La Sierra University

La Sierra Digs

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Line of sifts at Tall al-'Umayri, Jordan

Kids’ dig brochure
Campus archaeology brochure
Rendition of future museum
Andressa Pujol in 'Umayri lab
Birth of a New Archaeology Center

The Center for Near Eastern Archaeology at La Sierra University was officially born on 1 July 2012. Its arrival signals something bold, something grand, something entirely new for the campus. In a move intended to ensure a future for the past, especially the biblical past, La Sierra archaeologists, in collaboration with the administration of the HMS Richards Divinity School and the university, created a home for the varied archaeological activities and holdings at La Sierra. The new Center is located on the south side of campus on Raley Drive in spredly renovated quarters of what used to be the Agriculture Department and then a child development center.

What marks the establishment of this new campus center as significant?
• Features include a long and distinguished trajectory of faculty and student involvement in the archaeology of the ancient Near East, which has brought to the university international recognition and admiration. This is regularly witnessed in conferences like the Annual Meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research every November; the World Archaeological Congress held in January at the Dead Sea, Jordan; the triennial International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan (ICHAJ, held in May 2013 in Berlin, Germany), where La Sierra and affiliated Madaba Plains Project scholars deliver lectures and where references regularly arise about our work in session after session. Archaeology faculty include: (from the past) Kenneth Vine and Robert Bates, and (currently) Larry Geraty, Douglas Clark, Kent Bramlett, Chang Ho Ji, Bailey Gillespie, Warren Trenchard.
• Also under the umbrella of the new Center are tours to various parts of the Middle East, and support for an academic major and minor in archaeology, with a Master of Arts degree on the drawing board.

Recent Discoveries
Assembled by Monique Vincent

Feeding the Pyramid Builders

From early beliefs that they were Joseph's granaries or were built by Hebrew slaves, the Pyramids of Giza have inspired curiosity and imagination through time. Today excavations focus on the pyramids in their context, as Pharaoh's funerary monuments during Egypt's Old Kingdom. Recent research has turned to the details of the lives of the true pyramid builders, revealing where they slept and ate, and who got to eat choice morsels. Read more at http://www.livescience.com/28961-ancient-giza-pyramid-builders-camp-unearthed.html

Golden Shoes

This article describes the discovery of a rare piece of apparel - leather shoes worn by a Jewish woman thousands of years ago. The shoes are decorated with gold, providing evidence of the wealth and high social status of the woman who slipped the sandals on her feet. Apparently this discovery of luxury shoes is unique in the Holy Land, with only common leather shoes found before. Read more at http://www.haaretz.com/culture/the-israelite-who-wore-diamonds-on-the-soles-of-her-shoes.premium-1.525066

The Gabriel Stone

A "Dead Sea Scroll written on stone" found 13 years ago is making news again as the center piece of an exhibit in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The stone mentions the angel Gabriel and is probably from the same time period as the Dead Sea Scrolls and, like the Scrolls, provides a "portal into the religious ideas circulating in the Holy Land in the era when Jesus was born." Read more at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/30/gabriel-stone-jerusalem-unveils-mysterious-hebrew-tablet_n_3184953.html
Center Labs
By Monique Vincent

Registration of objects has moved from the Early Bronze Age into the Middle Bronze Age here at the CNEA’s Collections Lab! Volunteer Supervisor, Audrey Shaffer and regular volunteers like Marilyn Tolson and Layla Thomas enjoy watching the transition in the ceramic vessels over time and learning about the various types of handles and decoration types used on pottery from the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC. We have also enjoyed guest appearances by veteran excavators Carolyn Waldron and Nora Cano, eager to help with the work. We appreciate these volunteers as they work on measuring, weighing, describing, photographing, and storing thousands of objects. We will hit 3000 registered objects before the end of this month!

Vera Kopecky, Collections Lab photographer, has been lending a hand by photographing artifact assemblages from La Sierra University’s excavations at Tall al-‘Umayri, Jordan. Several artifacts excavated from the 2010 and 2012 seasons in Jordan will be returned this summer, and we need a series of “glamor” shots of the objects in groups. From the acquisition of new camera lenses to the ad hoc construction of backgrounds, Vera makes photography work at CNEA for both the donated collections and the excavated material!

The ‘Umayri Lab has been alive with volunteers this month, with two religion classes requiring hours spent in worthy pursuits. Matthew (Hew) Murdoch, archaeology major and Honors student at La Sierra, has been working on reconstructing shattered fragments of model shrines, or architectural models, used in ancient rituals at Tall al-‘Umayri. Picking up the broken pieces of these models, puzzled over since their original owners laid them in the ground over three thousand years ago, Hew has been successful in visualizing the pieces and gluing them back together into their original structures.

Andressa Pujol, also an archaeology major, with the help of students April Sapigao, Anderson Neto de Scuza, and Charles Nettles, has been working on recording the details of artifacts excavated during the 2002 season of excavation at ‘Umayri. These stone mortars, glass beads, and ceramic textile artifacts will soon be published and the volunteers have been essential in hastening the completion of this project.
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Calendar of Events

- Summer in Jordan
  Douglas Clark and David Wuchenich working on subsurface mapping at Tall al-`Umayri
- Archaeology Discovery Weekend
  16-17 November 2013
  JERUSALEM + Grand Opening Gala
- Archaeology Across the Campus
- Archaeology Adventures
- Archaeology Lectures

To support the work of the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology, contact the Office of University Advancement at 951 785-2500 or email at nyergen@lasierra.edu or go online at https://www.lasierraconnect.org/