Papyrology is an area of ancient world studies which unites many disciplines. There is the fundamental work of archaeologists and of scientists skilled at unravelling and restoring papyri from their original condition, so that decipherment may begin. The 'papyrologist' proper is expert at transcribing a first text and then commencing the often arduous process of emendations and additions so that a more meaningful document emerges. This is largely a team enterprise, since a knowledge of the various genres of literary and documentary papyri is only gained with experience (one of the benefits of the Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik published in Bonn is the rapid appearance of recently-discovered texts, which allows early collaboration of this kind). The palaeographer gives opinions on dating from the scripts themselves, the philologist notes linguistic usages characteristic of a period or an author, the literary specialist may locate a text either broadly or (occasionally) with great precision, and the historian – of Ptolemaic, Roman or Byzantine Egypt and other Near Eastern lands – is often able to propose a context for papyri which document the public or private life of a period, by the parallel use of literary sources and archaeological data other than papyri.

The XIVth Congress like its predecessors brought together scholars from all these fields, with approximately 300 delegates. Oxford was an appropriate venue, because it was the Oxford scholars B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt who in the 1890s gave the first large impetus to papyrology by their discoveries in the Fayum and at Oxyrhynchus on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Fund. One whole day was spent in London, primarily in the British Museum where a special display was mounted. A recent development here is that the Greek and Latin papyri (Department of Manuscripts) and the Arabic and Coptic (Oriental Department) have passed into the possession of the adjacent British Library, only the Egyptian papyri (i.e. hieratic and demotic) remaining with the Museum. For the historian the most interesting texts exhibited were the Hellenica Oxyrhynchia, which continued Thucydides' History, with the fragment for 396-5 BC. surviving (P. Oxy. v. 842, also edited by I.A.F. Bruce in 1967); Aristotle's 'Constitution of Athens' (edited first by Sir Frederick Kenyon in 1891); an epitome of Livy (Books 37-40 and 48-55, the latter adding to our knowledge of Roman history from 150-137 BC.); and the letter of the emperor...
Claudius to the Alexandrians of AD. 41. For the student of Christian origins there were, amongst other papyri, the ‘Secret Sayings of Jesus’ fragment (identified as part of the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas when the Coptic version of this was found in 1948) and the ‘Fragments of an Unknown Gospel’ (edited by H.I. Bell and T.C. Skeat, 1935).

Professor E.G. Turner of London presided over the Congress, and the opening ‘plenary’ session was addressed by his pupil and colleague Professor E.W. Handley on ‘Some new fragments of a Greek comedy’, which he tentatively assigned to Menander’s Aspis. It was also fitting that the final paper was delivered by Professor H.C. Youtie, doyen of American papyrologists, on the apatores of Roman Egypt (i.e. children without a legal father). These lectures well illustrated the work of literary and socio-legal historians. Other full-scale lectures were on ‘The biology and ecology of papyrus’, ‘Conservation’ (with a practical demonstration of the removal of papyri from the cartonnage used in the preparation of mummies) and on the recent excavations at Saqqara near Memphis. There was also a technical discussion of the codex, ancestor of our modern book, in which form many Greek and Coptic papyri have been found.

The term ‘papyri’ is not applied too rigidly at Congresses, and there were reports of texts on ostraka, and of the Roman military records discovered in 1972-3 at Vindolanda, south of Hadrian’s Wall, which have survived on thin wooden tablets. The first texts and discussion of these are to appear in Britannia iv, 1974. The other location beyond Egypt of special interest was Herculaneum, where about 2000 rolls of carbonised papyri were excavated in the 18th century from the villa of L. Calpurnius Piso, father-in-law of Julius Caesar. Many of these texts (of the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus, whose patron was Piso) were however damaged or lost. Some, for example the fragment of Epicurus’ De Natura, have been acquired by the British Museum and other institutions, but the bulk of this work is now directed by the Accademia di Archeologia, Lettere e Belle Arti di Napoli. At the Congress papers were read on a fragment of the De Natura XI, on ‘Philosophia medicans in Filodemo’ (Professor Gigante) and on the Rhetorica of the same author (Professor Sbordone). The former scholar edits the journal Cronache Ercolanesi (1971- ) and the latter the Ricerche sui papiri Ercolanesi, of which the first volume (1969) was on the De Musica and the Poetica of Philodemus.

With regard to the papyri of Egypt, the large number of short papers read at the Congress revealed the wide spread of subjects and the numerous centres at which groups of papyrologists are working. The literary papyri were strongly represented by British, German, French and Italian scholars; the documentary perhaps chiefly by Americans and British; and the Christian (including Coptic) and Byzantine by a cross-section. The volumes of The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, first edited by Grenfell and Hunt, and now by E.G. Turner, P.J. Parsons and J.R. Rea
with many collaborators, are only the best-known amongst many continuing series from Europe and U.S.A.

In the category of Christian papyri Dr Alanna Emmett offered a revised text and apparatus of the fourth-century Latin *psalmus responsorius* first edited by Professor Roca-Puig of Barcelona, with a discussion of its possible purpose and use; this will appear in the new journal *Museum Philologum Londiniense* edited by Professor Browning of Birkbeck College, London. The writer reviewed Mario Naldini's selection of documentary papyri in his *Il Cristianesimo in Egitto* (Florence, 1968) with special reference to biblical echoes and reminiscences in the private letters. Unfortunately neither Naldini nor Kurt Treu of Berlin was able to attend the Congress, but C.H. Roberts (most senior of British papyrologists) read a paper on the latter's behalf. Treu's *Referat* of Christian papyri for 1940-1967 (*Archiv für Papyrosforschung* xix, 1969, 169-206) is important for all who are working in this field; it is now supplemented for the most recent years by the lists of texts in *Aegyptus*. Gnostic documents discovered at Nag-Hammadi are being studied especially at the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont, California, under Professor James Robinson.

For the historian, the evidence of the papyri is sometimes so abundant as to allow precise dating. A good example of this came from Dr J.D. Thomas of the Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic, Durham, in a paper on 'The disappearance of the *dekaprotoi* in Egypt'. By the skilful use of six papyri (which belonged, incidentally, to five collections in various countries) he demonstrated that these municipal officials of the toparchies were replaced by the *praepositi pagi* between early May and early July, AD. 302. This is of some importance for our understanding of the change from five-year to fifteen-year (indiction) cycles at this time, and hence of the whole chronology of the later Roman period in Egypt.

Papyrology, in the narrower sense, is an exacting discipline, and the 1974 Congress revealed that not only does fruitful co-operation between scholars continue, but an ample supply of documents remains to be read and interpreted, fragmentary though they are in many cases. But this field of study in its broader context, because it is of necessity inter-disciplinary, can make a notable contribution to the vitality of the humanities today. The Proceedings of the Congress are being published rapidly, following the example of the *Zeitschrift*, but much of the material, compressed into short papers, is likely to appear in full in the journals of papyrology.