

archeologists to ticket collectors — are government employees with jobs for life. The inflexibilities make long-term planning almost impossible.

During the past decade or so, successive governments have experimented with new approaches to funding conservation, with some clear successes. The Egyptian Museum in Turin has, since 2005, been managed by a private foundation. This has renovated and modernized the museum, to international acclaim. And shoe magnate Diego Della Valle is paying €25 million for urgently needed conservation work on Rome's Colosseum that is being directed by the ministry. In return, he gets exclusive rights to use the image of the edifice to promote his products for 15 years. Alarmed academics have tried to equate such activities with privatization. But the heritage itself remains firmly in the possession of the state, which retains full power to control conservation or restoration projects.

Now the Pompeii superintendency has a further €105 million of EU structural funds to spend on securing its site, efficiently and effectively, under stern oversight — and within just three years. This will be a challenge, although the project acquired a further 20 or so architects and archaeologists this year.

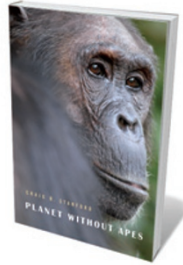
Herculaneum, fortunately, won the support of philanthropist David W. Packard, son of the co-founder of the Hewlett-Packard information-technology company. His Packard Humanities Institute in Los Altos, California, has been running the Herculaneum Conservation Project in partnership with the superintendency and the British School at Rome for the past 11 years. This international, interdisciplinary team of archaeologists, architects and conservationists do unglamorous practical conservation work. This could be mending the ancient drainage networks, repairing roof coverings or driving out the pigeons whose voluminous, acidic excreta destroy frescos. The work is mostly low-tech — for example, the best solution they've found for the pigeons is to encourage falconers to visit the site regularly.

The Herculaneum project has inspired at least one other consortium of foreign scientists to bid to help to conserve and restore some frescoed houses in Pompeii, working in partnership with the Italians.

Such respectful international support for Italy's cultural heritage is fundamental. But the country will have to help itself by relaxing outdated labour laws and modernizing management of its cultural heritage systematically. Italy can't do much about Vesuvius' shadow. It can do a lot about the political shadows it casts on itself. ■ [SEE EDITORIAL P.302](#)

Alison Abbott is Nature's senior European correspondent.

Books in brief



Planet Without Apes

Craig B. Stanford HARVARD UNIV. PRESS 272 pp. \$25.95 (2012)
Will electronic gadgetry bring down the great apes? The link may seem surreal, but in this study of the plight of gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans and bonobos, primatologist Craig Stanford reveals how mining coltan, a mineral used in electronics, destroys primate habitats and fuels the illegal bushmeat trade. In his wide-ranging call for action, Stanford — co-director of the Jane Goodall Research Center in Los Angeles, California — lays out the critical threats, arguing that humanity's closest cousins are viewed as savage 'others' and subjected to a genocidal urge last seen in the colonial era.



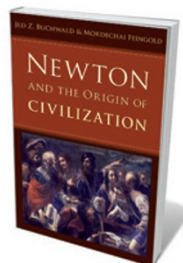
Jefferson's Shadow: The Story of His Science

Keith Thomson YALE UNIV. PRESS 322 pp. \$30 (2012)
Architect, philosopher, critic of slavery, slave-owner: the contradictions of American 'founding father' Thomas Jefferson are well known. That he was a scientist is not. Natural historian Keith Thomson redresses the balance in this finely wrought biography. Immersed in the work of Isaac Newton and Francis Bacon, Jefferson was arguably the most clued-up American naturalist of his time. This scintillating intellectual traced climate fluctuations, delighted in data tables, pored over fossils and helped to introduce the nation to palaeontology, geography, scientific archaeology and climatology.



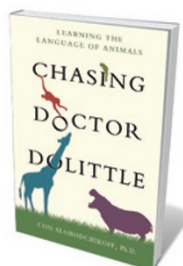
A Single Sky: How an International Community Forged the Science of Radio Astronomy

David P. D. Munns MIT PRESS 264 pp. \$34 (2012)
During the past 60 years, radio technology has transformed astronomy from a venerable practice reliant on visible light to an astounding new window on the cosmos. As historian David Munns reveals, it was all down to an international network of scientists who defied the rivalries of the cold war to ensure collaborative exploration of a 'single sky'. This remarkable science, forged by American, British, Australian and Dutch radio astronomers, ultimately led to the mapping of the Milky Way.



Newton and the Origin of Civilization

Jed Z. Buchwald and Mordechai Feingold PRINCETON UNIV. PRESS 544 pp. £34.95, \$49.50 (2012)
Isaac Newton spent most of his 84 years in pursuit of knowledge — mathematical to metaphysical. In this tome, historians Jed Buchwald and Mordechai Feingold unveil yet another strand: historical chronology. When Newton's *Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended* was published in 1728, it drew fire for its dramatic revisions to timelines of civilizations past. Yet Newton, the authors show, approached the study — using astronomy and population dynamics — with the same rigour he brought to science.



Chasing Doctor Dolittle: Learning the Language of Animals

Con Slobodchikoff ST. MARTIN'S PRESS 320 pp. \$25.99 (2012)
An alarmed prairie dog can recognize and communicate the colour, shape, size and species of a predator. So says biologist Con Slobodchikoff, who — after 25 years of studying these hefty ground squirrels of the US grasslands — posits that animals have language. He bases his theory on a physiological and structural system not unlike the skeletal system that has parallels in humans and other vertebrates (think of human vocal chords and the avian double syrinx).