

RESEARCH SUPPORT

COMPUTER LABORATORY

John C. Sanders

Having spent more than twenty-five years working in various archaeological capacities throughout the Middle East I have learned that the expression “everyone needs an assistant” is commonplace. It is in my role as Head of the Computer Laboratory, however, where this notion rings true. In the time that Katherine Strange has been working for the Lab (just over a year now), she has been invaluable in the production process for several Lab projects: preparing the electronic version of the 1996/97, 1997/98, 1998/99, and 1999/2000 *Annual Reports*; the preparation of website versions of several lead articles from past issues of *News & Notes*; and she participated in the scanning and processing of hundreds of the photographs for our website exhibition of *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expedition to Egypt and Sudan: A Photographic Study* (see further discussion below).

LABORATORY PROJECTS

1905–1907 Breasted Expedition to Egypt and Sudan

As this *Annual Report* goes to press the Institute’s website will be significantly enlarged with the release of 1,055 photographs from the Institute’s Photographic Archives, taken by James Henry Breasted, the Oriental Institute’s founder, during his early travels throughout Egypt and Sudan.

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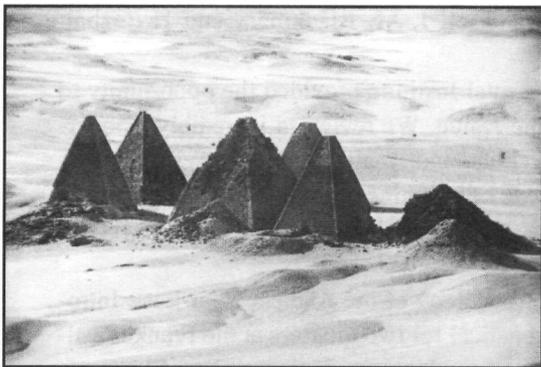


Figure 1. View from mountains showing pyramids. Gebel Barkal (Napata)

These images and their captions were originally published in the 1975 Oriental Institute text/microfiche publication entitled *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expedition to Egypt and Sudan: A Photographic Study* (for examples, see figs. 1, 3). Through the use of the Internet, and the gracious assistance of a volunteer staff, they will now be made available to scholars and the public worldwide via our website.

Docent Volunteers Karen Terras, Nancy Gould, Peg Cipolla, and students Nicholas Lezak, Sriram Kanteti, Katherine Strange, Peter Friedman, and Mara Terras are due a much deserved

thank-you for their help in photographic scanning, text processing, and HTML markup of web pages for the new *1905–1907 Breasted Expedition to Egypt and Sudan* photographic exhibit. This addition to the Institute's website is the direct result of their cumulative efforts over a six-month period.

Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur Exhibition

As a complement to *Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur*, a traveling exhibition organized by the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, at the Oriental Institute from 21 October 2000 to 21 January 2001, I developed a component for the Institute's website highlighting several of the show's artifacts with photographs and textual descriptions (fig. 2). Because the exhibition was temporary and its artifacts are not a part of the Oriental Institute Museum's collections I decided to design its look and feel in a manner very different from our "Highlights from the Collection" section of the website. Based on website statistics, visitor totals, and word-of-mouth comments during the time the show was at the Institute, both exhibitions were well received by the public.

Electronic Publications

In conjunction with the Oriental Institute Publications Office, the Institute has produced its first electronic publication, a third edition to *Thus Wrote 'Onchsheshonqy: An Introductory Grammar of Demotic*, by Janet H. Johnson (Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 45; Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2000). Several "letters" of *The Demotic Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, edited by Janet H. Johnson, are being prepared as the Institute's second electronic publication. These publications were selected to be distributed via the World Wide Web as an experimental foray into the electronic dissemination of Oriental Institute titles. This manner of distribution, and the titles suitable for it, will be evaluated during calendar year 2001.

Qinnasrin and CAMEL

Two new archaeological projects were added to the Institute's website during 2000/2001: Associate Professor Donald Whitcomb's Qinnasrin Project in Syria, and the Center for Archaeology of the Middle East Landscape (CAMEL), under the direction of Associate Professor Tony Wilkinson.

Qinnasrin is the name of a famous city founded in the early Islamic period as the capital of the *jund* or province of north Syria. This city was located about 25 km south of the ancient city of Halab (Aleppo) and was associated with the classical city of Chalcis ad Belum. Work in the Qinnasrin area is a joint project of the Department of Antiquities of Syria, the University of Paris — Sorbonne, and the University of Chicago, directed by Donald Whitcomb. These participants hope to continue this research into the history of Qinnasrin and the development of early Islamic civilization.

