

Notes for students researching objects

These notes are intended as a guide to students researching objects. You should check with your tutor, however, to see what type of information they think should be included in your project.

Most (BUT NOT ALL) of the objects in the Centre come from the collection of Sir Henry Wellcome. The Egypt Centre has an information sheet on him which can be purchased from the Museum shop or read on our web page (www.swansea.ac.uk/egypt). It has additional references on it which may give you extra information on how and why Wellcome collected, where he got his objects, etc. Many of his objects he purchased at auctions but others he got through the EES (in exchange for financing their excavations) or through private individuals. There is also an article in the *Museums Journal* (1986 Vol. 86, Supplement) about Wellcome and how he accessioned objects. You can see a copy in the Egypt Centre.

Other objects have come from the British Museum, the Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh, the National Museums and Galleries of Wales Cardiff and from individuals.

If the object was part of the Wellcome collection, it will have originally been catalogued by Sir Henry Wellcome. If we know what number he gave the object this is put in the 'previous number' field in our catalogue usually with '(W)' written after it. We call this the 'Wellcome number'. Our catalogue can be viewed in the Centre or you can see a hard copy of the entry relating to your object by requesting the 'object file' from the Egypt Centre.

For some objects we have the Wellcome slips associated with the object. These are basically the Wellcome Institute's catalogue entries with the descriptions, which Wellcome's agents gave to the object. If we have the slips you will find them in the 'object file' for the object. For objects where we do not have slips there may be slips in the Wellcome Institute in London. If you want to make an appointment to look at these in the Institute you will need the old Wellcome number.

If there are any old photographs associated with the object look we also put these in the 'object file' and/or you can look in our catalogue to see what is in the 'photograph' field. They might show you if the object has subsequently been repaired. They may have old lot numbers from auctions still attached to them.

When you start to think about your object look at the catalogue first. The catalogue is available on the computer in the shared area. If you want to copy parts of the catalogue bring a memory stick in. There are instructions on how to use the catalogue but if you have problems just ask.

Then ask to see if there is an 'object file'.

If your tutor wants you to look at similar types of objects in other places, as well as books and looking at other museums also look at the web. The Petrie Museum has an excellent online catalogue and others are available for Manchester, the Fitzwilliam, etc.

You might find it useful to look at the accession numbers (the numbers which we give to the object when it comes into the museum) either side of the object you are studying. Does it look as if the objects form a group? It may be that they are group simply because whoever was cataloguing them got the group together for ease of cataloguing. It may be that they form a group because they are from the same site, or from the same collector. This may give you clues on the history of your object.

The Egypt Centre has all its objects on an online database at

<http://www.egyptcentre.org.uk/>

We also have information on hundreds of our objects on our web page at

www.swansea.ac.uk/egypt

You can also look at the catalogue using the MODES database which is available in the Egypt Centre shared area. There is a booklet explaining how to access it.

You may be asked by your tutor to write a life cycle of the object. This could include how and why the object is displayed in the Museum or in other museums. You may find it useful to look at the Egypt Centre books on museums, conservation etc. to help in this. You can't take these out but you can look at them in the Museum.

Your tutor might want you to look at similar types of objects in other museums. Again the Egypt Centre has books on these.

VERY IMPORTANT: Museum staff are human and make mistakes. So, there might be mistakes on the catalogue or the object itself might even have the wrong number written on it. Don't take it as 'gospel truth'. Question what is in the catalogue. Think, 'why did the cataloguer write that?'

Egypt Centre can help you with your project in the following ways:

- We have a library related to the collection. This contains some books that are not in the main University library. You can't take the books out but you can consult them in the Egypt Centre.
- Object files. Some objects have files with extra information that is not in the catalogue. You will need to ask the Museum staff if you want to know if a file is available and they will arrange to get it out for you.

- Auction catalogues. Egypt Centre has parts of some of the auction catalogues from which Sir Henry Wellcome obtained a number of his objects. Egypt Centre staff can arrange to get these out for you.
- Information sheets. Egypt Centre produces information sheets on some of its objects. These are sold on the Museum shop. Most are also available on-line at www.swansea.ac.uk/egypt (follow the link for 'selected items from the collection').

If you need museum staff to get information or the objects out for you leave plenty of time for us. We generally ask for at least a week's notice but if someone is off sick or if we have a big event happening we may need more time. Please fill email Carolyn at c.a.graves-brown@swansea.ac.uk if you need extra information.

FAQs

These are a few of the questions students commonly ask us and the answers we give.

