

'Paperless' research to be highlighted at international conference

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12-16 in Beijing, China.

The iPad research experiment, led by Steven Ellis, UC assistant professor of classics, and John Wallrodt, a senior research associate for the Department of Classics, has been featured on the National Geographic Channel as well as Apple's website. That's after the researchers took six iPads to UC's excavation site at Pompeii last summer. The iPads themselves were just being introduced at the time.

UC teams of [archaeologists](#) have spent more than a decade at the site of the Roman city that was buried under a volcano in 79 AD. The project is producing a complete archaeological analysis of homes, shops and businesses at a forgotten area inside one of the busiest gates of Pompeii, the Porta Stabia.

Through years of painstaking recording of their excavations, the researchers are exploring the social and cultural scene of a lost city and how the middle class neighborhood influenced Pompeian and Roman culture.

The standard archaeological approach to recording this history – a 300-year tradition – involves taking precise measurements, drawings and notes, all recorded on paper with pencil. But last summer, the researchers found that the handheld computers and their ability to digitally record and immediately communicate information held many advantages over a centuries-honed tradition of archaeological recording.

"There's a common, archival nature to what we're doing. There's a precious timelessness, a priceless sort of quality to the data that we're gathering, so we have made an industry of being very, very careful about how we record things," explains Ellis. "Once we've excavated through it, it's gone, so ever since our undergraduate years, we've become very, very good and consistent at recording. We're excited about discovering there's

another way," Ellis says.

"Because the trench supervisor is so busy, it can take days to share handwritten notes between trenches," explains Wallrodt. "Now, we can give them an (electronic) notebook every day if they want it."

Wallrodt says one of the biggest concerns of adopting the new technology was switching from drawing on a large sheet of paper to sticking one's finger on the iPad's glass. "With the iPad, there's also a lot less to carry. There's no big board for drawing, no ruler and no calculator."

The researchers say they plan to pack even more iPads on their trip to Pompeii this June. The research project is funded by the Louise Taft Semple Fund through the UC Department of Classics.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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