

COMPUTER PROJECTS

Giorgio Buccellati

Our first work with computers goes back to 1968, a prehistoric date by now in this field. We started with research in cuneiform documents, which meant both establishing a data base and developing programs to cope with the various aspects of the texts. By 1973 we had developed a full-fledged cuneiform font, which in those times was a significant feat.

Archaeological work with computers was facilitated by the advent of microcomputers. We were the first to introduce computers to archaeology in Syria, by bringing a portable computer to the field. "Portable" would not be the word today, as all those students know who helped in the safe transportation back and forth of what looks like an oversized mastodon. But the experience gained has been put to very profitable use.

We now have a well integrated system of software for both the graphic and analytical part of our work, with several computers, plotters and printers which work as a network of independent work stations. They form a network in the sense that they are all integrated in terms of hard and software, but they are independent so that the danger of down time is almost nil, each component being fully interchangeable with its equivalent. Our field record is entirely computerized at the site itself, and some aspects of the analysis have already begun in the field, to be continued in the coming seasons.

Our goal is to integrate as fully as possible the stratigraphic with the typological encoding, so that there may be a real feedback during the excavation itself. The intuitive understanding of the data which guides us as we dig will thus be supported more and more by the graphic display of distributional patterns and the analytical tabulation of excavated data, providing for a more objective and comprehensive method of excavation. At the same time, the formal grammar of stratigraphic and typological traits which we have developed provide a powerful conceptual tool for the establishment of a coherent and fully documented record. We plan to make this record available as a new genre of archaeological publication, the "global" record of the excavation.



ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAM

The Interdepartmental Graduate Program offers an interdisciplinary course of studies leading to an M.A. or Ph.D. degree in Archaeology. It differs from traditional graduate training leading to a career in archaeology via a degree in anthropology. Students of the classics or of Near Eastern languages, for example, receive their education through study plans individually designed for their own academic goals. Twenty-three faculty members with diverse experience in archaeology administer the Archaeology Program to about forty students. Presently the Program has an equal number of men and women students from all continents, some of whom are returning to the University to pursue a second career. Working worldwide, students can be found researching medieval furniture or buildings in England, exploring Mayan caves in the Petén, or searching for early man in Ohio.

Since its inception over sixteen years ago, the Graduate Program has had an increasing number of applicants. UCLA is one of a limited number of universities, along with Yale, Harvard, University of Michigan, and UC Berkeley, that offers an interdepartmental program in archaeology. Because the degrees awarded here are universally respected, the program has an excellent record for placement of its graduates in the field.

Dr. Rainer Berger, Professor of Geography, Geophysics and Anthropology, is the chairman. In addition to his current administrative and teaching responsibilities he heads the Carbon-14 Dating Laboratory. His other projects include work in Machu Picchu and early medieval architecture in Ireland.



BACKDIRT

The Nitty Gritty of Archaeology at UCLA

Newsletter of the Institute of Archaeology at the University of California,
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FIRST WORD

Merrick Posnansky

With the publication of this premier issue of *Backdirt*, the Institute of Archaeology enters into a new phase of its history. The Institute was founded in 1973 with the aim of bringing archaeologists from different areas of regional specialization closer together within a loosely structured organization which stressed their mutually shared objectives. The Institute was also designed to provide links between archaeologists in the University and those who supported their interests in the broader Southern California community served by the University. Our Organized Research Unit has rapidly established itself as a significant UCLA institution. Last year faculty, students, and the general public participated in more than 40 public lectures, seminars and other activities arranged by the Institute. This year plans are being finalized for the new Fowler Museum of History in which the Institute will occupy a major portion of the ground floor. Most of the archaeologists on campus will then be provided with laboratory services and custom designed work space contiguous to their collections and to the expanding archaeological and ethnographical collections in the Museum of Cultural History. In mid 1989, for the first time we can look forward to a single venue for lectures and seminars of archaeological interest on the UCLA campus. We hope that in time one of the principal services we will provide will be the coordination of many widely dispersed services and the dissemination of information about archaeological activity both on campus and within the Los Angeles area. The Publications Division, under the direction of Dr. Ernestine S. Elster, produced eight major works in 1984-85 with the generous help of the Fellows of the Institute. The *Journal of New World*
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African drummer in village near survey site visited by Dr. Merrick Posnansky.

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