



Knowledge in the Graeco-Roman world (I-IV AD): forms, materiality, diffusion and transmission.

One-day international seminar - 16 November 2012

The first centuries of our era in the Graeco-Roman world have been characterized as a period of compilation and antiquarianism underpinned by an admiration for the models of the Greek past, but also as an age that was particularly dynamic in terms of the diffusion of new ideas and technologies. The use of the book as a tool for the production, adaptation and diffusion of knowledge was a crucial element in this context, since the spread of knowledge was inconceivable without writings and media through which these writings could be disseminated. At the same time, the interactions between the ancient Greek literary, scientific and religious traditions and the new cultural environments in which they were imitated, reshaped or criticized, both required and favoured the growth of the various instruments of knowledge.

The aim of this one-day seminar is to examine some of the key issues that shaped intellectual and cultural development in the Graeco-Roman world. The following topics are proposed for discussion:

- The forms under which knowledge was presented.
- The role of abbreviation and expansion: synthetic treatises, compilations, epitomes and other strongly derivative genres.
- The non-textual contents – drawings, diagrams, tables, indexes, lists – and their place in books. Their role in the definition of genres.
- How politics affected scholarship: different forms of patronage and their products.
- The libraries and the imperial courts as places of knowledge.
- The functions of stored, old knowledge in the creation of new knowledge. The interpretation of ancient tradition.
- The book as a cultural icon: what social roles for author and reader were implied?
- Education and social class of the producers and users of knowledge.
- The relationship between form and contents of knowledge: volume, codex, inscription and other formats. Kinds of text.
- The role of the codex in the reorganization of knowledge, from the point of view of the contents.
- Different kinds of books and the individuals involved in their writing, production, and reading.
- Buying and selling books: edition, production, diffusion and acquisition.
- Imperial policies, new groups, and the reorganization of knowledge.