanamaker, is featured in this issue. It is a good example of how we continue to think about ways to present our collection, as the Chapel will be fully restored when our new Egyptian galleries are completed. This, and the presentation of other objects first displayed at world’s fairs, represents one way in which we currently work to safeguard the past.

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