

Presentation 1 – Oxyrhynchus Papyri – Journal

First step – take to the internet. Found this site: <http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/> POxy – Oxyrhynchus Papyri project home site. Found a lot of information about the project – which is indexing and locating them, but not a lot about the actual transliterations or the technology behind the analysis.

Looked in the library catalog for the volumes of the transliterations; found it here:

Title: The Oxyrhynchus papyri, edited with translations and notes by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt.

Publisher: London, Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898-

Also found:

Title: Fifty Oxyrhynchus papyri (P. Oxy. Hels.) / Henrik Zilliacus ... [et al.]

Publisher: Helsinki : Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1979.

More searching on the internet found these links:

<http://www.classics.ox.ac.uk/research/projects/oxy.asp> a little bit about the history of the project at Oxford.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/oxyrhynchos.shtml> - a radio program about Oxyrhynchus

Through Google I discover this site: <http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/multi/> which isn't actually linked in the page itself... Bizarre, perhaps I'll email them about it. It's all about the actual procedure of infrared multispectral imaging, which is good because I was looking for that.

Went upstairs to check out the actual books I found – luckily I don't have to go to Sinclair to find the ones I want. I'm looking for a copy of the Iliad, since it's my favorite piece, and I can read it out loud to the class (if I practice my Greek enough), which I think will make these papyri and works more real to the other people. I find in one of the books the plate and transcription of the first 22 lines of the Iliad, which is great, exactly what I want. So I'll have to copy that out for my handout at some point.

Also, now that I found the official stuff I wanted from the website and journals, I want to find secondary sources for Oxyrhynchus. A keyword search in Voyager brings up 14 items, including this interesting-looking one:

Title: *Bookrolls and scribes in Oxyrhynchus* / William A. Johnson.

Main Author: [Johnson, William A. \(William Allen\), 1956-](#)

Now I think I have enough material to start putting together what I want to say and have on my handout.

Notes:

- Intro:

(1) Papyri: we have learned about how it is made, and how it was preserved in dry places throughout Egypt. In the 1700's, discoveries of large batches of papyri were beginning to be made and publicized, and by the late 1800's the Egypt Exploration Society was sending expeditions to Egypt specifically to find such collections.

(2) Oxyrhynchus: where is it, when was it discovered, what did it contain?

Oxyrhynchus was a classical city in Egypt (though now a village) about 200 miles south of Alexandria, and 100 miles south of Cairo, on a branch of the Nile river. In 1895, two young graduate students from Oxford named Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt, funded by the Egypt Exploration Society, came to Oxyrhynchus and by 1896-1897 had discovered the largest deposit of papyri yet found.

Essentially, what they found was garbage; that is, they found the garbage dumps of the city: large mounds, long covered by sand, in which there were hundreds of preserved papyri – including official documents, documents from daily life: receipts, lists, transactions, letters, and literary works, written down as educational exercises or otherwise. It took Grenfell and Hunt 6 years to excavate it all, coming down the Egypt in the winters, and returning to Oxford in the summers to sort through all the material.

- How are the materials in Oxyrhynchus meaningful to scholars?

Generally, as we have learned, what we have now are copies of copies of copies. These papyri represent original texts from (as far as I can tell) the 1st through 4th centuries AD. They give scholars information about not only the texts (in which there are plays, poems, epics, etc) but about daily life in the city, as well as physical characteristics of the material itself – ink, fiber, texture, the aesthetic and structural qualities of the papyrus, and even the dirt it was in.

- How do you get anything from the papyri?

(1) *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, a series of volumes of transcriptions, translations, and commentaries, has been produced since Grenfell and Hunt's first volume in 1898, and which now totals 68 volumes, the last published in 2004.

(2) The papyrus imaging project began in 1997, the main goals of which are:

- Produce high-quality digital images for archiving
- Provide useful images over the Internet
- Associate every image with the data users need, in searchable form
 - MARC library records, SGML databases, and HTML databases, searchable by CGI engines.¹

Recently, though, in April 2005, a new multi-spectral imaging technique has allowed researchers to look at the papyri in new ways – essentially looking at the papyri as captured in different spectra, especially infrared, which makes dirt, or damage on the surface seem to disappear, and the text to appear more clearly. This allows them to read the text more easily, clearing up some old questions, and getting access to previously unreadable texts.