The Middle East landscape bears the imprint of thousands of years of human activities. These activities include the excavation of canals, the creation and cultivation of fields, the movement of caravans, the excavation of materials for building construction, and the extraction of metallic minerals. The aim of CAMEL is to analyze and understand this landscape by combining both traditional on-the-ground archaeological surveys with remote-sensing methods such as satellite imagery and aerial photograph analysis.

Developing a New Oriental Institute Website Design

During the winter of 2000 I began discussions with several individuals in the University's Networking Services and Informational Technologies (NSIT) regarding the moving of the Institute's entire website from our own in-house web server to a server administered and maintained by NSIT. In the future the Institute would like to take advantage of several web-related services, such as electronic commerce and database backend serving, that NSIT is better equipped to handle than the Institute and at a lower overall cost in the long-term. In conjunction with such a move the look and feel of the Institute's website would get a make-over, updating the now five-year-old design into a presence more aligned with other University of Chicago departmental presentations. Discussions are still ongoing, and we will give the reader a complete rundown of this transition in next year's *Annual Report*.

As a first "baby" step in this process the background color on practically all existing Institute web pages was changed to white in March 2001. It was hoped that changing to this neutral color will help in evaluating the new design options for the website.

Docents Online

In July 2000 I worked with Museum Education intern Nitzan Mekel to establish a Bulletin Board component to the Oriental Institute website, to assist docents working with school groups by providing a forum for electronic question and answer interaction. Students and teachers can use email to submit questions that the docents will research and answer by return email.

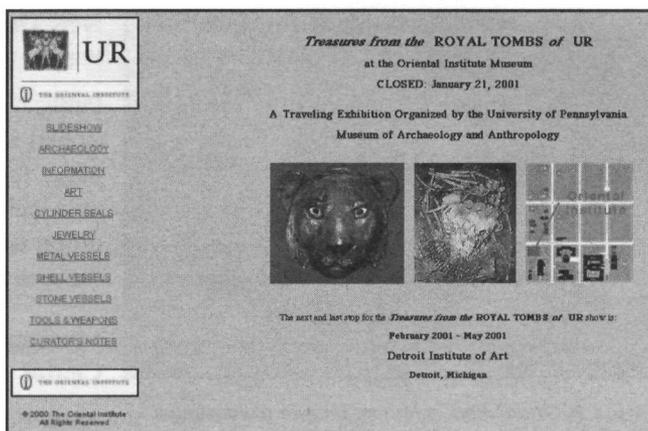


Figure 2. Homepage for Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur exhibition on Oriental Institute's website

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Figure 3. Unfinished colossus, temple of Atlanersa and Senkamanisken. Gebel Barkal (Napata)

New Design for Publications Office Web Pages

Publications Office Sales and Marketing manager Robert Herbst and I redesigned the individual web pages for all of the Institute's publications, which now include a scan of the cover or title page in addition to the bibliographic information provided for each book.

Museum Education's Online Teacher Resource Center

Anna Rochester, Education Outreach Coordinator in the Museum Education Office, developed an ex-

tensive set of educational resources for teachers during the past year which are now available to selected schools via the Institute's website. The Online Teacher Resource Center was developed with Chicago Public School (CPS) educators who took part in Oriental Institute Museum Teacher Training Seminars on ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. The site provides materials for classroom and museum use, allowing teachers to choose what relates best to their curriculum and to students' needs and interests. The materials and activities on the site follow themes outlined in *Life in Ancient Egypt* and *Life in Ancient Mesopotamia: Guides for Teachers Based on the Collections and Resources of the Oriental Institute Museum*.

LABORATORY EQUIPMENT / INSTITUTE RESOURCES

In August 2000, two new computer systems were installed in the Oriental Institute's William M. Sumner Computer Laboratory. An 800 MHz Dell computer running Windows 98 and an Apple Macintosh G4 computer have significantly increased the computing power within the Computer Lab and eased those periodic instances when faculty, staff, and students seeking use of Lab computers outnumber those available. I intend to replace at least one older Macintosh computer in the Lab during 2001/2002, and perhaps we will have to purchase one or two more because usage of Lab facilities is still increasing yearly.

The new Macintosh G4 computer is also equipped with an Epson 11" x 17" flatbed scanner in order to accommodate scanning of larger illustrations and oversized publications.

WORLD WIDE WEB SITE

For further information concerning several of the above mentioned research projects, the Institute's World Wide Web (WWW) database, and other Electronic Resources in general refer to the What's New page on the Oriental Institute's website, at:

http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/INFO/OI_WWW_New.html (Note: URL case-sensitive)

The homepage for the Oriental Institute website is at:

<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu>