

# DISCOVERING NEW PASTS: THE OI AT 100

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THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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## A KIND OF PARADISE: THE RESEARCH ARCHIVES OF THE OI FOY SCALF

“A monastery without books is like a state without its troops, like a castle without walls, a kitchen without utensils, a table with no dishes upon it, a garden without herbs, a meadow without flowers, a tree without leaves.”

— Jakob Louber (1440–1513)

Librarian of the Carthusian Monastery of St. Margaretental in Basel

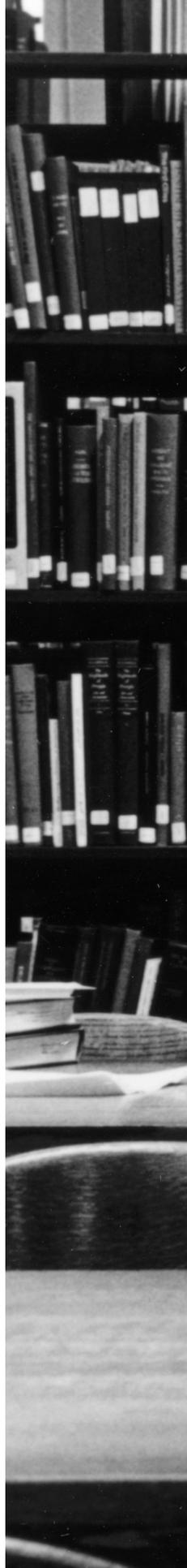
AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY has always been an important and central component of the Oriental Institute. For the first half of the institute’s history (1919–69), the Oriental Institute library served within the University of Chicago’s larger library system. After consolidation of that library system in 1970, the Research Archives was founded to fulfill the research needs of institute faculty, staff, and students. It remains one of the premiere libraries for cutting edge scholarly work in the study of the ancient Middle East. The collection of 65,000 print volumes is now supplemented by vast digital resources, cataloged and made publicly accessible through the Research Archives online catalog as part of the Integrated Database Project. The library will continue to be a conduit for groundbreaking results, a steward of lasting contribution, and a valued community space where ideas are shared and research is shaped.

For the academically inclined, a visit to the Research Archives is a trip to a kind of intellectual paradise; I invoke here the words of Jorge Luis Borges: “I, who had always thought of Paradise in form and images as a library.” Borges, an Argentinian writer famous for his essays and poetry, became blind at the age of fifty-five. In his “Poem of the Gifts,” Borges laments the irony of his blindness in the context of his profession and book collection, recounting his earlier, idyllic notions about libraries. Like the library in Borges’s imagination, students and scholars make the pilgrimage to the Oriental Institute’s (OI) library—now named the Research Archives—to forge new ideas and discipline old ones through deep, archaeological dives in the intellectual stratigraphy bound in the pages of volumes on the shelves of the Elizabeth Morse Genius Reading Room, as the main room is now called. The experience has left indelible impressions in their minds and on their work. Miriam Lichtheim (PhD, University of Chicago, 1944)—an Egyptologist who is justly famous for her three-volume set of English translations, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, but who spent many years as a librarian at the University of California, Berkeley—remembered her time in the OI’s Research Archives fondly, spending day after day there next to Helene Kantor (PhD, University of Chicago, 1945), who went on to become a world-renowned figure in the archaeology of the Middle East. Lichtheim recalled:

“Thereafter we found ourselves occupying seats at adjacent tables in the Oriental Institute’s Library, each partly hidden by a long row of books lined up in front of us. We sat there most of the day, every day of the week, for the next three years. A friendship developed, and there were social occasions for meeting. But what is engraved in my mind is that scene of daily study.” (Fig. 1)

There is real magic in the social fabric of the library. As a wide-eyed graduate student, I had spent many hours in the library, both studying for my classes as well as working as a part-time student employee. During one study session, my advisor Robert Ritner (PhD, University of Chicago, 1987), who himself had worked as a student employee in the Research Archives, had come to the library to discuss with me some matter related to a class he was teaching. As he was about to leave, he looked down at me and said, “No wonder you are doing so well in the Egyptology program . . .

OPPOSITE: Figure 1. A library patron doing research in the library’s reading room, ca. 1980 (University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf2-05486, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library).





you are sitting in my old seat.” Despite the humor in this quip, which suggests a kind of residual “magic” in the library chairs, each academic generation has always felt the inspiration and pressure to achieve from the spirits of the great minds that have long haunted the halls and desks of the Oriental Institute and the paradise that is its library.

#### A HISTORY OF THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE LIBRARY AND THE RESEARCH ARCHIVES

From the very beginning—in fact, even before its birth—the Oriental Institute had a library. William Rainey Harper (PhD, Yale University, 1876), the first president of the University of Chicago, studied deeply in the humanities, particularly philology, and received a PhD from Yale University with a dissertation comparing Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and Gothic. Committed to the close study of texts, Harper laid the groundwork for the University’s library system, building the collection into the second largest library in the United States by 1896. Now Harper Memorial Library, dedicated in his honor, faces the Midway Plaisance along 59<sup>th</sup> Street. Harper recruited and worked alongside James Henry Breasted in the Department of Semitic Languages when it was moved into Haskell Oriental Museum, located in Haskell Hall on the main quad of the University, which had been designed by Henry Ives Cobb and built in 1896 through the partial funding of Mrs. Frederick Haskell. In the north room of the third floor, Harper and Breasted helped build a library of primary reference resources for the study of



ABOVE: Figure 2. Haskell Hall Library, ca. 1896–1930 (University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf2-03468, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library). OPPOSITE: Figure 3. Haskell Hall Office and Library, ca. 1896–1930 (P. 9137).

the ancient Middle East; at one time this room was referred to as the Divinity Library of Haskell Hall (fig. 2). Large portions of the working library of the department were comprised of the personal books of these two men (fig. 3), and many of Breasted’s own library books are today in the Research Archives of the Oriental Institute, identified by his bookplate and stamps (figs. 16–17); these books were incorporated into the collection in the 1970s.

Harper and Breasted enlisted the help of professional library staff to manage and curate the collections. Prior to becoming the director of the state library school and library dean of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign from 1907 to 1909, Albert S. Wilson worked in the Haskell





FROM LEFT: Figure 4. Haskell Hall Library, ca. 1896-1930 (University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf2-03466, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library).

Figure 5. Haskell Hall, interior of library, ca. 1896-1930 (P. 12425).

Figure 6. Haskell Hall Library ca. 1896-1930 (University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf2-03404, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library).

Figure 7. Haskell Hall Library, ca. 1896-1930 (University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf2-03467, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library).



Hall library (fig. 4) from 1900 to 1906, producing cards on typewriters for the library card catalog at a time when it was still common to find patrons conducting their research in suit and tie (fig. 6). In the days before the Oriental Institute, the Haskell Hall library remained limited to a single room. However, with the foundation of the institute in 1919 and infused with the financial backing of the Rockefeller family, the library expanded along with the rest of the institute, its faculty, its staff, and its collections (fig. 7). With such growth, managing the library and linking patrons with their sources required additional dedicated staff equipped with specialized knowledge in the ancient Middle East and an independent spirit to support Breasted's vision for an interdisciplinary institute devoted to cutting edge research. Although they largely remained behind the scenes, librarians played an incredibly important role in shaping how knowledge was produced at the OI and often led the way in systems for the retrieval of information within large data sets.

