

INTRODUCTION

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I am delighted to share with you the Oriental Institute's Annual Report for 2017–18. This year saw the continuation of our primary field projects, despite the turmoil that continues to disrupt the Middle East and hurdles of various kinds that threaten to hinder our work in several countries. In 2017–18 the OI conducted excavations, research, and cultural heritage preservation projects in Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, and Turkey, investigating periods that span the Chalcolithic (sixth millennium BCE) through the Middle Byzantine (early second millennium CE) periods. In Egypt, Nadine Moeller and Grégory Marouard continued excavations at Tell Edfu in Upper Egypt, which presents an unparalleled opportunity to understand the development of urbanism in the third millennium BCE, while in Lower Egypt the Giza Plateau Mapping Project, under the direction of Mark Lehner, excavated three locations at Giza. In Turkey, we maintain a wide-ranging research program, with excavations at Zincirli (David Schloen), Kerkenes Dağ (Scott Branting), and Çadır Höyük (Gregory McMahon). In Iraqi Kurdistan, Gil Stein completed his fifth field season at Surezha, a site that promises to advance our knowledge of the distinctive urban evolution of northern Mesopotamia. Yorke Rowan and Morag Kersel continued work on the two major archaeological projects in Israel and Jordan, respectively, under their direction — the Galilee Prehistory Project, which traces the dramatic changes that took place in the Galilee between the fifth and early fourth millennia, and the Eastern Badia Archaeological Project, which aims to better understand the diachronic use and occupation of the Black Desert of Jordan. In Israel, David Schloen engaged in the second season of excavations at the Canaanite and Phoenician city of Tell Keisan, while Don Whitcomb launched a new expedition to investigate the early Islamic levels at Khirbet al-Karak on the Galilee. In Afghanistan, the OI and the National Museum of Afghanistan completed the sixth year of their remarkable cultural heritage partnership under the direction of Gil Stein. Finally, much progress has been made this year towards resuming excavations at Nippur in Iraq after a hiatus of twenty-eight years. We hope to conduct a preliminary field season, our first since the outbreak of the first Gulf War in 1990, in the 2018–19 academic year.

Our text-oriented projects also reached major milestones this year. Ray Johnson and his team completed the ninety-fourth season of the Epigraphic Survey at Chicago House in Luxor, Egypt. Beyond the primary objective of documenting the reliefs of Luxor Temple, Medinet Habu, and Theban Tomb 107 — and doing so by continuing to implement state-of-the-art digital methods — the portfolio of projects increasingly includes architectural restoration, conservation, and training programs. Much progress has been made on the Epigraphic Survey's next folio publication, *Medinet Habu Volume X: The Eighteenth Dynasty Temple, Part II. The Façade, Pillars, and Architrave Inscriptions of the Thutmose Peripteros*, which is nearing completion. The efforts of the *Chicago Hittite Dictionary*, led by Theo van den Hout and Petra Goedegebuure, were directed to completing the final fascicles of the letter Š, and, particularly, to hosting the 10th International Congress of Hittitology, which was held in Chicago with great success at the end of August. On a more somber note, we report the retirement of Oğuz Soysal, senior research associate of the *Chicago Hittite Dictionary* after a remarkable tenure of twenty-three years at the OI. The *Chicago Demotic Dictionary*, edited by Jan Johnson and Brian Muhs, having completed its original hard-copy mission, has made progress in making the necessary conversions of its files, a necessary step towards advancing the long-term goal of producing an interactive and

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flexible web-based dictionary. The Nubian Expedition Publication Project, under the direction of Bruce Williams, has three volumes nearing completion and on the cusp of publication. Most notably, this year also saw the happy conclusion of the *Rubin et al. v. Islamic Republic of Iran et al.* litigation with the Supreme Court's unanimous favorable ruling in February, which ended the legal threat to the thousands of cuneiform tablets on loan to the OI that are at the core of the Persepolis Fortification Archive project.

A new research project, *Coping with Changing Climates in Early Antiquity (3CEA)*, was launched this year under the direction of Hervé Reculeau and Nadine Moeller and in collaboration with the University of Michigan and Purdue University. Funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, 3CEA investigates, from a comparative perspective, the social and cultural perceptions of, and experiences with, climate change in the Bronze and Early Iron Ages. Aleksandra Hallmann joined the OI this year for a two-year term as our most recent postdoctoral fellow. In March, Aleksandra organized a highly successful two-day conference, the fourteenth in our annual seminar series, *Outward Appearance vs. Inward Significance: Addressing Identities through Attire in the Ancient World*, which brought together an international panel of experts to take measure of the meaning and significance of attire in the ancient world, from various theoretical and methodological perspectives, in order to arrive at a better understanding of the intersection between dress and the many facets of identity.

The OI Museum, led by Chief Curator Jean Evans, continued to make excellent progress with its Gallery Enhancements Project — a large-scale endeavor funded by an anonymous donor, to update most of our galleries and enhance visitor experience by replacing many of the original free-standing cases, improving lighting, and updating the displays and text. The Museum staff was also occupied earlier this year with the opening of *The Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt*, curated by Foy Scalf, which ran from October through March and was acclaimed by many to be one of the OI's most successful and well-conceived special exhibits. Our Education Department, with the addition of Tasha Vorderstrasse, as our university and continuing education program coordinator, expanded its efforts to offer hybrid adult education courses, which can be taken either on-site at the OI or remotely, online.

We are saddened to report the loss several cherished members of our community this year, including: Robert McCormick Adams, a monumental figure of Near Eastern archaeology, who served as director of the Oriental Institute, dean of the Social Sciences Division, and provost of the University; former faculty member Lawrence Stager; former student Eugene Cruz-Uribe; and Nancy Gerson, a Life Member of the Advisory Council and dedicated volunteer. Each made a distinctive impression upon the OI and each will be deeply missed.

The pages that follow detail the extraordinary scope of the research projects and programs currently supported by the Oriental Institute. As you read through the descriptions of each, I am sure you will share my deep appreciation and gratitude for all of the efforts of our faculty, researchers, and staff.