- *Do you have other information on the object apart from what is in the catalogue?*

For some objects we have extra information which is kept in an 'object file'. Sometimes this might just be a picture of the object or it might include more information.

In some instances we may also have the auction catalogue of the sale at which Wellcome Purchased the object. The object may also have been on display in the Wellcome Museum in the Classics Department or in the 'Face of Egypt Exhibition' which preceded the setting up of the Centre. We have catalogues from both these exhibitions. It may be worth you looking at them to see what was thought of the artefact in the past. You might also want to look at the old catalogue card, if there is one. For some objects we have notes made by a researcher prior to the setting up of the Museum.

- *The catalogue doesn't say where my object is from. Can I find this out?*

Many of Egypt Centre's objects are unprovenanced. We only put where it's from on if we know. This doesn't mean it's unknowable. For some objects you might be able to work out where it's from by its style, by the writing on it, or by an excavation number. You could also try working back from the last known owner. For example, if it is part of the Wellcome Collection you may try to find out where Sir Henry Wellcome got his artefacts. Many of them are from auction houses and sometimes the auction catalogues say where the object is from. Egypt Centre has part copies of some of the catalogues which might help in this.

- *The catalogue has a 'previous number' field. What is this?*

This is a number which was previously associated with the object. It might be its old accession number (the number given to it by the museum or a previous collector). It might be an excavation number, it might be an auction lot number. Or it may be a number that is associated with the object but the museum doesn't know why!

- *What do the letters in front of the accession numbers mean?*

W stands for Wellcome. It means that it was probably part of the Wellcome Collection at some point.

A or AB means that the items came from Aberystwyth University

AR stands for Armant. This is excavated material from Armant.

EC stands for Egypt Centre. All objects which we weren't sure where they came from in the 1997 cataloguing were given an EC number.

PM stands for Prys Morgan, who donated some objects to the museum prior to 1997.

- *The catalogue refers to a 'Day Book'. What's this?*

Kate Bosse-Griffiths, the original keeper of the objects at Swansea kept a work diary, which records some of her research, etc. on the objects. The present curator has looked through these and where there are references to objects she has noted this in the catalogue. However, sometimes the Day Books are difficult to understand because of handwriting interpretation or translating between German, Welsh and English.

- *The catalogue refers to 'Kate's catalogue' or 'Old catalogue card'. What is this?*

Kate Bosse-Griffiths produced a manual card catalogue in which she put down information which she knew or guessed about the object. She also produced a typescript catalogue. Sometimes these sources may give extra information about your object. If you want to check just ask.

Finally some questions to ask about your object (but please check with your tutor to see if these are suitable for incorporation into your project):

What is the object made from? How was this material made and used in ancient Egypt? Are there similar objects made of different materials? What colour is it? Is there any reason why it might be this colour? Who made the object? Were they male or female, young or old, rich or poor? Who used it and why? Is it mass produced? Was it difficult to make or could anyone do it? Is it the same as other objects of its type or is it very different? How did the style of such objects change

and why? Is it 'better' than earlier objects of its type? Is it utilitarian, symbolic or both? Could it be a fake? Was it valuable in the past? Is it valuable now? Was it made in the home? How would you date an object like this (radio carbon, thermoluminescence, sequence dating, etc.)? Was it found in a grave or temple or settlement site? Who, or what type of person, might have found this object in Egypt? Who may have later collected it and why? Has the object been added to or repaired? Why? What are the conservation problems associated with this type of material? How would you display this type of object in a museum? What types of objects might you group it with? What do you think is important about this object? Might other people think other things are important? Are there lots of other objects of the same type in Egyptian museums? If not, why? Have the others been lost in antiquity, did they never exist, or was no-one interested enough in them to collect them? Have ideas on how this object might be displayed changed? Why?

Have Fun.

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 Menu Item: [[Edit](#)]


Menu Item Type

Article Layout

The Article Layout displays a single Article.

Change Type

- Parameters (Basic)
- Parameters (Component)
- Parameters (System)

Menu Item Details

ID:	22
Title:	
Alias:	
Link:	
Display in:	The Collection
Parent Item:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Top <input type="checkbox"/> Selected Items <input type="checkbox"/> Searchable Database
Published:	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Order:	4 (Researching The Collection)
Access Level:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Registered <input type="checkbox"/> Special
On Click, Open in:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parent Window with Browser Navigation <input type="checkbox"/> New Window with Browser Navigation <input type="checkbox"/> New Window without Browser Navigation