Breasted recognized the particular information science needs of the burgeoning Oriental Institute and in 1924 hired a young Norwegian librarian named Johanne Vindenas. Without question, it

is Johanne Vindenas (fig. 8) who was most responsible for turning the OI library into the premier library for ancient Middle East studies in the United States. Breasted brought in Vindenas to run and manage the library, and he hired her fellow countrywoman, Asgerd V. Skjønberg, as a cataloger. Vindenas thrived, spending forty years at the Oriental Institute (1924-64).

**“ . . . a time when it was still common to find patrons conducting their research in suit and tie.”**



“Although they largely remained behind the scenes, librarians played an incredibly important role in shaping how knowledge was produced at the OI and often led the way in systems for the retrieval of information within large data sets.”



RIGHT: Figure 8. Johanne Vindenas, Oriental Institute librarian 1924–64, holding two Arabic manuscripts in the reading room (P. 53033).



During that time, Vindenas (fig. 9), Skjönsberg, and library staffers produced over 284,400 index cards (fig. 10) for the library's extensive card catalog (fig. 11), covering the approximately 50,000 volumes in the collection (fig. 12). So "meticulous" were her cataloging methodologies that in 1988 Robert Wadsworth, former bibliographer for the University of Chicago libraries, mentioned them in a remembrance he wrote a month after her death. Wadsworth noted the technical expertise and independence of Vindenas, who "was in such thorough control of all technical details that little could be done for her by the general [university library] staff." The cards from the library's card catalog were reproduced in sixteen large volumes in 1970, supervised by Shirley A. Lyon. The *Catalog of the Oriental Institute Library, University of Chicago* bears witness to the detailed and time-consuming task of producing an analytical index of ancient Middle East studies in the form of a paper database of cards. So incredible were these feats that the *Catalog* remains a useful reference source even to this day and, as discussed below, served as an important methodological model for the dictionary projects in the early, halcyon days of the OI.

LEFT: Figure 9. Johanne Vindenas, Oriental Institute librarian 1924-64, examining a book in the reading room (P. 53029).

AS182 Wiegand, Theodor, 1864-1936.  
 .B358 Rodenwaldt, Gerhart, 1886-1945.  
 1927 Gedächtnisrede des hrn. Rodenwaldt auf Theodor  
 Wiegand.  
 (In Preussische akademie der wissenschaften,  
 Berlin. Philos.-hist. klasse. Sitzungsberichte,  
 1927, p. cxxxviii-cxlii)

Wiegand, Theodor, 1864- 1936.  
 L.C. Mamboury, Ernest, 1878- 1953.  
 ... Die kaiserpaläste von Konstantinopel zwischen Hippo-  
 drom und Marmara-meer, bearbeitet von Ernst Mamboury  
 und Theodor Wiegand, unter mitwirkung von Uvo Hölscher  
 und Karl Wulzinger, mit einem beitrage von Eckhard Unger;  
 mit 31 abbildungen und 118 tafeln. Berlin und Leipzig, W. de  
 Gruyter & co., 1934.  
 viii, 71 p. illus., cxviii pl. (part fold.; incl. plans) diagrs. 31½<sup>cm</sup>.  
 (Archäologisches institut des Deutschen reiches. Abteilung Istanbul  
 [Istanbuler forschungen])  
 "Literatur": p. 69-71.  
 1. Constantinople—Antiq. i. Wiegand, Theodor, 1864- ii. Höl-  
 scher, Uvo, 1878- iii. Wulzinger, Karl, 1886- iv. Unger, Eck-  
 hard Axel Otto, 1885- v. Title.  
 Library of Congress DR725.M3 34-41166  
 (3) 913.4961

Winckelmannsprogramm.

N5325 Archäologische gesellschaft zu Berlin.  
 .B37 Winckelmannsprogramm der Archäologischen gesellschaft  
 zu Berlin ...  
 cl. Berlin, G. Reimer [etc.], 1841-  
 v. illus., plates (part col.) map, plans. 29<sup>cm</sup>.  
 Title varies: 18 -1919 ( -76.) ... Programm zum Winckelmanns-  
 feste ...  
 1920- (77.- ) Winckelmannsprogramm ...  
 "Verzeichnis der Winckelmannsprogramme" 1-50, 1841-90: 50th pro-  
 gramm, 1890, p. [171]-172.

1. Archaeology--Societies. 2. Art, Ancient. 3. Art, Greek. I. Title.

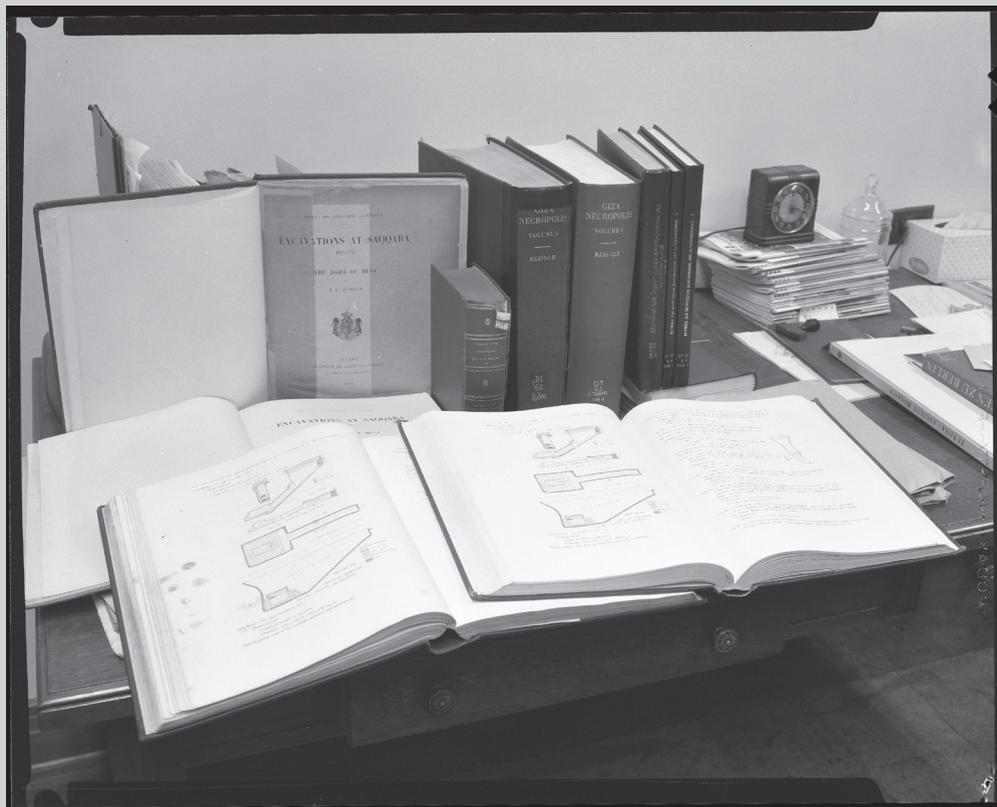
Library of Congress N5325.A8 CA 30-1479 Unrev'd  
 (2)

Wind, Edgar, 1900- ed.  
 Z5579 Warburg institute.  
 .W25 A bibliography of the survival of the classics. v. 1-2; 1931-  
 (C1) 1932/33. London [etc.], 1934-38.  
 2 v. 25<sup>cm</sup>.  
 The period 1920-30 is covered by a similar bibliography by Richard  
 Newald entitled *Nachleben der antike*, published in the *Jahresbericht*  
 über die fortschritte der klassischen altertumswissenschaft, v. 232, 1931,  
 and v. 250, 1935.  
 Title varies slightly.  
 Vol. 1 has added t.-p.: *Kulturwissenschaftliche bibliographie zum*  
*nachleben der antike*.  
 Text in German; introduction to v. 1 in English.  
 Vol. 1 edited by Hans Meier, Richard Newald and Edgar Wind.

