Ancient archaeology holds clue to new computer systems

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Greek pot early 5th c. BCE

Researchers are looking back at ancient civilisations in order to develop future computer systems in a £1.75m project.

By analysing the changes and developments of traditions and techniques used by craft communities in the ancient Mediterranean researchers believe they can create new and more effective methods of data mobility within computer networks.

Archaeology researchers at the universities of Glasgow, Leicester and

Exeter are looking at objects ranging from cooking wares and coins to wall paintings and loom weights and tracing the links between the people who made, used and taught others to make them.

Professor Peter Van Dommelen from the University of Glasgow said: “By tracing the development of techniques and technologies used to create specific objects we will see how the developments crossed temporal, geographical and cultural boundaries. It is this pattern of passing-on and upgrading of information that our colleagues in computing science hope to imitate for the creation of computer systems that are better connected and more reliable.

“Research of this inter-disciplinary nature is really breaking boundaries in the way technology is being created in the 21st century.”

Professor Lin Foxhall, Principal Investigator of the project at Leicester University, added: “How do we gather knowledge about how societies came to operate the way they do? We can’t travel in time and observe how complex networks evolved, but we can collect, organise and interpret their remains. And, we can apply what we learn from the past to help us address pressing issues we face today.”

The project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, combines archaeology, archaeological science and computer science to investigate networks across and beyond the Mediterranean region, encompassing Greek, Punic and other peoples, from the late Bronze age through classical times.

Provided by University of Glasgow

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