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Medieval Nemea: Building a Public Digital Resource

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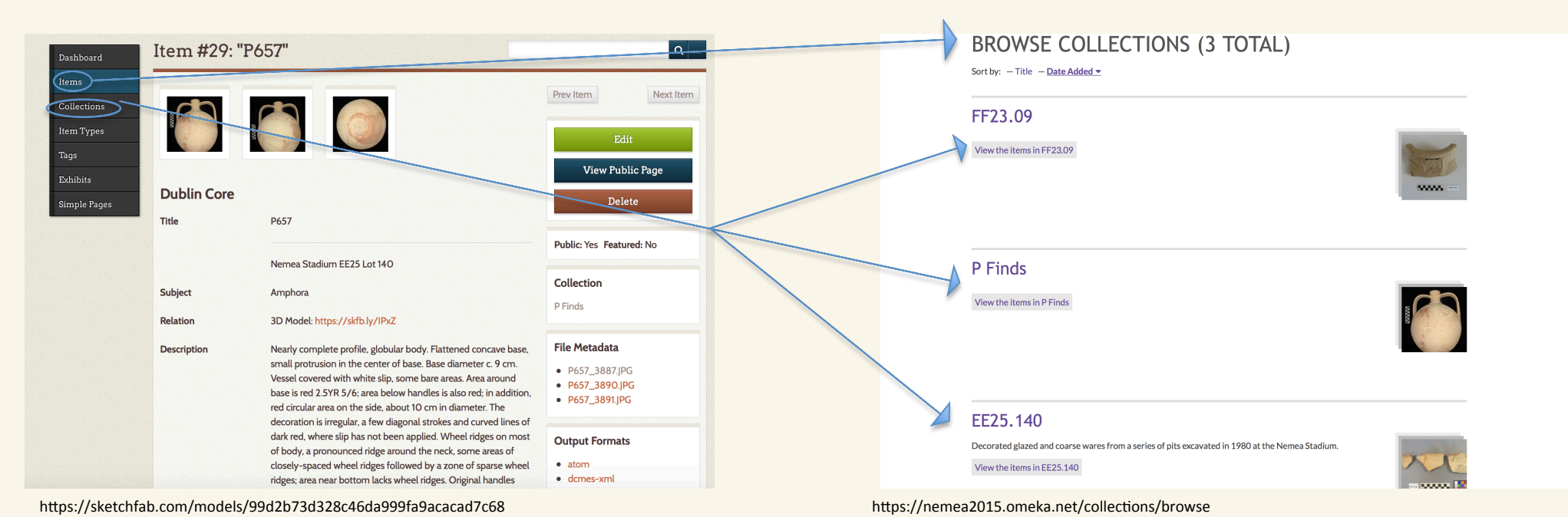
MEDIEVAL NEMEA: BUILDING A PUBLIC DIGITAL RESOURCE

Lauren Vagts, Department of Anthropology

The Project - Why use Omeka?