- End product – Homer example?

¹ <http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/imaging/imaging.html>

I also need some other information about the site, so I go to Encyclopedia Britannica for more information. Found a small paragraph about the site, which happens to have the date information I need!²

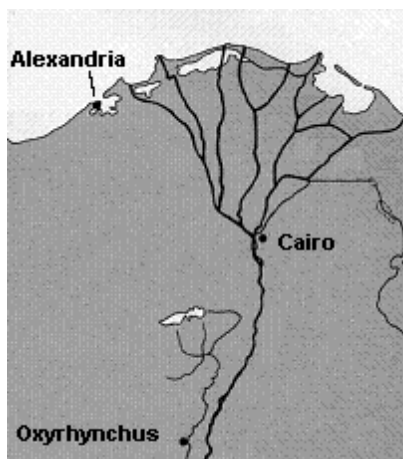
Finally, I found some journals that looked promising – I had already known about these from my previous research, but wanted to check the citations for my handout.

The most interesting things I learned:

I didn't know the papyri were found in the garbage piles – that was pretty interesting to me. I really am interested in the imaging technology they started using recently, but a lot of the research I found turned out to be really technical, too much so for me. I hope to convey my interest in original ancient documents to the class; I've found some decent pictures, so hopefully that will help. I hope people visit the website, since that was really the most informative thing about the whole project.

In fact, the information about the exhibit they had was really great – really personal stuff, like letters and pictures that made the excavations come alive. That was great.

² "Oxyrhynchus." *Encyclopædia Britannica* from Encyclopædia Britannica Online. <<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9057844>> [Accessed September 19, 2005].



Oxyrhynchus Papyri Project

Oxyrhynchus was a classical city in Egypt (now a village) about 200 miles south of Alexandria, and 100 miles southwest of Cairo, situated on a branch of the Nile river. In 1895, two young graduate students from Oxford named Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt, funded by the Egypt Exploration Society, came to Oxyrhynchus to look for papyri. By 1896-1897 they had discovered the largest deposit of papyri yet found – in the ancient garbage heaps of the city.

250BC-700AD: The dates of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri

1895: Grenfell and Hunt reach Egypt

1896: The discovery of the first mound of papyri

1898: The first volume of “The Oxyrhynchus Papyri” published

1997: The start of the Papyri Imaging Project, a high-resolution digital

photography project

2005: New imaging technology allows scholars to access new materials, including never-before-seen literature and plays.

Two images of the same papyrus: the left side is the actual condition of the piece, the right side is an image made with multi-spectral imaging technology: the text becomes readable!

[PICTURES UNAVAILABLE IN THIS FILE]

Egypt Exploration Society. "POxy: Oxyrhynchus Online," *Oxyrhynchus Papyri Project*. Home page online. Available from <http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/index.html>; Internet; accessed 19 Sept. 2005. The homepage of the Oxford-based project, with information on all aspects of the history and papyri of Oxyrhynchus; includes pictures, essays, and, most importantly, the high resolution scans of the papyri themselves.

The Oxyrhynchus Papyri. Graeco-Roman Memoirs. London, Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898-. A continuing series of volumes which include the transcriptions, translations, and commentaries on a variety of the papyri from Oxyrhynchus. The latest volume is #69, to be published in 2006.

Johnson, William A. *Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus*. Toronto, Univ. of Toronto Press, 2004. A groundbreaking look at the “bookroll industry” and scribe culture of Oxyrhynchus. Johnson looks at hundreds of individual papyri to gain an intimate understanding of the design, production, and, he hopes, function of scribes and bookrolls in ancient Greek society.

“*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*.” Bonn, Habelt Verlag, 1967-. The premier journal for the study of papyri; articles are published in German, English, French, and Italian.

“*The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*.” Urbana, Ill., American Society of Papyrologists, 1964-. The leading English-language journal for the study of papyri.