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REFLECTIONS ON THE BEGINNINGS OF STUDIA ANTIQUA ON ITS TENTH ANNIVERSARY

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It is a great pleasure for me to write some reflections on the beginnings of Studia Antiqua on its tenth anniversary. When a small group of undergraduates, including me, founded the journal a decade ago, we had high hopes for the ways in which it would foster student scholarship at Brigham Young University. As I have recently reminisced with individuals who participated in the journal’s inception, several have expressed surprise and delight that it is still an active part of ancient studies on campus.1 The journal has experienced a few setbacks and has evolved in many interesting ways over the last ten years, but its perseverance and its status in 2011 as an official publication of the BYU Religious Studies Center lends affirmation to the goals we set out to accomplish in 2001. Needless to say, the founding editors and early contributors of Studia Antiqua are quite pleased that it continues to fulfill its original intent by serving as a valuable academic resource for BYU students involved in the study of antiquity.

The founding of Studia Antiqua was directly related to the creation of a student organization for the study of the ancient world. In the fall of 2000, two BYU undergraduates—Thomas Spackman and Jason Combs—approached the Brigham Young University Student Association (BYUSA) with the idea of creating the BYU Ancient Studies Club. This club would provide a venue in which interested students of antiquity could associate with each other and listen to occasional faculty lectures. In April of 2001 the club held its first official elections and appointed Davin Anderson, an exceptionally talented student linguist, as president. That summer the club presidency expanded to include

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1. In particular, I thank Robert Ricks, Mindy Anderson Jeppesen, Carli Anderson, and Bradley Ross for sharing some of their thoughts and memories of the journal’s early days as I prepared this essay.
a vice-president (John Robinson), secretary (Robert Hunt), treasurer (Carli Anderson), and historian (Bradley Ross).

I had been acquainted with members of the presidency from shared Hebrew, Greek, and Near Eastern Studies classes, and in the Fall 2001 semester we began discussing ways in which the club could expand to include more student participation. For example, there was interest in providing a regular forum in which students could present their research in public lectures. As a part of these discussions, most of which occurred in the Hugh W. Nibley Ancient Studies Room in the Harold B. Lee Library, I suggested to the club presidency that they create a journal in which to publish this student research. They enthusiastically agreed and (as I should have anticipated before I made the suggestion!) appointed me as the general publication director of the club, thus making me responsible for overseeing the publication of student research.

As many of these activities went beyond the scope of the club’s status with BYUSA, we decided to create a new society to better articulate the vision and facilitate the goals of the organization. That semester we changed the name of the club to the BYU Student Society for Ancient Studies, drafted a constitution to regulate the election and duties of society officers, and moved the organization from BYUSA to under the auspices of S. Kent Brown, the director of Ancient Studies at that time. This new society would provide a forum in which faculty and students from various disciplines and departments—History, Classics, Anthropology, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, and Ancient Scripture—could come together to present and evaluate student research dealing with the ancient world broadly defined.

Along with creating a new society, that semester we announced the establishment of its official semiannual publication—Studia Antiqua: The Journal of the Student Society for Ancient Studies. The vision for Studia Antiqua (“Ancient Studies”) was to provide an opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students to produce original research, experience the editing process (including receiving scholarly review and providing necessary revisions), and have a polished, published piece to put on their Curricula Vitae. We felt that this would be valuable preparation for future work in academics and would provide students with a professionally vetted writing sample as they applied for graduate programs or professional positions. We also hoped that the existence of such

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2. To help organize, define, govern, and perpetuate the journal, we drafted a document—“By-Laws for the Governing and Operation of Studia Antiqua”—that outlined its purpose, content, submission process, editing, publication, promotion, funding, and distribution. This document was signed in October 2001 by S. Kent Brown as director of Ancient Studies, me as founding editor in chief, and the presidency of the Student Society for Ancient Studies.
a journal would expand the vision and raise the academic standards among ancient studies students on campus.

The initial production of *Studia Antiqua* proved to be a complicated, time consuming, and extremely rewarding experience.\(^3\) Before an issue of the journal could be published we needed funding to cover the necessary costs, members of the BYU faculty who would be willing to provide academic review, and, of course, student articles. Davin Anderson and I spent a busy week in the Fall 2001 semester meeting with various departments and entities on campus (History, Archaeology, Classics, Asian and Near Eastern Languages, Ancient Scripture, G.E. and Honors, and the Institution for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts [ISPART\(^4\)]), sharing our vision of the journal, and soliciting funds. Each department graciously supported the project, provided money to publish the journal twice a year (every fall and winter semester), and appointed its own representative to serve on the journal’s Faculty Review Board.\(^5\) In order to publish the journal’s first issue in a timely manner we did not send out a call for papers as we would for subsequent issues. Rather, we invited a handful of selected students to submit papers they had already written for various classes. This resulted in five articles within the categories of Classical, Ancient Near Eastern, and Biblical Studies.