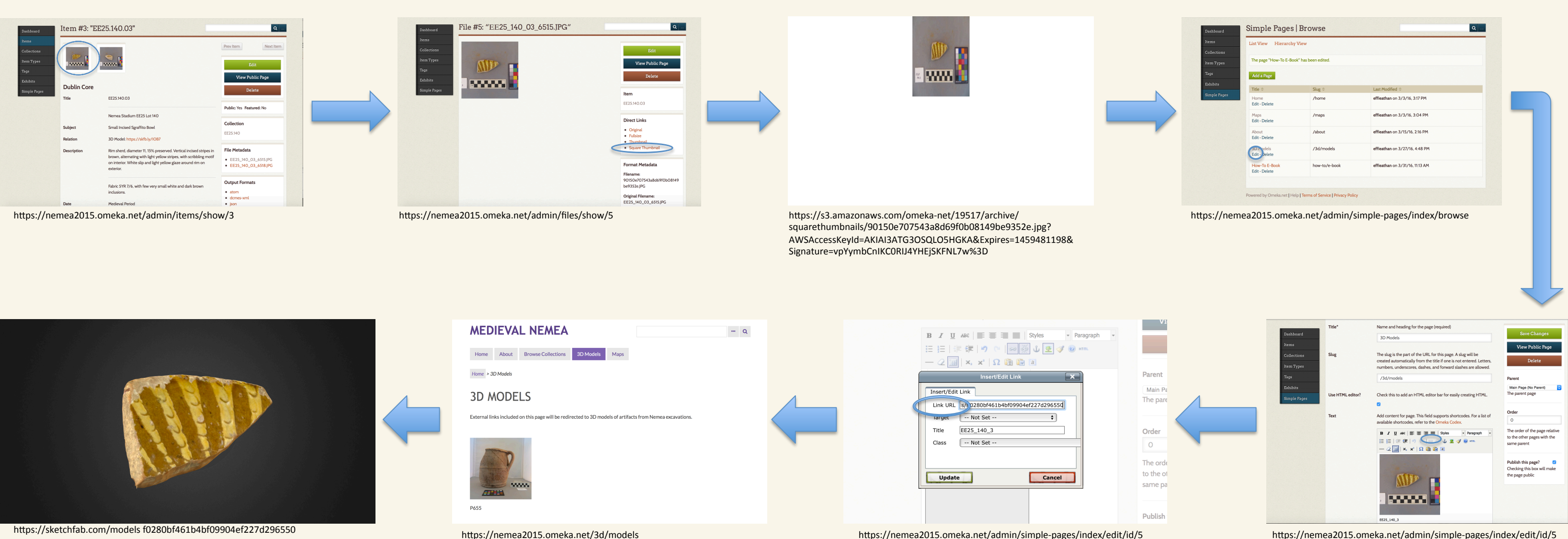
This site presents medieval ceramics from the excavations at the site of Nemea, in southern Greece. We are creating a digital resource with results and artifacts from archaeological excavations conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, which have remained unpublished. The website will incorporate a variety of materials, including excavation notebooks, maps, data bases, photographs, and 3D models of ceramics.

Omeka was selected as the software for this project for several reasons. Omeka offers the Dublin Core metadata as a way to standardize and organize digital data, allowing its users access to a well-developed platform. Omeka is also an open source software allowing anyone to build and access digital resources, as well as the opportunity to share cultural heritage resources worldwide. Lastly, plugins are useful tools which allow users to broaden the fundamental functionality of Omeka.



