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Spring 2018

# An Archivist and a Geologist Walk into a Pub ...

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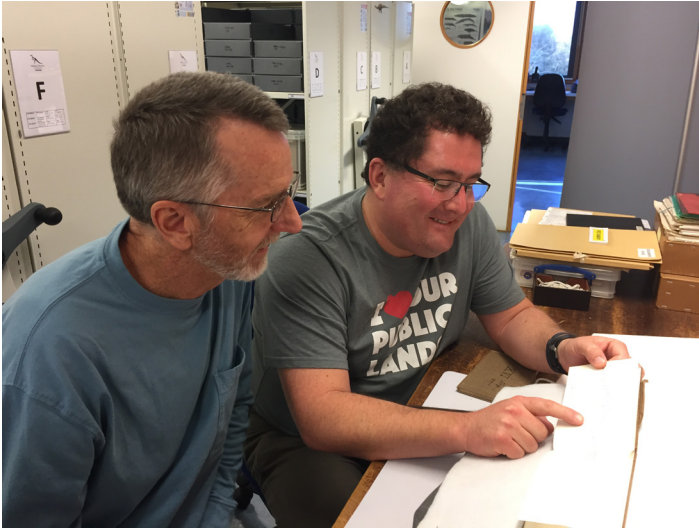
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## Recommended Citation

Wurtz, M. J. (2018). An Archivist and a Geologist Walk into a Pub .... *Society of California Archivists Newsletter*, 166, 20–21.  
<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/libraries-articles/108>

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## AN ARCHIVIST AND A GEOLOGIST WALK INTO A PUB...



Archivist Wurtz and geologist Burmeister (with clean hands) inspect the 127-year-old geological notes of the Grand Canyon at Cambridge University during a research trip to the UK to discover the history of geological thought.

The University of the Pacific archives (led by me) and geology departments (led by Dr. Kurtis Burmeister) have been working together for years to have archival resources used on field trips in California, the Canyonlands of Utah and Arizona, and Scotland. We include reproductions of John Muir's journals, Internment Camp newsletters, historic maps, and other archival and library resources in the field guidebooks to connect students to the landscape and improve observational skills. Surveys of the students conducted before and after the trips have indicated success.

During these field trips, I have been drawn to the history of geology and I have learned that the Scots have been the bedrock of geological thought. James Hutton was the first scientist to theorize that the earth had to be older than Bible indicated 6000 years, and other Scots have developed seminal theories on volcanism and plate tectonics. On a history/geology trip to Scotland in 2017, we included archival documents into the students' field guides so they could look at them in the very places where early geologists first understood the earth themselves.

When preparing for the Scotland trip, we quickly learned that much of Scotland's history is preserved

in London's archives, libraries, and museums. So, we wrote an internal grant to send us to London to find those resources. We ended up visiting the British Library, the Geological Society, the University of Birmingham's Lapworth Museum of Geology, the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, and the Cambridge University Sedgwick Museum of Earth Science.

All three museums had robust archival collections that were branches of the curatorial collections (where the rocks and bones are kept). None appeared to be directly affiliated with universities' main library or archives, nor did they have separate reading rooms for researchers. Oxford's was part of the administrative offices, Cambridge's was in the collections room, and Birmingham's was in an unused classroom. They all had created some online access to either boutique collections or basic finding aids; and all were starting digitization projects to make available on larger networks of resources like Calisphere.

As far as seeing cool stuff, our expectations were wildly exceeded! We saw and captured nearly 1000 images including the first geological map ever drawn -- a beautifully colored 1807 map of Bath, England by William Smith, who later drew the first geological map of a country and was the subject of Simon Winchester's 2001 *The Map That Changed the World*. We were also struck by the 1891 notebooks from British geologist Alfred Harker's tour of the US West. Harker made observations of the exact locations that we take students. Clearly, we found plenty of materials that will enrich the experience of our students on field trips.

The British Library had extremely high security, but an extremely liberal reproduction policy - just don't hurt the books and maps, or disturb other patrons. Tip for "library lovers:" figure out an old book you want to see and contact these libraries well in advance to determine access. Like most modern libraries, books are hard to find or encased in glass, and rare books are rarely a matter of walking in and asking. A year earlier, I jumped through the hoops to see a book from Ireland's Trinity Library's Long Room and just getting to the "Early Printed Books" reading room was a worthwhile odyssey.

Even with all the preparation, most of the archivists we visited were still a bit hesitant to help us at first. But once we got the archivist interested, they bent over



The transition from archivist to researcher is painless and rewarding when you are in the British Library and you get to roll out an early 18th century geologic map of Scotland.

backwards to find the coolest stuff. This was especially so at the Geological Society. Although they had the strictest policies (including a fee to walk in the door), the now-interested archivists would top themselves with each new box of geological treasures that beat everything we intended to see. All the people at the museums were wonderful, and excitedly reminded us upon departure that if we need anything else, let them know.

The trip was an excellent opportunity to see how geological and English archives work, study the history of geological thought, find outstanding examples of observations that can be shared with students, and foster continued opportunities to work with teaching faculty. None of this would have happened if it weren't for the connection with the geology department at the University of the Pacific. I'm quite fortunate to have a colleague like Kurt Burmeister to shepherd, mentor, and work with me to get our archives into the classroom.

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