

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)
announces a Lecture

by

Professor Gary Urton
Harvard University

**Archives of Knotted Strings in Ancient Peru:
Administrative and Historical Accounting in the Inka *kipu***

The principal record keeping instrument used in the Inka empire -- the largest state of the ancient New World -- was the *kipu* (or *quipu*; Quecha, "knot"). These were knotted-string devices made of spun and plied cotton or camelid (llama, alpaca) fibers that were knotted in complex ways to sign numerical values in the Quechua base-10 numeral system. The identities of objects (e.g., names, statuses, etc.) recorded in *kipus* were signed by colors as well as by differences in construction features (e.g., spin/ply, knotting and attachments directions). This talk provides an overview of what is known to date concerning the use and storage -- i.e., "archiving" -- of *kipus* from archaeological sites along the coasts of Peru and Chile. The central question addressed is: What evidence do we find in *kipu* collections from archaeological sites around the former territory of the Inka empire that gives us insights into the production, use and performance practices associated with *kipu* archives?

Thursday, 20 November 2014 at 6.15 pm
Room 0001, CSMC