(Continued on next card) ...

(46r45h1) 36-13716

ABOVE: Figure 10. Catalog cards from the library card catalog files, ca. 1960. Photo: Johanne Vindenäs. BELOW LEFT: Figure 11. Oriental Institute Library, entrance hall and library card catalog, ca. 1960. Photo: Johanne Vindenäs. BELOW RIGHT: Figure 12. Office desk of Oriental Institute librarian, ca. 1960. Photo: Johanne Vindenäs.



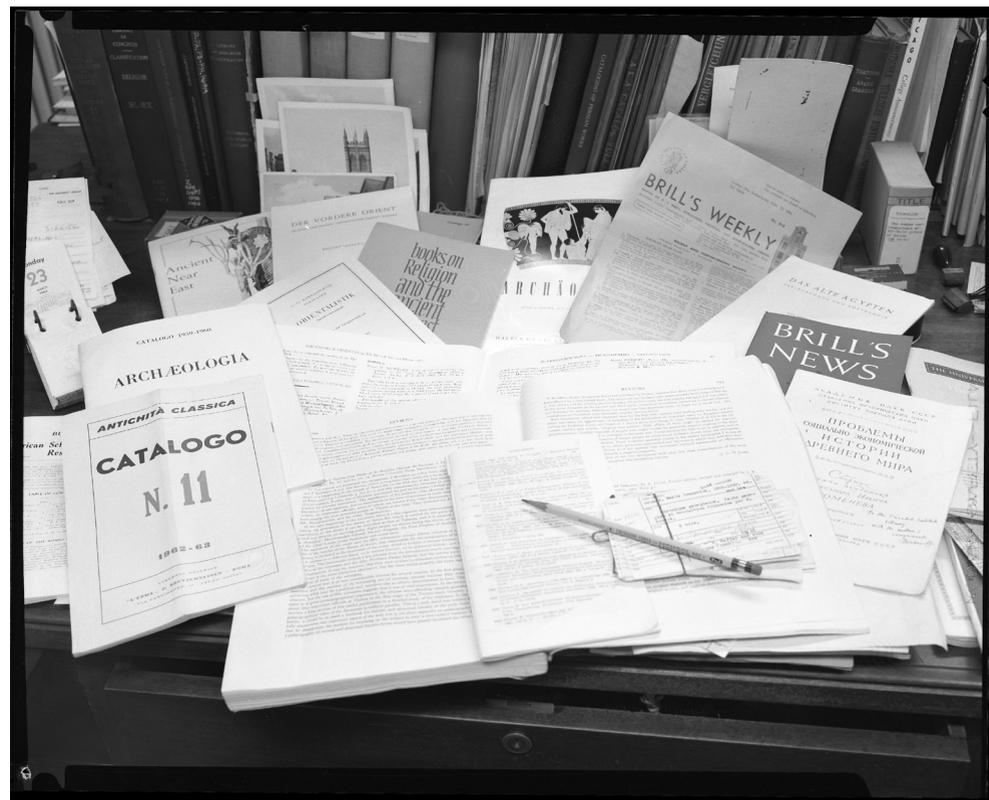


ABOVE LEFT: Figure 13. Oriental Institute Library Reading Room, ca. 1931, view to the south, showing the large rosette window (P. 19000).

ABOVE RIGHT: Figure 14. A collection of illustrated London news pamphlets and associated catalog cards, ca. 1960. Photo: Johanne Vindenas.

OPPOSITE TOP: Figure 15. A collection of offprints and pamphlets, ca. 1960. Photo: Johanne Vindenas.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Figure 16. Bookplate of the Director's Library.

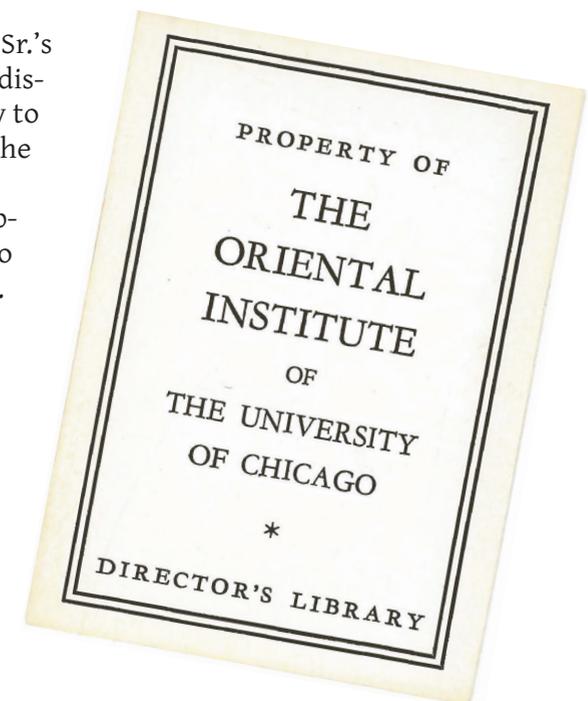


It was Vindenas who oversaw the move from Haskell Hall to the new Oriental Institute building constructed at the corner of East 58th Street and University Avenue in 1930 (fig. 13). The books were moved to the new building in 1931 where they occupied the large reading room on the second floor, described by Breasted as “the most beautiful room in the building . . . where for the first time the entire specialized group of books representing the field of research with which the institute is concerned is conveniently accessible.” Although formally part of the larger university library system, Vindenas had wide latitude to manage the collection to fulfill the mission of both the institute and the university at large. With the construction of the new Oriental Institute building, ancient Middle East studies had its new “country club.” The Oriental Institute served as a grand research institution analogous to what mathematicians had in the Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS) at Princeton. In Sylvia Nasar’s best-selling memoir of John Forbes Nash Jr., *A Beautiful Mind*, the IAS was described as a mathematical paradise: “Its well-stocked third-floor library, the richest collection of mathematical journals and books in the world, was open twenty-four hours a day. Mathematicians with a fondness for tennis (the courts were nearby) didn’t have to go home before returning to their offices—there was a locker room with showers. When its doors opened in 1921, an undergraduate poet called it ‘a country club for math, where you could take a bath.’” The Oriental Institute library was likewise an extremely rich collection of books, journals, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, manuscripts, and ephemera (figs. 12, 14, and 15) covering the archaeology, languages, cultures, and peoples of the ancient Middle East (which was included in the early

twentieth century under the rubric “Oriental Studies”). And like the IAS, faculty at the OI could obtain library keys for unrestricted twenty-four-hour access to accommodate the needs of researchers on whatever idiosyncratic schedules they preferred (fig. 11).