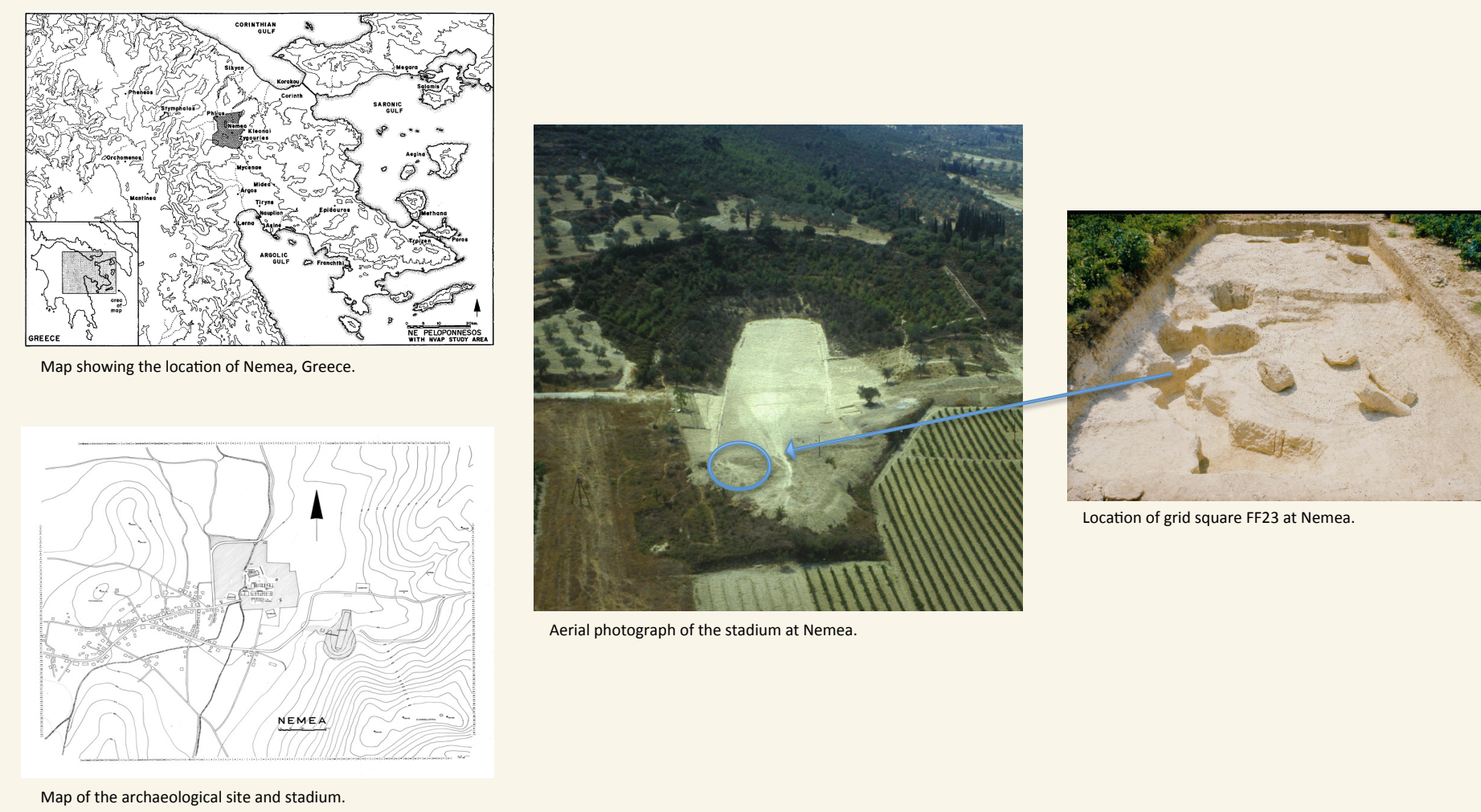
Creating External Links

Currently, Omeka does not offer a plugin for viewing 3D models, and we have searched for ways to incorporate these models in our site. We were able to solve this problem by simply creating a page that displays all of the 3D models with images and hyperlinks. This allows the user to view the 3D models in another tab.



Medieval Nemea Site

The excavations at the Sanctuary of Zeus in Nemea have been conducted by the University of California at Berkeley since 1974. During classic antiquity, between 5th and 4th centuries BCE, the Sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea was one of the four greatest Panhellenic sanctuaries in Greece, including Olympia, Delphi and Isthmia. Several rituals took place at the site, including athletic festivals held in honor of the various gods. Panhellenic athletic festivals were held prior to a truce where representatives of the entire Greek world gathered in celebration of their united culture. The Nemean Games were celebrated biannually and were organized on the same model as the better known Olympic Games.



