

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)
cordially invites you to the workshop

**A Tale of Searching, Finding, and Keeping.
Archives in the Greco-Roman World**

Friday, 29 April, 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm CEST
Warburgstraße 26, 20354 Hamburg

Hybrid Event

Registration:

<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/en/register-workshop20>

The archiving and, thus, safekeeping of important documents was a crucial part of the administrative processes in the Greco-Roman world. To a substantial extent, this task was performed by state-run archives, working at the service of both society and individual. When researching into the various states, empires and societies of Classical antiquity, one discovers a variety of different archival systems, each adapted to the respective needs at hand.

Over the past decades, modern research on ancient archives has seen significant progress due to in-depth studies into various geographical and chronological settings. In Egypt, where actual archives and their documents are preserved, the publication and analyses of large amounts of primary texts has substantially furthered our understanding of the functioning of both public and private archives. In regions and cities with less fortunate climatic conditions and, therefore, a less favourable material basis—most importantly Athens and Rome—the reconstructive work falls back on more indirect sources (literary and epigraphical) that nevertheless deliver invaluable hints at the underlying processes of archiving and safekeeping.

By gathering specialists on archives from Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Asia Minor, the workshop attempts at exploring both similarities and differences in the archival practices of Greco-Roman antiquity.

Programme

2:00 – 2:10 Introduction and opening remarks

Session 1: Egypt

Chair: Konrad Hirschler (Hamburg)

2:10 – 2:50 Katelijjn Vandorpe (Leuven): *How people lived, what people cherished. Private papyrus archives from Greco-Roman Egypt*

2:50 – 3:30 Thomas Kruse (Vienna): *State archives and archival practice in Roman Egypt*

3:30 – 3:50 Coffee break

Session 2: Greece, Rome, Asia Minor

Chair: Kaja Harter-Uibopuu (Hamburg)

3:50 – 4:30 Michele Faraguna (Milan): *Land records and archives in the Greek poleis*

4:30 – 5:10 Benjamin Hartmann (St. Gallen): *The human archive. The Roman scribes and the cultural, social and political consequences of archiving*

5:10 – 5:50 Karin Wiedergut (Vienna): *Serving two masters? The city archives of Asia Minor under Roman rule*

5:50 – 6:00 Final discussion

Abstracts

Katelijan Vandorpe (KU Leuven): *How people lived, what people cherished. Private papyrus archives from Greco-Roman Egypt, 2:10 pm – 2:50 pm*

Documentary papyri lead us into the living rooms of ancient people. While isolated texts are like instant snapshots, private papyrus archives present a coherent picture of the life of a person or a family, and may span several months, years, or decades. The possibilities of archival research for any aspect of life in Greco-Roman Egypt are unlimited. This paper discusses the more technical and methodological aspects of archival research: what constitutes an archive, how and where were archives preserved, how were they organized and what types of documents do we find in them? The rich archive of Dryton, a Greek officer who married an Egyptian girl, will serve as a case study.

Thomas Kruse (Austrian Academy of Sciences): *State archives and archival practice in Roman Egypt, 2:50 pm – 3:30 pm*

Even outside the province of Aegyptus - one only has to think of the edict of Q. Veranius concerning the archives of Lycia - there is significant evidence for the high importance that the Roman administration attached to a functioning archive system in the Roman provinces. Due to the particularly favorable richness of evidence, compared to other provinces, these testimonies are especially numerous for Roman Egypt. This concerns both dispositive legal acts of governors concerning archives - three major edicts alone deal with this matter; as well as (the much more numerous) testimonies from everyday administrative practice, which reflect the organization, function and modus operandi of archives - from the central archives in the provincial capital Alexandria, to the archives in the metropolises of the administrative districts (nomoi), down to the notarial archives in individual villages. It turns out that the centralized and richly differentiated archival system, which developed under Roman rule into a separate branch of Egyptian provincial administration, had no Ptolemaic precedent in this form, which underlines the high interest of the Romans in this subject. This interest was directed, on the one hand, towards securing private legal transactions, in that a functioning registration and, if necessary, authentication of private legal instruments guaranteed legal security for the contracting parties, and, on the other hand, towards the control and verifiability of the actions of the local administration, to which purpose separate archives for the documentation of administrative acts were established; last but not least, of course, the archives also took into account the administration's efforts to record

and document the material resources of the province as comprehensively as possible. These aspects will be examined in more detail in the paper on the basis of selected representative texts on the structure, organization, function and practice of the archives in Roman Egypt.

