

RESEARCH ARCHIVES

Charles E. Jones

Introduction

For all of us with an interest in the ancient Near East, the affairs of the modern Middle East have loomed large during the past year. In a region where delicate and dangerous political situations are routine, this year has been extraordinary by any accounting. Hardly a country from the Mediterranean to the Indus has not been challenged by the geopolitical climate. The world's press has focused on the region in ways never before experienced in history and hardly predictable as recently as a decade ago. Global communications networks enable virtually all inhabitants of the planet to recognize pictures of the streets of Baghdad, Jerusalem, Kabul — and even such unlikely places as Umm Qasr.

Likewise, the tragic effect of the war and postwar events on cultural institutions — museums, libraries, archives, archaeological sites — have focused the world's attention on the historical depth of the cultures of the region, the “Cradle of Civilization.” The losses suffered in the Iraq Museum in Baghdad and at archaeological sites (about which much more appears in other contributions within this *Annual Report*) have overshadowed the equal or greater damage to institutions such as the National Library and Archives and the Library of the Ministry of Religious Endowments. Best estimates at the time of writing are that the National Library has lost not only its building and equipment, but also all copies of its catalogues and about half of its circa 1.2 million volumes. The Ministry of Religious Endowments has lost about half of its manuscripts and ninety percent of its printed books. Comparable losses have also taken their toll on the Iraqi Center for Manuscripts and the Mustansiriya University Library — all in Baghdad [<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/LibraryPix/LibraryPix.htm>]; the Central Public Library, Central University Library, and the Islamic Library in Basra; and the Central Public Library, Central University Library, and the Library of the Museum in Mosul. It will take years — probably decades — to recover from the losses to all such institutions in Iraq.

The national collections of Iraq, as they existed until recently, have their origins in colonial institutions established under British rule in the period after the First World War. The documentation of the establishment of the Iraq Museum is rich and interesting — much of it is available online in the archives of the papers of Gertrude Bell [<http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/home/index.htm>]. It is not clear, at present, how much of this kind of documentary material survives in collections in Iraq. As early twentieth-century institutions, they are approximately the same age as the Oriental Institute; the relationships between the Institute and the Iraqi partners have developed in parallel for eight decades. In many ways, we are partner institutions engaged in the struggle to understand antiquity and the origins of society and civilization. Objects excavated under the aegis of Oriental Institute expeditions, and the records associated with them, are in the collections and custody of museums and archives in Iraq. Other records and photographs associated with these projects are in the collections of the Oriental Institute. Published assessments of these projects are in libraries in Iraq and Chicago and the world. These publications collectively become the cumulative record of our understanding of the ancient world and the measure and means by which our knowledge is continuously reassessed. No collection exists in isolation. Damage to one institution is damage to all institutions and to the collective heritage of mankind.

The damage suffered by these institutions in Iraq in the past half-year should remind us of the fragility of the infrastructure of scholarship and should instruct us to redouble our efforts to pre-

RESEARCH ARCHIVES

serve, maintain, and offer access to the resources in our custody. In such efforts, libraries and archives need to lead the way.

Global Resources Hosted at the Research Archives

For more than a decade, the staff of the Research Archives has been working to offer global access to its own collections and to develop tools that will increase communication among those interested in the ancient Near East.

ANE – ANENews: Ten years ago this summer, in early July 1993, the Ancient Near East (ANE) list was opened to the public. Intended to provide a medium for discussion among scholars and students actively engaged in research and study of the ancient Near East from the Indus to the Nile, and from the beginnings of human habitation to the rise of Islam, it has admirably fulfilled its mission. The discussion list allows scholars and students to ask and answer questions publicly; to quickly gain a feel for the opinions of peers; to distribute drafts of articles to a wide but focused audience; to comment on issues of concern in the news media; and to instantly send out announcements of jobs, conferences, and changes of address or status. It also provides a forum for the occasional angry argument, and a soapbox for polemic and lament. At present, about eighteen hundred addresses are subscribed. Among the suite of lists focusing on ancient topics, ANE is one of the oldest and heaviest trafficked — clear indications that it provides a useful service. Those interested can direct their browsers to the ANE pages at:

<https://listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/ane>

and

<https://listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/anenews>

IraqCrisis: In April 2003, in response to increased traffic on the subject of the war in Iraq on ANE and other lists, and in response to the widespread need for a forum to communicate substantive information on cultural property damaged, destroyed, or lost from libraries and museums in Iraq during and after the war, we established a new list, distributed under careful moderation. IraqCrisis has a subscribership of about six hundred souls — mostly professionals in the museum, library, cultural heritage, and university communities. It is a part of the Oriental Institute's formal response to the crisis in Iraq. Those interested can direct their browsers to the IraqCrisis pages at:

<https://listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/iraqcrisis>

ETANA — Core Texts: For two years, the Research Archives has been in partnership with a number of sister institutions in the development of ETANA (Electronic Tools and Ancient Near Eastern Archives), operating under a grant from Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. During the past year more than sixty volumes from the collections of the Research Archives have been scanned, processed and added to the ETANA Core Texts collection, available publicly and free of charge on the web. A full listing of these volumes is available at:

<http://www.etana.org/coretexts.shtml>

Many of these books were chosen because their condition in libraries is poor, mostly due to heavy use. An enormously useful side product of the project is the production of hardbound, acid-free duplicate readers' copies of each of the volumes selected, which can now be placed on the shelves for those who wish to use them in that format. While they are indexed "locally" at the website of ETANA (URL cited above), records for each of the volumes also now appear in

RESEARCH ARCHIVES

Abzu [<http://www.etana.org/abzu/>] (the rebuilding of which I discussed in last year's report). Even more significantly, partner institutions have taken on the burden of producing formal MARC records for each volume, linked to the web-accessible version of the volumes, so that anyone working at a University (or other networked) library worldwide can have immediate access to these publications. This project is an important early step in the collaborative production and access to the published record of the ancient Near East.