The early days of the Oriental Institute library did not pass without contention and, in fact, libraries at the Oriental Institute have had a tumultuous history. Almost immediately following the death of James Henry Breasted in 1935, his son James Henry Breasted Jr. began correspondence with John Wilson about the fate of his father’s library. Wilson, who assumed the directorship after Breasted, took over during one of the most challenging periods in the history of the institute, receiving in his first days a devastating letter from Rockefeller about funding that would necessitate massive cuts to the institute’s projects and staff. The complicated matter of Breasted’s personal library further strained an already exasperated Wilson, who had to confront major financial contraction upon assuming his directorate; these tensions manifested in Wilson’s relationship with a young Breasted Jr. trying to find his way after the loss of his father. Breasted Sr.’s library was known around the Oriental Institute as the “Director’s Library,” a preference reflected in the bookplates used to designate these volumes (fig. 16), although Breasted Sr. also had a bookplate marking his own *ex libris* material (fig. 17). As one can imagine, Breasted Sr.’s life and work were intertwined with the very fabric of the early institute, and there was little distinction made between what belonged to Breasted’s personal library and what belonged solely to the institute. This complicated the task of assigning legal possession at Breasted’s death, as he had willed his library to his son, James Henry Breasted Jr.

Breasted Jr. had every legal right to consider the library of his father his own personal property. Furthermore, the collection had immense sentimental value to the younger Breasted, who had often corresponded with his father about books. In a letter dated August 1931, Breasted Sr. thanked his son for the gift of a volume by Leo Frobenius: “. . . his generalizations on Africa, and his wide observation, make his writing important for us Orientalists. You could not have selected for me a more useful book. In all likelihood, I would have overlooked it, if you had not presented me with a copy.” Yet, there was some confusion about which books actually belonged to the Breasted library. Throughout Breasted’s career, the director’s library was used by those in the institute as part of the institute’s own collections, which contributed toward the care and binding of such books, and which also often passed up purchasing specific volumes for the institute library because those volumes were already in the director’s library. In 1936, when it came time to hash out the details, the lack of clarity caused friction between Breasted Jr. and new director John Wilson, as both men were reorienting themselves to a world without Breasted Sr. The correspondence about the fate of these books be-



“ . . . Breasted Sr. also had a bookplate marking his own *ex libris* material.”

library in the care of the institute, at one point even offering to sell it to the institute for a market value sum. In a letter to Wilson on August 10, 1936, Breasted Jr. broke the news to Wilson that he would like “to retain ownership of my father’s scientific library.” Serious disagreements would plague the remainder of their correspondence about the library through 1939.

Breasted Jr., who graduated from Princeton in 1932—where he was voted the “biggest grind” by his class for his hardworking efforts—was adamant that any book containing the director’s library bookplate belonged to him; Wilson disagreed, pointing out that the same bookplate was used in many other volumes belonging to the institute’s library. Furthermore, Breasted Jr. was especially offended when members of the institute raised the subject of their invested “equity” into this collection in terms of binding, preservation, storage, and care, suggesting in a letter of 1937 that this investment was worth “almost double the value set on the library by the appraisers.” In a letter on July 13, 1938, Breasted Jr. wrote to Wilson that: “Like the Eloquent Peasant I do not have the wealth or the publicity ballyhoo facilities of your University or institute. But I am more than willing to lay this whole business before the bar of public opinion unless you decide to make this unnecessary.” The last straw came when Wilson kept for the institute a number of volumes from the library, bound at institute expense, and sent replacement copies to Breasted Jr. The latter saw this as an unforgivable affront—an attempt to keep books in which one might find Breasted’s own marginalia notes and whatever value such notes may have contained. Despite Wilson’s attempt to assuage Breasted Jr. of this offense in a letter of April 19, 1939, by noting that “a page-by-page check of the volumes . . . does not reveal a single note or marginal comment in Dr. Breasted’s handwriting,” the young Breasted was not to be appeased.

Their correspondence ended bitterly, with Breasted Jr. taking possession of his father’s library. He temporarily severed all ties with the University of Chicago and the Oriental Institute, partially over perceived wrongs committed in the library negotiations, but equally from the affairs surrounding his University of Chicago degree. Like his father, Breasted Jr. committed himself to the study of the ancient world. He came to the University of Chicago’s Department of Art for graduate school and submitted a thesis on Old Kingdom servant statues. He had a letter from the prominent Egyptologist Hermann Ranke stating that his work was worthy of a PhD, but the committee in the Art Department disagreed and conferred on Breasted Jr. only an MA. After obtaining his father’s library, he openly expressed his frustration to the University, the institute, and to Wilson personally in a series of letters in November 1941 in which he cut off all relationships with them. At this time, Breasted Jr. was writing from the Department of Art at the

gan rather benignly, with Breasted Jr. informing Wilson that he (Breasted) may want some of the books, as he was considering an academic career studying and teaching about the ancient world, following in the footsteps of his father. Breasted Jr. often asked Wilson for career advice in these letters, but largely offered to leave the Breasted



University of California, Los Angeles, where he would go on to a directorship position at the Los Angeles County Museum from 1946 to 1951. The impasse between Breasted Jr. and the OI, however, was only temporary. Once emotions cooled, Breasted Jr. wrote to Egyptologist William F. Edgerton, assuring him that the matter was water under the bridge, partially chalked up to the impetuous actions of youth. With a new, amicable agreement, the majority of the director's library was restored to the Research Archives in the 1970s, with the final volumes turned over during the renovation of the director's office in the term of William Sumner (director, 1989–1997). As it happened, the temporary removal of Breasted Sr.'s books from the OI actually proved to be felicitous, allowing these books to avoid the dislocations of the OI library in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

It's possible that Johanne Vindenas had seen the writing on the wall when she retired from the Oriental Institute library in 1964. By that time, the University of Chicago had conceived of the idea of a centralized library for the entire campus. In a press release of 1969, the University acknowledged a gift of \$10,000,000 by the Joseph and Helen Regenstein Foundation for the establishment of Joseph Regenstein Library on 58th Street between Ellis and University avenues. In the face of the library consolidation project, Herman H. Fussler and Stanley Gwynn of the University library began negotiations with the Oriental Institute in May of 1965 about what to do with the books housed in the OI, even suggesting the possibility of leaving it in its current place in the reading room. However, as part of the consolidation and the prospective opening of the new library by 1970, the University's library administration suggested rather strongly that scattered departmental libraries be brought together under the new roof of Joseph Regenstein Library. Herman Fussler made a presentation to the OI voting members, ultimately encouraging consolidation.

Faculty and voting members of the Oriental Institute partook in serious discussions about how such a consolidation would affect the institute. What is described in the Director's Correspondence as a "vocal minority" fought to keep the books in the institute; but in the end, they lost. In a letter from Robert M. Adams, director of the Oriental Institute, to Mr. Herman H. Fussler, director of the university libraries, dated November 17, 1965, Adams writes: "I am pleased to report that by the time it [the voting member's discussion] was over a clear consensus had emerged in support of the basic decision to transfer the major holdings now in the Oriental Institute into the new library building. To all but a small minority of us, this seemed the best course of action available." Fussler wrote back to Adams on November 22: "Thank you for your memorandum of November 17, with respect to the

decision by the voting members of the Oriental Institute to locate the major holdings of the Oriental Institute in the new library building." While the administration can be forgiven for imagining the efficiencies this centralization and shared services plan could have—mostly in terms of the costs associated with the space needed to store the books, but also some potential reduction in library-related staff and expanded library hours—the efficiencies directly related to scholars using the materials, those which are much more difficult to directly calculate, were seriously reduced. Subject expertise, individual service, specialized classification, and the expediency of finding and



CENTERFOLD: Figure 17.  
Breasted bookplate.

