

RESEARCH SUPPORT

COMPUTER LABORATORY

John C. Sanders

The Computer Laboratory lost a friend, its founder, and namesake, when William M. Sumner passed away earlier this year. I also lost a friend and colleague, my former boss, the man who hired me as a research associate to start and manage the Oriental Institute Computer Laboratory back in 1990. Bill's commanding presence in the offices of the Oriental Institute has been absent for many years now, and it hurts to know that he will never again grace its halls. Efforts that started under Bill's auspices, and with his encouragement, however, do carry on within the building, a fitting legacy to a wonderful person and a former director whose vision for the Institute lives on.

Projects

Integrated Database

Bill had a direct connection to the original discussions about the creation of an integrated database (IDB) for all Institute records. Some of those earliest talks took place in Bill's office, from 1990 onward. His passing is unfortunate timing as we are now so close to completion of the first incarnation of the integrated database he and I envisioned. The expected delays when undertaking such an enormous project as the IDB have pushed back our projected spring/summer 2011 rollout date until late 2011 or early 2012. The project is proceeding on track, though, with our first data migration scheduled to start about the time this *Annual Report* is published. This is an exciting time for those of us directly connected with the IDB project; Bill will not share in these moments but he's part of the reason the IDB will soon be launched!

After long hours with either pencil and paper or at a computer screen, Helen McDonald, Susan Allison, and Foy Scalf have designed the customized screen displays for their respective data sets, which will be coded by the KE Software programmers and given to us to test and verify. After that, data migrations will commence, with each of three runs discovering problems that must be fixed before the next run is executed. When the process is finished, several weeks to a month or two later, we will end up with the Institute's Museum Registration and Library catalog data brought into the EMu (Electronic Museum) database system, and displayed on faculty and staff's computer screens according to how Helen, Susan, and Foy designed them. At approximately the same time, the web browser-based portal into these two datasets designed for public use will also be launched.

Electronic Publications Initiative

Once again, this past year saw great progress with the Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative. Twenty-three electronic versions of current or past Institute publications, in Adobe

Portable Document Format (PDF), were made available for free download on the Institute's website. These new downloadable publications pertain to ancient Mesopotamia, Syro-Palestine, and Anatolia, with one Egyptian and one Islamic title. Currently, 298 Oriental Institute publications are available as PDFs. When fully implemented our Electronic Publications Initiative will make accessible all 400+ titles in our Publications Office catalog.

Three new letter volumes (M, P, and 'I) for the Chicago Demotic Dictionary Project were finished this past year, converted to Adobe PDFs, and made available for free download on the Institute's website.

The Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative dictates that current and future print publications produced by the Oriental Institute Publications Office are also made available electronically through the Institute's website. I encourage everyone to read that portion of the Publications Office section of this *Annual Report* regarding the status of the Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative, then visit the Catalog of Publications page on our website where you will be able to download these past and current titles of our publications in electronic form:

<http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/catalog/>

A list of the volume titles which were processed into digital format and made available to the public on the Institute's website during this past year can be found in the Electronic Resources section of this *Annual Report*.

The Oriental Institute Website

This past year a portion of the electronic publication backlog on our website was eliminated with the addition of all *Institute News & Notes* newsletters from 1999 through 2001, plus the most recent issues from summer and fall 2010, winter 2011, and spring 2011, now all available as PDFs. Select lead articles in *News & Notes* published between 1990 and 1999 remain available on the website, but in HTML format. As time permits over the next year or two these editions will be converted to the Adobe pdf format, along with as many pre-1990 *News & Notes* publications as we can find in our archives.

Donald Whitcomb's new archaeology project, the Jericho Mafjar Project, was added to the Archaeology Research Projects component of the website. These new excavations just underway in the northern areas of Khirbet al-Mafjar, located north of Jericho in the Palestinian territories, will investigate the theory that the site was not just a palace complex, but was instead an incipient Islamic city.

The Tell Edfu Project, under the direction of Nadine Moeller, was added to the Archaeology Research Projects component of the website, providing a brief description of the project's work at the town site of Tell Edfu, several images from their 2009 field season, and a link to the project's independent website.

The Nubia Expedition's archaeological fieldwork in 2008 is detailed in a progress report on the website.