Work on the first issue also included an extensive process of editing, formatting, printing, and distribution. It would be several years before the student editors of *Studia Antiqua* had an official internship or paid position. In this early period the journal was completely dependent upon students who volunteered their time and efforts in order to turn our vision into a reality. I am personally very grateful to Robert Ricks, Mindy Anderson Jeppesen, and Andrea Ludwig—all incredibly talented and dedicated students, editors, and friends—who put in countless uncompensated hours as the managing editors for the first three to four issues of the journal. Each made valuable contributions to its content and format, and we all experienced a steep learning curve, as well as enjoyed a wonderful camaraderie, as we began this exciting project together.

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3. Thoughts on this process as it unfolded can be found in the Society Update and the Editor’s Preface at the beginning of each issue from 2001 to 2003. There was also a full-length article about the founding of the society and journal in the *Daily Universe* in 2002, but I have not been able to locate a copy of it or determine its precise date.

4. This entity has since become part of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship.

5. Technically, the funds from these various departments and entities were not made available in time for the journal’s first issue, resulting in Ancient Studies solely providing the necessary funding for the initial publication. All subsequent publications, however, were made possible through the annual donations made by the various departments.
For the first issue we had to find facilities and software that would allow us to carry out the necessary editing and formatting. At the time, Robert Ricks was also an editor of the *Collegiate Post: BYU’s Academic Fortnightly*, a student newspaper on campus whose facilities were located in the basement of the old Smith Family Living Center. Robert arranged for us to use those facilities after hours, which resulted in many late nights but allowed us to format the journal for publication. When the formatting was complete we took the content and funds to the BYU Printing Services for publication. As soon as printed copies of the journal came off the press, members of the society presidency distributed them throughout campus to interested students, faculty, and departments. Copies of the journal were also placed in the Harold B. Lee Library and were made available for purchase at the BYU Bookstore.

Although the first issue of *Studia Antiqua* (Fall 2001) was slightly belated (it was actually published in February of 2002), we were proud to have brought our vision of a student publication from conception to finished product in less than four months. We were also delighted that, with a few exceptions, students and faculty enthusiastically received the journal’s first issue and began using it as incentive to improve course writing assignments. A personal highlight for me that semester was walking into the Ancient Studies office in the HBLL to see Hugh Nibley reading an article from it (I believe it was Ariel Bybee Laughton’s piece “Vestal Virgins and Early Christian Asceticism”) and hear him remark to Pat Ward (the Ancient Studies secretary at that time) on how excited he was to see such work being done by BYU students. Needless to say, this provided an additional motivation to continue work on the journal and further improve its quality.

Work on the second issue (Winter 2002) had already begun by the time the first issue was at the press, and we were considering new ways to develop the journal’s content, format, and operation. For the second issue we extended an open call for student article submissions, expanded the student editorial staff (which was still working on a voluntary basis), added abstracts of student honors theses to the journal’s content, and included student illustrations. By this time we had also moved out of the SFLC basement and were invited by Mel Thorne to work on the journal in the Humanities Publication Center, which offered vastly superior facilities and software. From here the project continued to expand. For the third issue (Fall 2002) we obtained an ISSN number for the

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6. This building has since been torn down to make way for the new Joseph F. Smith Building.

7. Submissions at that time were initially reviewed and accepted for publication by the journal’s Student Editorial Advisory Board, which consisted of the Student Society for Ancient Studies presidency.
journal from the Library of Congress and had a staff of ten student editors (an editor in chief, four managing editors, and five other staff members), each of which were now receiving university credit in the form of an editing internship. That issue contained seven articles, book reviews, a section featuring a discussion between a previous student author and an interested faculty member, and illustrations by Michael Lyon (a professional illustrator whose work adorns the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley).