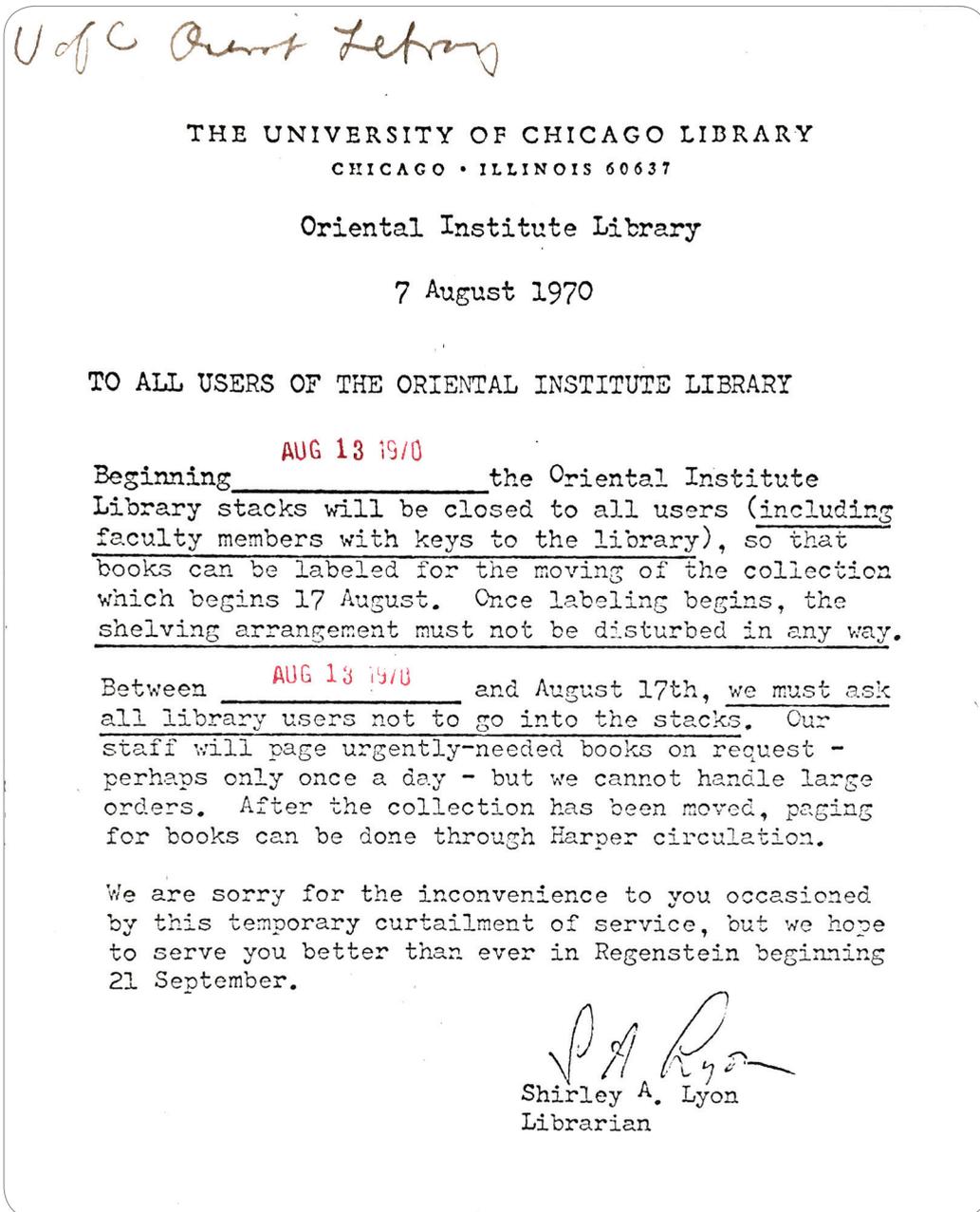
using library materials—all offered by librarians such as Vindenas—were trumped in efforts to centralize and economize.

Under the directorship of Robert McCormick Adams (1962–1968), the Oriental Institute library was emptied of its tomes, infuriating segments of the staff, and disrupting large-scale projects like the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary. Flyers announcing the closing of the library went out on August 7, 1970, which explicitly stated that materials would be completely inaccessible (fig. 18): “TO ALL

USERS OF THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE LIBRARY. Beginning AUG 13 1970 the Oriental Institute Library stacks will be closed to all users (including faculty members with keys to the library), so that books can be labeled for the moving of the collection which begins 17 August. Once labeling begins, the shelving arrangement must not be disturbed in any way.” The materials were scheduled to be available in Regenstein Library one month later, by September 21, 1970.

For three years, the stunning reading room of the Oriental Institute library (fig. 19) sat empty. Plans were made during those three years to rebuild the library’s reference collection. By August 1972, serious discussions were underway for a new reference library in the Oriental Institute. In a letter to faculty and staff dated August 21, 1972, Director John A. Brinkman announced: “Because of continued faculty interest in establishing a library of basic reference works in the core institute fields of archaeology, cuneiform studies, and Egyptology, a long series of conversations with two directors of the Regenstein library has culminated in an agreement with Mr. Stanley McElderry, current library director, to consider a concrete proposal to establish such a reference library.” By October that same year, initial ideas had been slightly diverted as the minutes of a voting members’ meeting note that: “if the library administration should be unwilling to release the necessary books from Regenstein, then the possibility of setting up an independent library should be considered.”

Work on long-term projects like the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (CAD), Chicago Hittite Dictionary (CHD), Chicago Demotic Dictionary (CDD), among others, required intensive bibliographic effort; staff routinely needed to check references to lines, words, spellings, meanings, or translations of individual texts in their original publications. Prior to the library consolidation, these staff members—who were drolly known as “slaves” in the CAD office—could quickly come down to the second floor of the Oriental Institute, pull the needed volumes from the library shelves





(fig. 20), and compile their scholarly work. If they couldn't find what they were looking for, they had a dedicated subject specialist like Johanne Vindenas to guide them and a collection of 45,000 volumes that fit essentially in a single large reading room. After the consolidation, researchers were required to walk two blocks, check the library catalog for a call number (the classification scheme of which was often not obvious to the user), determine the location where those classifications are kept, negotiate five upper floors and two basement levels to find the necessary work among millions of others, and at last, hope that it was not checked out or in use somewhere in the library. The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary was a particularly demanding library superuser whose staff needed quick and easy access to a wide range of library books. Shirley A. Lyon, librarian for the Oriental Institute during the consolidation process, wrote to Erica Reiner, professor of Assyriology and editor-in-chief of the CAD, on July 29, 1970, to say that "the library is sympathetic to the needs of the Dictionary staff and wants to respond to them as fully as possible. . . . The Library has no objections to leaving in the Oriental Institute on indefinite loan for the use of the CAD the books described on the list submitted. . . ." One can only imagine how much longer an already long-lived project like the CAD, which took over ninety years to complete, would have taken without the Oriental Institute library and its successor, the Research Archives. Fantasies of centralization had blinded many to these departmental concerns and deprived the institute of Breasted's accomplishment of having a comprehensive research collection for the institute's needs in one space. They could not see,

OPPOSITE: Figure 18. Memorandum announcing the closing of the Oriental Institute Library, 1970 (Oriental Institute Museum Archives).

