

## CASE STUDY

# YALE PhD CANDIDATE SARAH M. PICKMAN FINDS MORE TO EXPLORE WITH WILEY DIGITAL ARCHIVES

## Sarah M. Pickman

PhD Candidate • History of Science and Medicine Program • Yale University  
Dissertation: *The Right Stuff: Objects and the Making of Extreme Environments*

Sarah M. Pickman is a PhD candidate in Yale University's History of Science and Medicine program, with a curious mind and a passion for bringing a unique perspective to the histories of exploration and scientific travel.

"As a Master's student, I became fascinated with how explorers packed for their expeditions, and why they brought specific food, toiletries, clothing and other supplies," Pickman said. "So, for my PhD program, I decided to focus on the histories of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century expeditions in extreme environments, from how they were planned to the type of information the explorers were hoping to gain from their journeys."

Society archives have played a big role in her research, from the beginning.

"Especially important to me were discussions on the gear the explorers used—how they packed or planned for their trips—**all of those things that don't get recorded in journals, but do get recorded in the meeting minutes, correspondence and diaries found in society archives,**" Pickman said. "I could see who sponsored the expeditions, where the explorers bought supplies, what they took, what things cost, and gain access to the types of background information that was pertinent to my research, but not available through other sources."

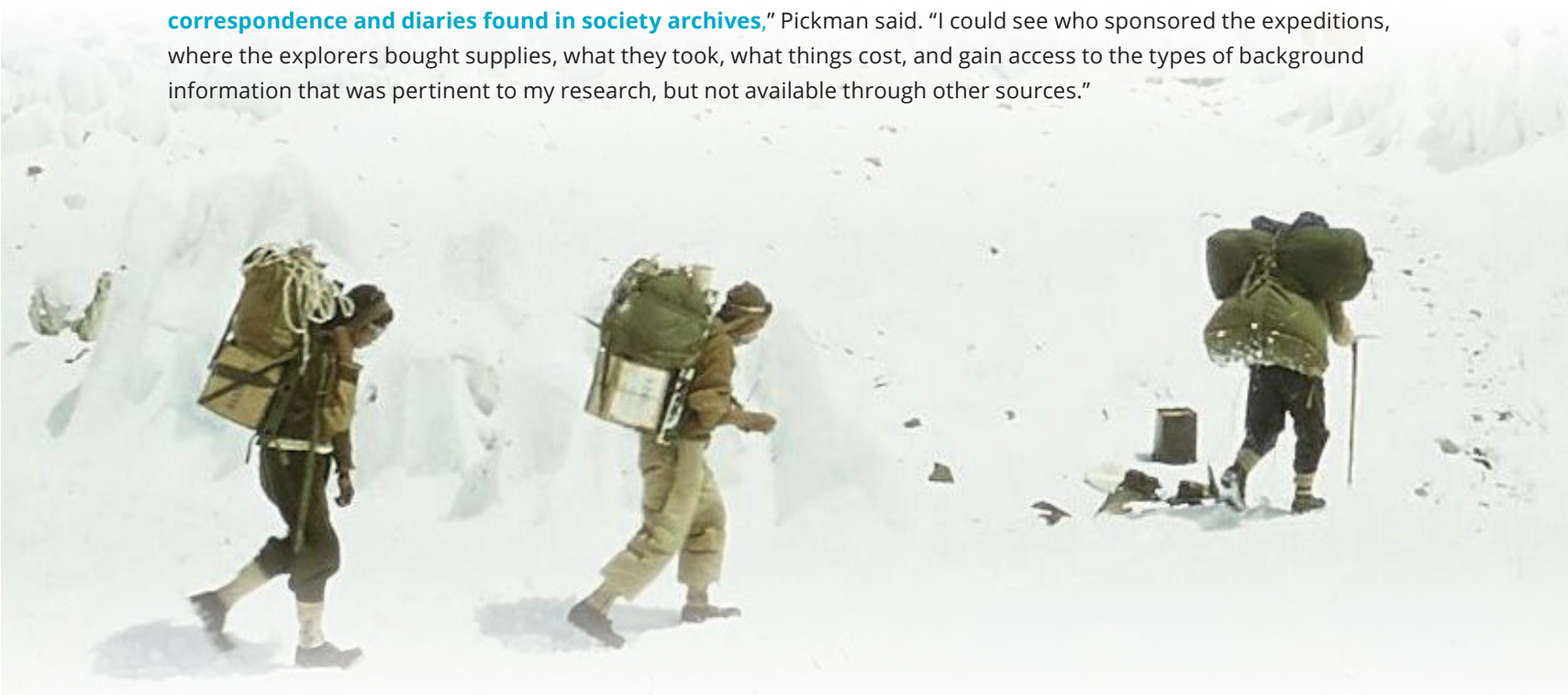


Image from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) archive

# Discovering the Value of Digital Archives



“With Wiley Digital Archives, you can download manuscripts, photos, maps or whatever image you need very easily. The scan quality and image resolution is excellent”

Pickman first learned about the [Wiley Digital Archives](#) program while she was visiting the [Royal Geographical Society](#) in the United Kingdom on a grant from Yale.

“I was looking for materials that were actually out being digitized, but, was told that I’d soon be able to access these online,” she said.

She’s been using Wiley Digital Archives ever since.

“There is a value to seeing actual documents, but even if you have the funding to travel to the site, there’s only so much time to spend. Physical archives are only open specific hours, and the staff may not be there all of that time. So, you are limited,” Pickman said. “The [Wiley Digital Archives](#) program is **always available**, with **no time restrictions**. So, you have more freedom to explore the content in greater detail.”

According to Pickman, the program also makes it easier to capture the information and images she needs for her work.