Iraq Bibliography: In the weeks following the looting and destruction of institutions in Iraq, members of the Research Archives staff began to collect references to published works documenting the contents of the museums, libraries, and other collections in Iraq. In collaboration with the Oriental Institute Iraq Working Group, and with the Middle East Librarians Association Committee on Iraqi Libraries (see below), we produced the bibliography of the basic publications. This bibliography is available online at:

http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/iraq_bibliography.html

The most recent version includes some 220 volumes and an index of 12,423 Iraq Museum (IM) numbers for published objects in the collections of the Iraq Museum. [Note however, that many published objects — especially well known objects — will appear repeatedly in the published record. Therefore, this number does not indicate the number of discrete objects included in the publications listed here.] In addition, many of these volumes include publications of objects in the collections of the Iraq Museum that either did not have IM numbers assigned at the time of publication, or for which the IM numbers are not indicated in the publication. As news of the actual extent of loss and damage to these collections has emerged, we have shifted our focus to concentrate on particular classes of objects. This emerging bibliography is an important baseline assessment of the secondary documentations of the collections in question, and we expect to develop and augment it in the next few months.

Middle East Librarians Association Committee on Iraqi Libraries: In a parallel effort, a committee has been established to coordinate the response of librarians in North America to the crisis in Iraq. I joined this committee at the outset and have been an active participant. Among the efforts the Research Archives and the Oriental Institute have contributed is the Web presence of the committee, which you can find at:

<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/melairaq.html>

The first assessment of the library situation in postwar Iraq, written by Nabil al-Tikriti, a graduate student in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, was published by the Committee on its website. Other useful documentation published there includes:

- **Iraqi Library Stamps.** The aim of this project is to collect images (scanned photographs or photocopies) of library stamps and other ownership marks used by various libraries and manuscript collections in Iraq and make these images available on the Internet.
- **Pictures of Damaged Libraries in Iraq.** The photographs presented here document damage to libraries in Iraq during and after the war in April 2003. Most of them are provided by Nabil al-Tikriti. They were taken during his trip to Baghdad on May 25-31, 2003. They accompany his report: *Iraq Manuscript Collections, Archives, & Libraries: Situation Report*, dated June 8, 2003. The remaining photographs were taken by McGuire Gibson, Professor of Mesopotamian Archaeology, the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. He was a member of the UNESCO team that visited Baghdad in May 2003.

RESEARCH ARCHIVES

The Online Catalogue and Acquisitions Lists: During the past year we have added about ten thousand records to the online catalogue. The total number of records stands at 121,741. The Catalogue is available online at:

<http://oilib.uchicago.edu/oilibcat.html>

The online catalogue records are used by about seven hundred users worldwide each day.

During the past year we have produced two Acquisitions lists:

Acquisitions - November–December 2001.

Acquisitions - January–February 2002.

Information on how to read them online and how to subscribe to the mailing list is available at:

<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/RABooks.html>

We currently have 460 subscribers to the mailing list.

Current Acquisitions

Following are the acquisitions statistics for the past year:

	<u>May 2002–April 2003</u>	<u>Total</u>
Monographs and Series	744	26,372
Journals	<u>253</u>	<u>10,707</u>
Total Books	997	37,079

This year's acquisitions statistics remain consistent with the publication trends of the past few years in ancient Near Eastern studies, and with the acquisitions policies of the Research Archives. We continue to be committed to acquiring all the basic published resources for the study of the ancient Near East.

Staff

The staff of the Research Archives has always been drawn from the talented and accomplished pool of University of Chicago students. During the past year, I have been fortunate to have the help of three excellent assistants. Kathy Wagner has held down the Wednesday evening shift for another year. In the autumn, we welcomed the addition of Eudora Bernsen, first-year student in Archaeology, and Foy Scalf, first-year student in Egyptology. Eudora shouldered much of the cataloging burden while Foy focuses on a number of special projects. These three assistants have made an excellent team, and together we have accomplished a great deal this year.

Acknowledgments

As always, the Research Archives is indebted to a large community of supporters. The partnership for more than a decade between the Research Archives and the Computer Laboratory is of inestimable value. John Sanders and I communicate with one another on a continuous basis on every conceivable matter. This partnership goes far beyond the usual ties among colleagues. Likewise, relationships between the Research Archives and the Museum, particularly the Museum Archives and Registration Departments and the Education Department and the Publica-

RESEARCH ARCHIVES

tions Office are of fundamental importance for the smooth operation of the library. I gratefully acknowledge the support and friendship of the members of those units of the Oriental Institute. As always, the Journal of Near Eastern Studies has provided and maintained exchange subscriptions in support of the library. In addition, Robert D. Biggs, its editor, has offered us a steady stream of donations of books and journals, old and new, from his own library and on behalf of the Journal of Near Eastern Studies.