ABOVE LEFT: Figure 19. Oriental Institute Library Reading Room, ca. 1931, view to the north (P. 18593).

ABOVE RIGHT: Figure 20. Library stacks on the third floor "Minstrel's Gallery," ca. 1960. Photo: Johanne Vindenas.



ABOVE: Figure 21. Oriental Institute Library, reading room with patrons working among bookstacks on the tables, ca. 1960. Photo: Johanne Vindenas.

OPPOSITE TOP: Figure 22. (from left) Robert Englund, Charles Jones, Simo Parpola, and Guillermo Algaze. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Figure 23. Charles Jones.

Cedric Seele (1898–1971), William Franklin Edgerton (1893–1970), John Albert Wilson (1899–1976), Raymond D. Bowman (1903–1979), John W. B. Hadley (1930–1994), Klaus Baer (1930–1987), T. George Allen (1885–1969), and the Megiddo Expedition. These have since been supplemented with major donations from Deborah Aliber, Catherine Novotny Brehm, Edward W. Castle, Andrew Dolan, Fred Donner, and Bruce Williams, in addition to the many smaller donations received every year. Likewise, the *ex libris* bookplates found throughout the collection reflect estates and gifts from a wide range of scholars, including S. R. Driver, Ernst Herzfeld, Georg Möller, Charles Nims, Keith Seele, Wilhelm Spiegelberg, and Walter Wreszinski, among others. The library was re-founded during the directorship of John Anthony Brinkman and opened its doors again in 1973. However, in order to distinguish itself from the larger university system, it was designated as the “Research Archives,” consciously avoiding the word “library” in its title, a decision that has ever since been a source of

as Gilbert Highet, the humanist known for his series of weekly radio broadcasts about topics in literature, had so eloquently observed when writing about Oxford University, that: “No doubt it would be possible for a central university library to provide enough reference books for all the undergraduates studying every subject; but it would be clumsy and uneconomic. In a small college library one can easily allow the necessary books to circulate year after year, or at worst to be reserved on a table, where the readers will all know one another” (fig. 21). This social aspect of the departmental library can be particularly rewarding (as it was for Miriam Lichtheim and Helene Kantor), and it lies at the heart of today’s Research Archives.

The rebuilding of the Research Archives can in some ways be considered a real grass roots effort. Private collections were turned over for common use among scholars in the building. These included the materials from the libraries of James Henry Breasted (1865–1935), Keith

confusion for visiting researchers looking for the archival records of the institute, which are held in the “Museum Archives.”

After the library consolidation and the subsequent opening of the Research Archives, the legacy of Johanne Vindenas had to be entirely rebuilt. A number of important figures who went on to prominent careers oversaw the rebuilding effort in the Research Archives throughout the 1970s, including Charles Van Siclen III and Richard Zettler. During this time, a distinctive classification method was established in the Research Archives. Where Vindenas had employed the classification system of the Library of Congress, the Research Archives was organized around the acronyms of publications used by scholars in the field—a library organizational scheme I have referred to as “by scholars, for scholars.” For example, volume two in the Oriental Institute Publications series, which is known by its acronym OIP 2, can be found arranged alphanumerically in the series section on the shelves in the reading room. In this way, patrons who already know what they were looking for could quickly and easily bypass looking up the classification number in the library catalog and proceed directly to the volume on the shelves. Although idiosyncratic, this arrangement can create real efficiencies in conducting research.

What Vindenas was to the Oriental Institute library, Charles Ellwood Jones (fig. 22) was to the Research Archives. Jones spent twenty-two years (1983–2005) as the head of the Research Archives, taking it from its early incarnation and growing it into a twenty-first century library. Jones has gone on to an impressive library career, employing the skills built during his time in Chicago to further the missions of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World in New York, and today the Pennsylvania State University libraries where he is Tombros Librarian for Classics and Humanities (fig. 23). Under Jones’s tenure, the infrastructure of the library was transformed in many important ways. At a time when email was still a rarity, Jones, largely with the aid of Information Technology support from John Sanders, created an important listserv devoted to circulating information about the study of the ancient Middle East, which remains in use to this day as the ANE-2 list. He oversaw the transition from the library card catalog to a dedicated online public access catalog (OPAC) available over the internet. He oversaw two major architectural projects: the renovation of the reading room, which included the restoration of lighting fixtures based on the original design that replaced flo-



**“What Vindenas was to the Oriental Institute library, Charles Ellwood Jones was to the Research Archives.”**



rescent track lighting (fig. 24), and the expansion of the library into the new wing built in the late 1990s.

Since that time, the Research Archives has continued to expand its collection and methodologies. Compact storage was installed in the new wing in 2012, thereby doubling space for growth in our monograph stacks (fig. 25). We have continued to transform the library catalog, analyzing all publications with an independently listed author, a practice already envisioned by Breasted as invaluable to researchers. Our library catalog, therefore, doubles as an index of ancient Middle East studies with its 600,000 records covering the 65,000 physical volumes in the collection. Over the last ten years, a major project has been the “integration” of the library catalog with all the other data from around the institute. This project, known as the Integrated Database Project, has revolutionized access to our collections and has allowed us to produce networks of integrated knowledge across the Oriental Institute museum, archives, library, and research labs. The Research Archives thus remains a central node of the institute blending the past and the future, where the enduring traditions of our respected elders are combined with the cutting edge technology of the twenty-first century (fig. 26).



OPPOSITE: Figure 24. Oriental Institute Library, view south from the “Minstrel’s Gallery,” ca. 1969 (P. 55263).

ABOVE LEFT: Figure 25. Monograph stacks in the Research Archives new wing, ca. 2006. Photo: Magnus Widell.

ABOVE RIGHT: Figure 26. Elizabeth Morse Genius Reading Room, ca. 2010. Photo: Foy Scalf.

“Our library catalog, therefore, doubles as an index of ancient Middle East studies with its 600,000 records covering the 65,000 physical volumes in the collection.”

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CORPUS PROJECT AND INFORMATION SCIENCE AT THE OI

The Research Archives was established from a collective need for a “library of basic reference works” among the faculty, staff, students, members, and visiting researchers of the Oriental Institute (fig. 27). As a reference library, volumes from the collection do not circulate to ensure their availability as needed. Although its history has been circuitous, the University of Chicago community is now in a nearly unique position in the world of ancient Middle East studies with two independent, world class library collections on its campus. Non-circulating reference materials are available through the Research Archives, and circulating library materials are available through Regenstein library. This preserves the fundamental intent of the collection as a reference source for in-house scholarly work, a primary fulfillment of our mission to support the research endeavors of the institute as a whole. As stated in the *Oriental Institute Annual Report 1959–1960*: “The existence of an Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago implies further that the ancient cultures of the Near East are worthy of special attention as the record of man’s earliest attempts to organize human life on a comprehensive scale, to unfold its higher potential, and to give it a cosmic frame of reference.” Few are aware of the role of the library in that “cosmic” story.