By the Winter 2003 semester, I had been working on creating, developing, and producing the journal for over a year and a half. In addition, I was then preparing to graduate from BYU, get married, and begin graduate school at Andrews University (all of which I did in August 2003). A major concern I had during that semester was the perpetuation of the journal; obviously, I hoped that the work we had begun in 2001 would continue to be a part of student academics at BYU long after we had all moved on. For the fourth issue (Winter 2003) we added a second editor in chief, Tyson Yost, who would bring the journal into its third year. Tyson’s most significant accomplishment was working with the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) to co-publish a special issue of Studia Antiqua (Summer 2003) which contained the proceedings of a student conference on Hebrew law in the Book of Mormon.8

Unfortunately I have not been able to determine precisely what happened to the journal (or the Student Society for Ancient Studies) in 2004. For some reason the journal was not published that year. (I suspect that this might have been connected to the decline of the society around this time.)9 One issue of Studia Antiqua was published in the winter of 2005 with the subtitle being changed from “The Journal of the Student Society for Ancient Studies” to “The Student Journal for Ancient Studies,” thus dropping its association with the (now defunct?) society. However, I know little about how this issue came to be, its connection to any student organization then on campus, or how its editorial process worked.

Despite this brief attempt at its resuscitation, Studia Antiqua appeared doomed to extinction after two years of not being published between the

8. This volume contains a lengthy introduction by John W. Welch on the conference and publication, and is still available for purchase through the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship.

9. Carli Anderson remembers that the society began to decline with the discontinuation of the old Near Eastern studies major and MA program. Even though the society’s interests and activities included the entire ancient world, most of the society presidency members had been part of the old Near Eastern Studies program. When those ranks were no longer being filled society leadership and membership naturally declined.
springs of 2005 and 2007. I was delighted to hear that sometime in early 2007 Breanne White (who had been a student of mine in 2005 and 2006) and Daniel McClellan felt motivated to resurrect the journal and begin publishing it again on a semiannual basis. A number of changes were made to the journal in order to adapt it to the current situation on campus. For example, the Student Society for Ancient Studies no longer existed by this time. In its place had arisen the Students of the Ancient Near East (SANE), an organization to support students in the newly created Ancient Near Eastern Studies major. Although this organization was more narrowly defined than the former Student Society for Ancient Studies had been, SANE leadership took responsibility for publishing the journal. The organization retained the broad title of *Studia Antiqua* and the journal’s original goal of publishing research from various parts of the ancient world, as indicated by its new and current subtitle, “A Student Journal for the Study of the Ancient World.” This reinvention of the journal was soon accompanied by its new status as an official publication of the BYU Religious Studies Center and a paid internship offered to its student editor in chief (!). With a few minor adjustments along the way, the last eight issues of *Studia Antiqua* (Spring 2007–Fall 2011) have been published under these circumstances.¹¹

As I reflect on the beginnings of *Studia Antiqua* and its development over the last decade, I am proud of what we accomplished and delighted that it has exceeded the original goals we had for the project. This current issue (Fall 2011) will be the fourteenth issue of the journal over ten years. By my count, the journal has published articles, book reviews, or thesis abstracts from over a hundred student contributors, many of whom have since gone on to graduate school in related fields of study. In addition, the journal has provided almost forty student editors with the valuable experience of producing a high-quality publication. An online search of the journal shows that *Studia Antiqua* articles have been listed on resumes, discussed on blogs, and referenced on numerous library websites as being resources of student research on the ancient world. *Studia Antiqua* even has its own Facebook page,¹² a sign of success and relevance in our modern world!

¹⁰. In the summer of 2005 I taught as a part-time teacher in the Ancient Scripture Department at BYU. Breanne was in my Book of Mormon class that summer, and also attended a Biblical Hebrew course I taught for the Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages in the summer of 2006.

¹¹. Ultimately, placing the journal under the auspices of the Religious Studies Center has provided it with a stability and continuity that it was not able to attain under the Director of Ancient Studies. For an account of this transition see “Student Journal Explores the Ancient World,” *BYU Religious Education Review* (Winter 2009): 22–23.

As of 2011 the journal’s content, look, quality, and exposure all exceed the expectations we had for it in 2001, and the future success of the journal promises to continue along this trajectory. I applaud the current student editors and authors whose efforts continue to make our vision a reality after ten years. I also express appreciation to those departments and members of the faculty who have supported Studia Antiqua throughout the last decade, as well as the Religious Studies Center for ensuring its continuous publication. With the help of these dedicated individuals and organizations, the original goal of promoting student research, writing, and publication at Brigham Young University will no doubt continue to flourish into the foreseeable future.