

RESEARCH ARCHIVES

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Introduction

Among the more interesting trends in scholarship in the past few years is the movement towards “open access.” A useful summary of the basic principles is articulated in the opening paragraph of the manifesto of the Budapest Open Access Initiative published in early 2002:

An old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good. The old tradition is the willingness of scientists and scholars to publish the fruits of their research in scholarly journals without payment, for the sake of inquiry and knowledge. The new technology is the Internet. The public good they make possible is the worldwide electronic distribution of the peer-reviewed journal literature and completely free and unrestricted access to it by all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds. Removing access barriers to this literature will accelerate research, enrich education, share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich, make this literature as useful as it can be, and lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge. (www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml)

Noble goals indeed! For many years it has been my contention that libraries and librarians are — and should be — essential partners in removing access barriers and in developing the structures that allow the sharing of the results of scholarship for the sake of inquiry and knowledge. Traditionally situated at the nexus of the exchange of information among scientists and scholars, libraries and librarians must now also advocate for the transformation of the systems of scientific and scholarly communication and champion the role of research libraries as partners in this change.

The Oriental Institute Research Archives and its librarian have long sought to develop partnerships with like-minded organizations in the development of tools, strategies, and materials dedicated to these principles.

Within the Institute, the Research Archives is a senior participant in the development and maintenance of the Oriental Institute’s Web site (now a full decade old and undergoing a major restructuring). Other internal projects working towards these goals are the Iraq Working Group (oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/iraq.html) and XSTAR (oi.uchicago.edu/OI/PROJ/XSTAR/XSTAR.html). Similarly, the library staff is actively engaged in committees to develop and establish policies governing the organization, control, and access to a wide variety of “intellectual properties” in the custody of the Oriental Institute.

In the world at large, the Research Archives is a partner in such things as the development of ETANA: Electronic Tools and Ancient Near Eastern Archives (www.etana.org); the development of achemenet (www.achemenet.com), the central place online for the study of the Achaemenid Empire; and most recently The Alexandria Archive Institute (www.alexandriaarchive.org).

We collectively believe that we are witnessing the emergence of a new set of paradigms governing, structuring, and providing access to the “common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge.”

Towards the end of the year, we articulated our mission in the following paragraph:

The Research Archives’ mission is to make its resources available and useful to the faculty, staff, and projects of the Oriental Institute and to sustain and preserve for future generations a universe of knowledge and creativity relating to the languages and

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cultures of the ancient Near East and to the ancient and modern scholarly traditions associated with the ancient Near East.

The development of our print collection, with the goal of providing a comprehensive record of the ancient Near East as it is manifest in the published record, is the task which takes the bulk of our “blood and treasure.” The primary point of access to this is by way of the online catalog.

The Online Catalog

During the past year we have added about ten thousand records to the online catalog. The total number of records stands at 130,235. The Catalog is available online at www.oilib.uchicago.edu/oilibcat.html. The online catalog includes items acquired in the Research Archives since 1990. It also includes important classes of analytical records — bibliographical records of essays, articles, and reviews included in the books and serials we acquire. In the past year we have begun the process of retrospective cataloging of the monograph collection. In its basic form, this process requires the examination of every book in the collection, the comparison of the book to its online and card-catalog record, and the development of an online record if needed, along with analytical records for essays included in each volume. After a year’s work, my dedicated staff has made it thorough about eight percent of the collection.

Current Acquisitions

Following are the acquisitions statistics for the past year:

	<u>May 2003–April 2004</u>	<u>Total</u>
Monographs and Series	690	27,062
Journals	<u>255</u>	<u>10,972</u>
Total Books	945	38,034

Despite a shrinking budget and strong inflation in the cost of books and journals, the Research Archives remains committed to acquiring all the basic published resources for the study of the ancient Near East.

Global Resources Hosted at the Research Archives

The globally accessible resources of the Oriental Institute fall into two categories: Communication and Documentation. I list here programs that are new or newly developed in the past year.

Communication: Mailing lists**ANE**

listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/ane

Provides a medium for discussion among scholars and students actively engaged in research and study of the ancient Near East.

ANENews

listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/aneneews

Provides a moderated forum for the distribution of information among scholars and students actively engaged in research and study of the ancient Near East.

IraqCrisis

listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/iraqcrisis

Provides a means of communicating substantive information on cultural property damaged, destroyed, or lost from libraries and museums in Iraq during and after the war in April 2003, and on the worldwide response to the crisis.

ETANA-Abzu-News

listhost.uchicago.edu/mailman/listinfo/etana-abzu-news

Provides occasional reports on developments at ETANA and Abzu.

Documentation

Abzu

www.etana.org/abzu/

A guide to the rapidly increasing, and widely distributed data relevant to the study and public presentation of the ancient Near East via the Internet.

A Bibliography of Ugaritic Grammar and Biblical Hebrew Grammar in the Twentieth Century, Mark S. Smith

oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/bibs/BH-Ugaritic.html

ETANA - Core Texts

www.etana.org/coretexts.shtml

A new set of titles, digitized under a grant from the American Theological Librarians Association, is nearly complete at the time of writing.

Iraq Bibliographies

oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/IraqBibs.html

Compiled in response to the cultural heritage crisis in Iraq during and after the war in spring 2003.

Middle East Librarians Association Committee on Iraqi Libraries

oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/melairaq.html

Bosnian Libraries: Their Fate in the War and Responses to it, with Lessons for Iraq, Jeffrey B. Spurr

oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/CAA_Spurr.htm

The Iraqi Jewish Archive Preservation Report

oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/IraqiJewishArchiveReport.htm

The Library of Congress and the Cultural Property Office of the United States Department of State Mission to Baghdad: Report on the National Library and the House of Manuscripts, October 27–November 3, 2003

oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/LCIraqReport.html

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Names and Contact Information for Senior Administrators and Librarians at Institutions in Iraq

oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/University_contacts.htm

Serials held by the Oriental Institute Research Archives

oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/ResArchSerials.html

Staff

I am indebted to the excellent staff of the Research Archives. Our team this past year included Foy Scalf and Michael Beetley. Foy, a graduate student in Egyptology, has devoted his time to a number of projects, most recently to the analysis and cataloging of our map collection. He will continue to work for me, having begun his third year as Assistant Archivist. Michael Beetley, a dissertating graduate student in Northwest Semitics, was with us for almost a whole year. His efforts were largely devoted to building the analytical catalog records for material newly acquired in the collection. He also began and systematized the retrospective cataloging of monographic materials. This slow and laborious process enriches our catalog as a research tool each day. Michael has moved on this summer to a teaching position — we congratulate him and thank him for his careful work with our team. Our most recent employee is Benjamin Trofatter. Ben, a student in the College majoring in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, is shouldering the duties Michael shed. I am grateful, as always, to have the opportunity to work with an extraordinary team.

Acknowledgments

It is impossible to give sufficient acknowledgment to the close and productive relationships that I have both personally and professionally with the staff and faculty of the Oriental Institute. It is the personal dedication of this large team to mutually shared goals that makes each day interesting and worthwhile. Likewise, the continuous interaction I have with members and friends of the Oriental Institute who pass through the physical or virtual spaces of the Research Archives is a constant source of stimulation and intellectual challenge. Thanks to you all.

The exchange programs we have with the Journal of Near Eastern Studies and with the Publications Department, remain, as they always have been, a mainstay of the Research Archives acquisitions efforts. As our acquisitions budgets shrink, and the costs of books and serials rise outpacing the rate of inflation, the steadfastness of these partnerships takes on an increasingly crucial role. We are grateful.