Although taken for granted today, spaces for the collection, storage, production, and study of texts—and the knowledge they contain—are as old as writing itself. A modern research institute is unthinkable without a library, much like its monastic predecessors. In AD 1170, the subprior of Saint Barbara in Normandy, whose name was Geoffrey, wrote a letter to a monk named Peter Mangot, providing Peter with permission to build a monastery. Geoffrey cautioned Peter that the monastery needed a library because: *Clastrum sine armario est quasi castrum sine armamentario*, “A monastery without a library is like a castle without an armory.” Similar notions existed in the ancient Middle East and Africa. The Ptolemaic (ca. 237–57 BC) temple of Horus at Edfu included a library room called the “house of books” (*pr md̩̩.t*)—a phrase analogous to the Mesopotamian *edubba* “house of tablets”—that included inscriptions on the walls, ostensibly detailing some of the papyrus scrolls kept inside. So “charged” were these books that the ancient Egyptian scribes referred to them as “divine books” (*md̩̩.t-ntr*) and more specifically as the “emanations” or “souls” of Re (*b̩̩.w R̩̩*)—physical manifestations of the sun god, the most powerful force of nature. Such “charged” texts were sought by the Neo-Assyrian king Ashurbanipal in his efforts to create one of the best stocked libraries of the ancient Middle East, complete with lists of catalogs detailing the contents of the library. Perhaps in scope it was unmatched until the founding of the Library of Alexandria, whose seemingly innumerable contents Callimachus legendarily cataloged in his *Pinakes*—popularly regarded in information science as one of the first library catalogs.

Already in antiquity, but especially since the Middle Ages, accessing information—bibliographic or otherwise—has been aided by various kinds of catalogs. The now largely obsolete library card catalog owes its existence to the principles of classification developed at the end of the nineteenth century AD by people such as Charles Ammi Cutter, whose *Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalog* (1876) served as a foundation for long-running standards in library and information science such as the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR), Resource Description and Access (RDA), or the modern Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR). Cutter’s volume appeared in the same year (1876) that saw the creation of the American Library Association (ALA), founded at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition by a group of attendees including Melvin Dewey. Dewey’s now famous classification system was based

“*Clastrum sine armario est quasi castrum sine armamentario*, ‘A monastery without a library is like a castle without an armory.’”

partially on earlier schemes, such as that of Sir Francis Bacon, and informed by contemporaries such as Cutter. It was also influenced by the ALA's adoption of standardized 3 × 5 inch cards stored and displayed in sets of drawers comprising the “classic” card catalog, whose furniture design is often attributed to Ezra Abbot. Dewey's system heavily influenced how knowledge was handled far beyond the world of library science.

The late nineteenth century was a time of dynamic study and advancements in the humanities; these advancements produced anxiety about how the deluge of information would be managed. Paul Otlet expanded the Dewey Decimal system to theoretically cover any potential topic through a universal decimal classification, a wonderful story told in a recent popular volume, *Cataloging the World*, by Alex Wright. By 1895, Otlet had founded the Universal Bibliographic Repertory in Brussels, a card catalog designed to index all human knowledge—essentially a project to take the library card catalog to its logical extreme. For a fee, researchers could submit queries and receive answers from the project's headquarters in Belgium. Likewise, since 1860 the Oxford English Dictionary had been collecting slips organized into “pigeon-holes,” a system mimicked by nearly all dictionary projects at the Oriental Institute, including the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (CAD), Chicago Demotic Dictionary (CDD), and Chicago Hittite Dictionary (CHD). Projects established within the last twenty-five years tend to employ digital database frameworks, but the CHD continues to collect and produce a large paper card collection, and the over one million paper cards from the CAD remain together among the archives of the institute. Likewise, the manner in which Johanne Vindenas indexed the library volumes—most helpful to scholars for journal articles, conference proceedings, *Festschriften*, and book reviews—sought to solve the same problems with which Otlet and others were grappling, namely the organization and distribution of knowledge. Aligned with the aims of the OI Integrated Database today, “Otlet had developed a series of progressively more ambitious schemes to organize the collection and to promote universal access to human knowledge through a global information network.”

Otlet's legacy had largely been forgotten until it was resurrected by Warden Boyd Rayward in his PhD dissertation for the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago in 1973, and then subsequently in many publications throughout his career. Rayward demonstrated the importance of graduate programs for library and information science; established in 1926, the University of Chicago Graduate Library School stopped accepting new students in 1988 and closed in 1989 despite its important contributions to the research mission of the university. The research of Rayward on Otlet represented one thread in the global trend in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to use cataloging systems first developed in libraries for organizing information in other disciplines—a trend most evident in the dictionary projects, but present also in surprising ways elsewhere. In fact, the Integrated Database Project currently developed through a sophisticated digital database platform had a little recognized forefather in a paper “database” system at the Oriental Institute that, like Paul Otlet, sought to gather and catalog all the material from the ancient Middle East.

Like the Universal Bibliographic Repertory of Otlet, the Oriental Institute designed in the 1930s the Archaeological Corpus Project, headed by a scholarly committee representing some of the primary divisions of ancient Middle East studies at the time, including: A. T. Olmstead, T. George Allen, Watson Boy-



ABOVE: Figure 27. Research Archives, Elizabeth Morse Genius Reading Room, ca. 2006, with Ilya Yakubovich and Catherine Chou. Photo: Magnus Widell.

“As a space providing the ingredients necessary for the soup of science, the library serves as one of the few communal spaces where all of us—faculty, staff, students, members, visitors, and the public—come together to ‘excavate’ ideas.”

es, Edward Chiera, William F. Edgerton, and Arno Poebel. From roughly 1932 until 1951, scholars at the Oriental Institute began compiling an archaeological corpus, which sought to index “the whole range of evidence surviving from [the ancient Middle East] as a whole.” One of the earliest mentions of the Archaeology Corpus Project appeared in 1933 in *The Oriental Institute* by James Henry Breasted, who believed it to be “one of the most important in the whole range of humanistic research.” The project was indexed in the *Report of the Informal Conference on Union Catalogs* by the Library of Congress in 1936, where Neilson C. Debevoise is listed as “in charge,” and its activities described as: “Collects and registers material from discoveries in the Middle East by the Oriental Institute and other archaeological expeditions.” Funding for the project derived in part from the Work Projects Administration programs

initiated as part of the New Deal during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Boxes containing the nearly 400,000 cards produced by the project sat in storage for perhaps as many as fifty years, but still retain the handwritten label, “WPA Project.”

The project was yet another brainchild of James Henry Breasted, whose extraordinary vision was seemingly limitless. According to Breasted:

“The writer considered that a practical method for producing some degree of correlation of materials both old and new would be the compilation of an encyclopedic index. On a limited scale this work began with the organization of the Institute in 1919. In so far as such an index was bibliographical, it could be compiled by a librarian in accordance with library practice. . . . The catalogue thus produced by our librarians is becoming more and more an indispensable tool for all research workers in the field of the Near East. In physical form this catalogue is of course a *card index*, so organized that its subject entries include the leading rubrics in the cultural development of man, especially before the rise of historic Europe, but also later. Ideally conceived, the contribution of each item recorded would be summarized on its cards, so that, when exhaustively compiled, the cards under each rubric would be the basis for a complete organization of the discernible relevant facts and materials, drawn not only from publications but also from unpublished original monuments and sources.”

