

## Seminar SAW History of Science, History of Text, 2011-2016

June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016

### Perspectives on the constitution of collections containing scientific documents of the past

#### Presentation

This session explores other facets of the working conditions of historians of science: the history of the constitution of the collections in which they find the documents that become the sources of their inquiry.

**Reviel Netz** (Stanford University, USA)

*The scale of ancient culture*

**Abstract** – The talk considers the number of books and, above all, number of authors active in antiquity. The fundamental observation is that ancient culture was big. Further claims are that it emerged rapidly; remained mostly stable for many centuries; and then went through a genuine collapse in scale in the third century CE. The question is explored, to what extent the typical features of the culture of Late Antiquity can be explained in terms of such a transition in scale.