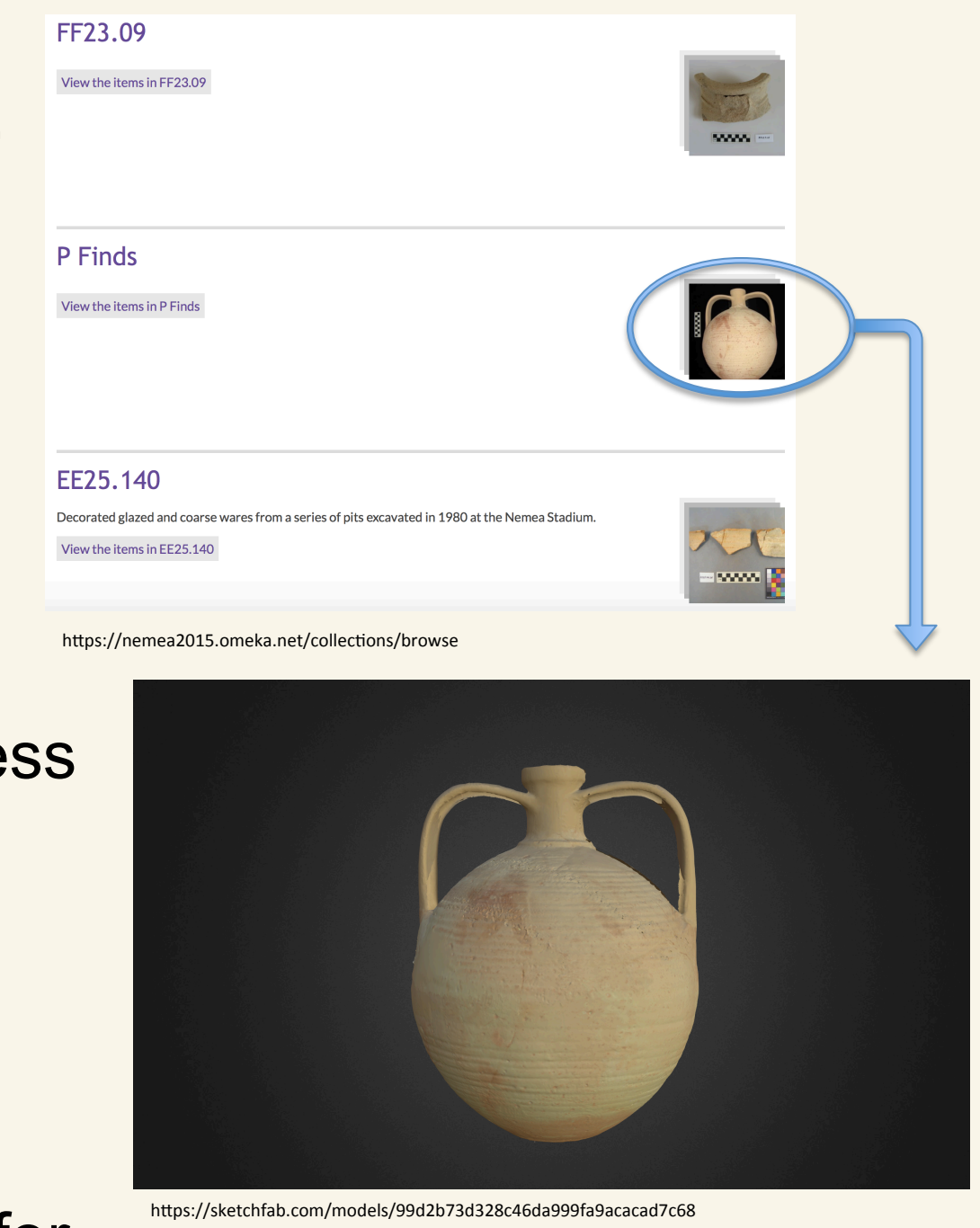
About Medieval Nemea

In 1974 archaeologist Stephen Miller excavated five meters of layered silt from the stadium, dating these layers to the 12th and 13th centuries AD indicating that the artifacts recovered had more than likely washed down from the hill above. The following year, large amounts of ceramics, dating to the same time period, were excavated from the north end of the Stadium in section FF23. As Miller wrote "it will be of interest in the future to determine the location of the Middle Byzantine settlement which was responsible for the production of such a large quantity of ceramic and numismatic material" (Miller 1976, p.194). Excavations in 1980 focused on the northern section of the Stadium, in section EE25. Trenches excavated earlier (in 1925) were revealed as well as multiple layers and pits with large quantities of medieval artifacts from the 12th and 13th centuries.

Ceramics from these areas (FF23 and EE25) represent domestic debris deposited over a period of time. These and other closed deposits from the Nemea excavations provide information about material culture from well-dated contexts. These deposits are essential in order to refine chronology, and reconstruct daily activities at the site and its vicinity.

Limitations and Assessment

Although Omeka allows us to create an open source database, there are limitations and some disadvantages. At this point, Omeka is more geared toward 2D images and does not offer plugins for 3D data. So, we have searched for solutions with moderate success, inserting external links that allow a seamless transition to external websites, such as SketchFab, which hosts 3D models.



Omeka is an open source database developed specifically for cultural heritage projects. The main advantage is that it provides ready-made templates, and many plugins which allow customization. Using an open source platform also enables us to share our research within the digital humanities community. Disseminating results of archaeological research in this matter allows for critiques and invites perspectives from a broad spectrum of users and researchers.

Future Plans – Concluding Thoughts

As digital technologies progress, so will our abilities to enhance this digital resource. Although Omeka was created for a 2D environment, we anticipate that soon it will offer tools that will allow the incorporation of 3D data. In the near future, we plan to create an open forum and invite comments and suggestions from users for improvements of this digital resource. Another addition will be to create a 'How-to E-book' page that will explain the process and the steps that we have followed, and make the addition of new content easy and user-friendly. Finally, resources such as this strengthen the connection between research, heritage and preservation, by broadening participation and making accessible material that previously had been available only to specialists.

Acknowledgements

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