

Time Capsule Ceremony Welcome by Sue Alcock
November 19, 2008

This ceremony could seem but a simple matter of fun. This torpedo shaped object, borne in procession from the present location of the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World by four strapping youths accompanied by an color-coordinated, highly exhibitionist crowd, will now be interred below the relaid floor of old Rhode Island Hall – the building that will soon be our new home. Within it are various assemblages of artifacts and images, assemblages representing themes such as ‘A Day in the Life of the Institute’, ‘Life on Campus’, ‘The Past State of Archaeology’, ‘Objects from the Field’, and ‘The Year 2008’. In this torpedo shaped object are the building’s architectural plans, t-shirts, pictures of Arte and Martha, lists of Institute courses, Obama memorabilia, a piece of our own private Parthenon, – what else? – and more corks and bottles than I think we care to admit.

So this is all great good fun. But we are also archaeologists. And that means that for us especially ‘things’ carry power and meaning. Selecting these objects, making this kind of ritual deposition, putting something away for others, someday, to find and to interpret: what we do here today is actually very serious, even solemn, business. In many ways it is a statement of hope for the future and for temporal connection with those who will follow. Given what is in this torpedo shaped object, we should wish those future archaeologists (and may it be archaeologists and not tomb looters!) good luck in figuring us out! But we also wish them well.

As we wish the time capsule well in its new context. Libations and prayers will now follow....

A Mesopotamian prayer
Graeco-Roman and Mayan rituals of offering
Chinese sacrificial hymn and ‘human sacrifice’

‘Taps’ on the concertina, as the time capsule is taken into the building for deposition.