“Some society archives don’t allow you to take photos or copy materials on site, so you have to transcribe these by hand,” she explained. “With Wiley Digital Archives, you can download manuscripts, photos, maps or whatever image you need very easily. The scan quality and image resolution are excellent.”

*Image from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) archive*

**Wiley Digital Archives**

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## Easy to Search, Browse and Use



**“One of the great things about society archives is that they can reveal those figures whose work was obscured or hidden in official publications—like women.”**

Having access to a wealth of archive content is only valuable if the underlying technology makes it easy to search for and find what the individual researcher needs.

“The keyword search in Wiley Digital Archives is great and saves a lot of time. **You can use keywords for text, image and photographs; look at related items, and narrow your search by a specific time period,**” Pickman said. “There are so many ways to set up your search parameters that finding what you need is fast and easy.”

Pickman is also a fan of the Analysis Hub Frequency Search feature.

“That shows how often a word appears in the archive over time, **so you can track the frequency of a term, like a scientific concept,**” she said.

As razor-sharp as these search capabilities may be, that doesn’t negate the opportunity for a few serendipitous discoveries along the way.

**“One of the great things about society archives is that they can reveal those figures whose work was obscured or hidden in official publications—like women,”** Pickman said. “Though women were fully admitted to the Royal Geographical Society more than 80 years after it was founded, there were women who worked for the society as housekeepers, as well as explorers’ wives who supported activities for the society. Discovering that fact was a great, serendipitous archival find that I was able to explore further with keyword searches for *women, housekeepers, wives, secretaries and assistants.*”

The time and access to content through the digital archive enabled her to expand on that initial discovery.

## More Time. More Discoveries. More Benefits.

At the time of this writing, Pickman, who will graduate in 2021, has a year left to complete her dissertation. While she values the opportunities she’s had to physically travel to archive sites, she also recognizes how much the Wiley Digital Archives program has benefitted her work—and the work of other researchers.

“You get a sense of the whole society’s collections in a way you may not have the time or energy to do when you’re on site. You can play around and get a sense of all the holdings, and make more discoveries that impact your work,” Pickman said. “Just as important, **it opens access to independent scholars or researchers at schools that don’t have the funding for extensive travel.**”

Enabling more brilliant minds to be inspired by the work of the past.