The Epigraphic Survey added an update to the project's homepage with notes and photographs from their eighty-sixth season that ended in April 2010. Alternately, issue 21 of the Survey's *Chicago House Bulletin* (September 2010) was added to the website for download as PDF.

Various types of media presentations were added to our website to present the Oriental Institute Museum's special exhibit *Visible Language: Inventions of Writing in the Ancient Middle East and Beyond*: an image gallery containing more than fifteen photographs of

COMPUTER LABORATORY

objects from the exhibit; four YouTube videos showing the evolution of written script over time; and nine audio tours available for free download, so that you can use your own iPod or other MP3 player to listen to Museum staff discuss the exhibition as you view it.

During the past year, two Oriental Institute lectures were made available on our website for viewing as downloadable video presentations: “Exploring the Roots of Mesopotamian Civilization: Excavations at Tell Zeidan, Syria,” a lecture by Gil Stein; and “Meluhha: The Indus Civilization and Its Contacts with Mesopotamia,” a lecture by Mark Kenoyer.

The Research Archives added their June 2010 through April 2011 Acquisitions Lists to the website, and the Oriental Institute’s 2009–2010 *Annual Report* was converted to PDF by the Publications Office and added to the website.

And lastly, several Institute scholars added content to their sections of the Individual Scholarship component of the website: John Brinkman, with his Mesopotamian Directory; six articles by Norman Golb; one article by Robert Ritner; as well as the 2010 dissertation of John Nolan and dissertation proposals by Solange Bumbaugh and Robert R. Tate, all submitted to the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, the University of Chicago.

Persepolis Fortification Archive

The Computer Lab continued to stay abreast of the scanning operations, imaging, and recording of the Persepolis Fortification Archive (PFA) tablets throughout the year. Up-to-date information about the project’s work is available in the Persepolis Fortification Archive component on the Oriental Institute website. Also, for additional information regarding this project, please read the Persepolis Fortification Archive section of this *Annual Report*, where project director Matthew Stolper outlines in detail the current progress of the scanning and cataloging of these most important ancient texts.

Oriental Institute Terabyte Storage Initiative

As I write this *Annual Report* the Institute’s terabyte storage system, the OIA (Oriental Institute Archive), now totals 24.98 terabytes (24,980,000,000,000 bytes). For comparison purposes, a typed, double-spaced, 8½” x 11” paper is roughly 2,000 bytes! Currently, 104 faculty, staff, and research project personnel have access to the OIA for archival storage of computer files and images, as well as for daily computer backup. As more of the Institute’s historical records, cards, documents, photographs, and publications are converted to digital format the size of our terabyte storage system will continue to expand. I want to take this opportunity to thank Scott Branting, Robert Tate, Elise MacArthur, and the entire CAMEL staff for their assistance in the maintenance and monitoring of this off-site computer storage space.

Laboratory Equipment/Institute Resources

During the past year, due to the increasing size of several Filemaker databases we host, the underlying hardware for our FileMaker server was switched and computer memory and disk capacity were upgraded to 7 GB and 465 GB, respectively. A similar upgrade was also made to the Institute’s FTP server, increasing its disk capacity to 465 GB.

A second dedicated FTP server was established this past year for staff and foreign researchers as they prepare materials for the next series of Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition (OINE) publications. The entire publications project is being coordinated by Bruce Williams. Additional personnel working with material from specific Nubian archaeological sites are as follows: the Kasr el-Wizz component of the project includes Artur Obluski, Alexandros

Tsakos, and Edyta Klimaszewska-Drabot as P.I.s; the Serra-Dorginarti component is split into two parts: for Dorginarti, the P.I. is Lisa Heidorn, for Serra, Bruce Williams is the P.I., collaborating with Nadejda Reshetnikova, a Russian architect, for the architecture study, and Don Whitcomb will be conducting a glazed pottery analysis of the Serra material.

For further information concerning the above-mentioned research projects and other electronic resources in general, refer to the What's New page on the Oriental Institute's website, at

<http://oi.uchicago.edu/news/>

See the *Electronic Resources* section of this *Annual Report* for the complete URL to each of the website resources mentioned in this article.