Michele Faraguna (Università degli Studi di Milano Statale): *Land records and archives in the Greek poleis*, 3:50 pm – 4:30 pm

Archives and their role in the administration of ancient Greek cities are a challenging topic. As a rule, archives and their physical structures are difficult to trace and reconstruct archaeologically (with the exception of those cases where a high concentration of seals is encountered), while the records assembled in them were written on perishable materials, primarily wooden tablets (waxed or whitened) and papyrus, or sometimes leather, and are consequently now lost. Writing media and their uses in the Greek world were nonetheless manifold and included stone, bronze and lead. We therefore possess a large and slowly but steadily increasing body of public and private documents that, for reasons to be investigated for each individual case, were written on these permanent materials and shed exciting light on administrative and legal practices and procedures. In order to retrieve ancient archives and understand their contents and organization we have to rely on the preserved documents and work backwards. In this paper I will try to apply this working method to the case of land records on the assumption that in the Greek polis ownership of real estate was a 'privilege' connected to citizenship and, as a result, public control must have in the first place concerned citizens' lists and land tenure.

Benjamin Hartmann (University of Zurich): *The human archive. The Roman scribes and the cultural, social and political consequences of archiving*, 4:30 pm – 5:10 pm

The *scribae* were the official scribes, documentary specialists and archivists of the Roman Republican state. Assigned to the various magistrates, they were paid to draft and administer the public financial and legal documentation the office holders were expected to produce. In Rome, they were entrusted with the administration of the public archives and the official documents these were composed of. As a result of their professional function and the workings of the apparitorial civil service of which they were part, they found themselves at the heart of an expanding public documentation and soon enough were considered the veritable experts on documentary practice. They effectively held a monopoly in handling the so-called *tabulae publicae*, the official repository of public knowledge. As a consequence, the history of the Roman *scribae* is also a history of the Roman archive and its materiality. Bound by oath, the *scribae* vouched with their own

social credit for the integrity of the large-format wax tablets that constituted the *tabulae publicae*. In this way, men of humble origins and small means found themselves ennobled by the importance of what they were entrusted with. At the same time, control over the written arcana of the state and access to the powerful were bound to yield tangible benefits and, as a result, high social mobility – even if it meant breaching the oath they had sworn.

Karin Wiedergut (Austrian Academy of Sciences): *Serving two masters? The city archives of Asia Minor under Roman rule*, 5:10 pm – 5:50 pm

The southwestern parts of ancient Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) were equipped with elaborate systems of safekeeping and archiving documents well before the arrival of Rome. When the regions were transformed into Roman provinces – Asia in 129 BCE, Lycia in 43 CE – the new rulers apparently only made minor adaptations to a well-established system, e.g. by fixing certain malpractices in the city archives, as is shown by the famous edict of Q. Veranius, the first governor of Lycia (SEG 33, 1177). The benefits of having a working archival system in place are quite obvious for the Roman side, and are, to a great extent, to be seen in connection with the latter's fiscal interests. However, as Veranius argues when stating his own reasons for intervention, it was the legal security of each and every individual in the newly founded province that was on his (and, by extension, the Romans') mind when aiming at restoring good practices in the public archives.

The extant sources from the Roman Imperial period (1st to 3rd centuries CE), which – oddly enough – mainly come from the realm of funerary epigraphy, seem to confirm such a carefully administered system of protecting the individual through measurements taken by the Roman provincial government. Gradually and over time, the general public was given the possibility to make use of the archives' services in many ways, ensuring an enhanced level of legal security for the citizens of the provinces. The talk will focus on archival practices in the provinces' cities and specifically discuss the question of access given to their residents: Next to the Roman government, can the general public in the provinces be seen as the other master of the archival systems provided by the cities? Or, put differently, were the Romans acting or reacting when changing administrative practices?