

ISAW is the newest venture in fostering connective and comparative study of antiquity. Its geographical range is to span all of the Old World, the chronological from the Neolithic to late antiquity or even beyond. Opening its doors in 2007, it has a vision and plans, but only the slenderest of track records.

The vision has a number of unusual features, the implications of which I shall explore:

- Small size: ISAW is intended to have 8 faculty and 24 graduate students when fully populated.
- Autonomy: all faculty will be appointed fully in ISAW, not shared with departments (although they may be cross-appointed on a courtesy basis), and its program will be separate from that of other departments.
- Importance of a program of visitors: there are to be at least as many visiting research scholars (largely but not entirely postdoctoral) as faculty.
- Network reliance: only the less direct but still substantive involvement of many scholars at many institutions is going to make the concept viable.
- Lack of central direction: we aim to have self-forming research groups but no centrally-determined themes.
- Preference for connectivity over comparison: although comparative study is encouraged, actual connections across cultural and political boundaries is more central to the vision.