

## INTRODUCTION

**William M. Sumner**

We will celebrate the Oriental Institute's seventy-fifth anniversary next year beginning with a gala dinner dance, to benefit the Legacy Campaign, on October 7, 1994. The celebration will end in the spring of 1995 with a festive evening for faculty, staff, volunteers, and members. Anniversaries are always occasions for reflection on past achievements, evaluation of current activities, and planning for the future.

The mission of the Oriental Institute, within its setting as part of the University of Chicago, is to engage in research on all aspects of ancient Near Eastern civilizations, participate in advanced teaching, and maintain the Oriental Institute Museum and associated educational outreach programs. Scholarly publication is one way to measure the past success of our research efforts. Since the Institute was founded by James Henry Breasted in 1919 more than three hundred books have been published under our imprint. These publications are widely acclaimed as fundamental contributions to scholarship in a variety of disciplines—archaeology, history, and philology, to mention only the broadest categories.

Another way of viewing the research accomplishments of the Institute grows out of Breasted's early recognition that some academic research projects, well beyond the capacity of individual scholars, require long-term institutional commitment. There are many examples of publication and field projects at the Institute that have lasted for well over a decade, but two notable examples that are still active—the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary and the Epigraphic Survey—have been in existence for many decades and are the best examples of long-term institutional commitment.

The historical development of the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary began with a long phase, lasting from 1921 until about 1953, devoted mainly to the production of dictionary cards that represented, with some exceptions, every occurrence of each word. By 1936 there were over one million cards in the dictionary file and perhaps another five hundred thousand entries, in a somewhat revised system, were added by 1953. The task of preparing new dictionary cards continues as new texts are published, but beginning in 1953 emphasis was shifted to the task of writing the dictionary articles and publishing the planned twenty-one volumes—several in multiple parts. The first volume (Volume 6, H) appeared in 1956 and the second part of the sixteenth volume (Volume 17, Š, in three parts) appeared this year. This leaves one volume in press and four volumes to be completed; we estimate that these five volumes, plus a final volume of additions and corrections, will be in print by 2004.

The Epigraphic Survey at Luxor, Egypt, informally known as Chicago House, was founded in 1924. The objective of the Survey is to accurately record in precise detail the inscriptions and reliefs on temples and other Egyptian monuments. The "Chicago House Method" was invented by Breasted in 1905 and refined by the

Chicago House staff in the early years of the Survey. The method is an exacting procedure for collating drawings created directly on enlarged photographs through the close collaboration of Egyptologists, photographers, and artists. The first publication of the Survey, which appeared in 1930, has been followed by fourteen additional volumes or portfolios recording reliefs and inscriptions at Karnak, Medinet Habu, and the Theban Necropolis. The first of two projected portfolios recording scenes in the Processional Colonnade at Luxor Temple, based on work initiated in 1973, went to press this year and will appear in the autumn of 1994.

Both the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary and the Epigraphic Survey are outstanding examples of major projects that have required an exceptionally strong commitment of both human and fiscal resources over a prolonged period of time. These and many other projects, together with the research of individual scholars at the Institute, have produced valuable contributions to the field of ancient studies. We can take justified pride in these accomplishments, which have gained international recognition for the Institute and the University of Chicago.

The recent accomplishments and the current status of research, educational, and other activities at the Institute are described in some detail in the following sections of this report. Throughout the report you will find indications of new initiatives and new directions—increased collaboration with other departments in the University of Chicago, experiments with new analytical instruments, and a variety of developments in computerized analysis, model building, and publication.

The history of the Oriental Institute during the past seventy-five years shows that we have honorably fulfilled our mission and established a secure foundation for the challenges of the future. These challenges have many facets related to research and scholarship, graduate education, and public outreach. However, our most pressing and immediate challenge is preservation of our irreplaceable collection of ancient Near Eastern art and artifacts. The museum climate control, renovation, and expansion project is absolutely essential to the future of the Institute. As things stand now we will enter the final phase of architectural and engineering planning (design development and construction documentation) early in 1995; this phase will take about thirteen months.

The next decision point will be the closing of the museum, now scheduled for July 1, 1995, subject to administrative approval. The final step will be to break ground, which can occur no earlier than winter 1996. It is of extreme importance for everyone to understand that museum closing and breaking ground are both entirely dependent on the success of our fundraising drive, the Legacy Campaign, to finance this project. We must demonstrate our capacity to fund the entire \$10.1 million cost of the project before the Trustees will authorize us to begin construction. At present we have \$4.4 million in gifts, pledges, and bequests, including a grant of \$900,000 from the National Heritage Preservation Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. A more complete account of the Legacy Campaign and the Honor Roll of Donors will be found in the last section of this report. Early in autumn 1994 each member of the Institute will receive a copy of the Legacy Campaign brochure; I know that we can rely on each of you to pledge your generous support to campaign. Together we can assure a bright future for the Institute in the next century, a future that will fulfill the vision first articulated by James Henry Breasted when the Institute was founded.