Several major scholars worked for the project. Homer L. Thomas was supervisor of the project in 1939–1941. By 1943, it was Ann Louise Perkins at the helm. Miriam Lichtheim took over from Perkins in 1949. She ran the Archaeological Corpus Project from 1949 until 1951, when then Director Karl Kraeling cut funding for the project and redirected it toward excavations at the site of Ptolemais in Libya, which formed part of the pentapolis of Cyrenaica. The results of these excavations were subsequently published as Oriental Institute Publications 90, *Ptolemais: City of the Libyan Pentapolis*. It is clear from her

memoir, *Telling it Briefly: A Memoir of My Life*, that Lichtheim harbored resentment over how the project, as well as her position as research associate, ended at the Oriental Institute—a situation she described as being “rudely interrupted” by Kraeling, who believed the project “superfluous” and let her go despite the support of the Egyptologist William F. Edgerton. Her layoff from the Oriental Institute subsequently led her to leave the professional field to become a librarian, first at Yale and then at the University of California, Los Angeles, a fitting development from her work on the corpus, but she continued to produce scholarly work in her personal time. While in California, she helped Klaus Baer, another Kraeling “victim” in her opinion, transition from Chicago to a professorship at the University of California, Berkeley.

The work of the Archaeological Corpus Project began to produce results, particularly “after long experimentation, at last attempting quantity production under the direction of Dr. Neilson Debevoise.” In the preface to her 1947 book, *Seal Impressions of Nuzi*, Edith Porada notes that the “photographs of the seal impressions were taken by the writer with the material and equipment put at her disposition by the Archaeological Corpus of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago,” where A. T. E. Olmstead is listed as “Chairman of the Archaeological Corpus.” Like the Mundaneum of Paul Otlet, which he saw as a foundation to international collaboration and a contribution to world peace, the Archaeological Corpus Project served as an example of large-scale cooperation among scholars. Few scholars of today’s younger generations who open the pages of the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* probably realize the scale of its achievement—among the greatest in the humanistic tradition on par with the compiling of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible in the sixteenth century or the Oxford English Dictionary in the twentieth century. Even fewer are likely to realize the debt such projects owe to the library card catalog, by which a model had been set for putting basic information on paper cards and arranging them by various criteria.

This intertwined history of the Oriental Institute library, the Research Archives, the major scholarly projects of the institute, and its publications helps to demonstrate how the Oriental Institute has been home



LEFT: Figure 28. Oriental Institute Library, reading room with patrons working among bookstacks on the tables, ca. 1960. Photo: Johanne Vindenas.



## ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN IN THE RESEARCH ARCHIVES

At the center of the Research Archives is a spectacular reading room ringed with shelves and furnished with large tables (figs. 13, 19, and 26) for poring over books or laying out elephant folios (figs. 29 and 30) for easy access. After a renovation grant in the 1990s, the room has since been known as the Elizabeth Morse Genius Reading Room, named after the trust that funded the renovation of the reading room, including the recreation of light fixtures in their original style (figs. 31 and 32). Breasted described it as “the most beautiful room in the building,” with its towering rosette window (figs. 13 and 26), vaulted ceiling (fig. 33), and beautifully executed decoration. It remains a popular setting for photography, including the official portrait of the thirteenth president of the University of Chicago, Robert Zimmer (fig. 34). Like other areas of the Oriental Institute, stylistic features from the ancient Middle East were incorporated into the design, such as in the leaded glass window rosette (fig. 35) and the finely carved bounty of plants repeated in the woodworking (figs. 36 and 37). However, much of the architecture at the University of Chicago was based on the Gothic style of English institutions like Oxford and Cambridge Universities, a style of the Victorian Gothic revival so common on American collegiate campuses that it has been termed “Collegiate Gothic.” Therefore, the ceiling of the Research Archives was decorated with several designs borrowed from English heraldry. A repeating pattern stenciled on cork board inlays in the ceiling depicts a greyhound peering back over its shoulders as it reclines at the base of a tree (fig. 38), an attitude or pose in heraldry referred to by the French terms *couchant* “lying down” and *regardant* “looking backward” (fig. 39). In one tableau over the central windows on both east and west walls, two mirrored greyhounds sit beneath a tree from the trunk of which grows the coat of arms of the University of Chicago, with its motto *crescat scientia vita excolatur*: “Let knowledge grow from more to more; and so be human life enriched” (fig. 40).

TOP LEFT: Figure 29. Oriental Institute Library Reading Room ca. 1931, elephant folio cabinets with volumes from the Coffin Texts project (P. 20855).

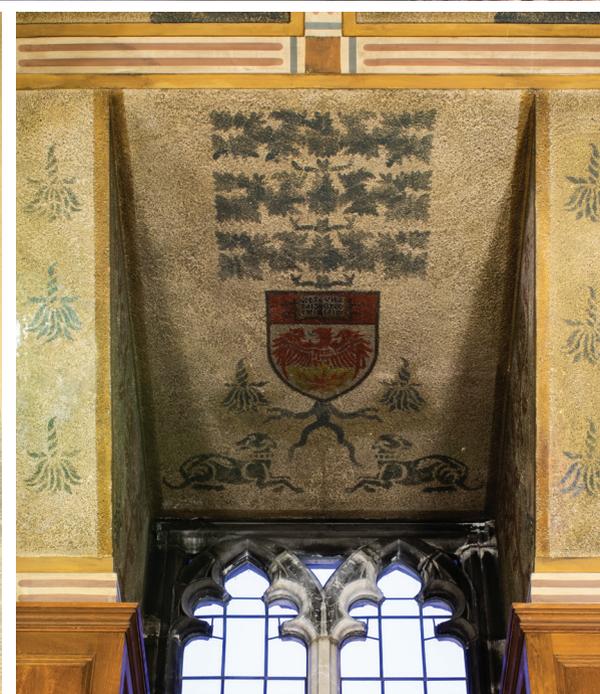
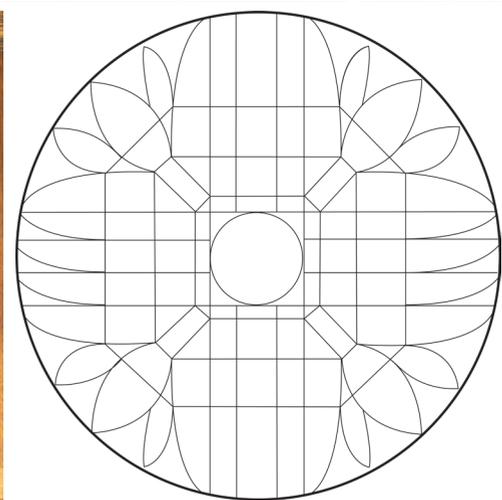
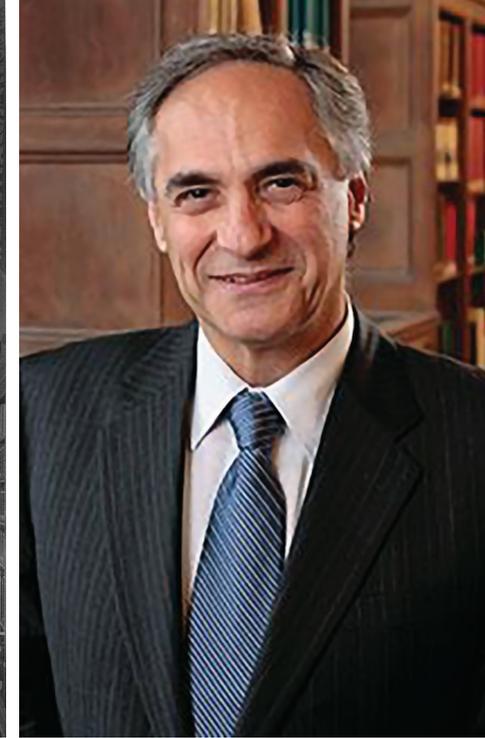
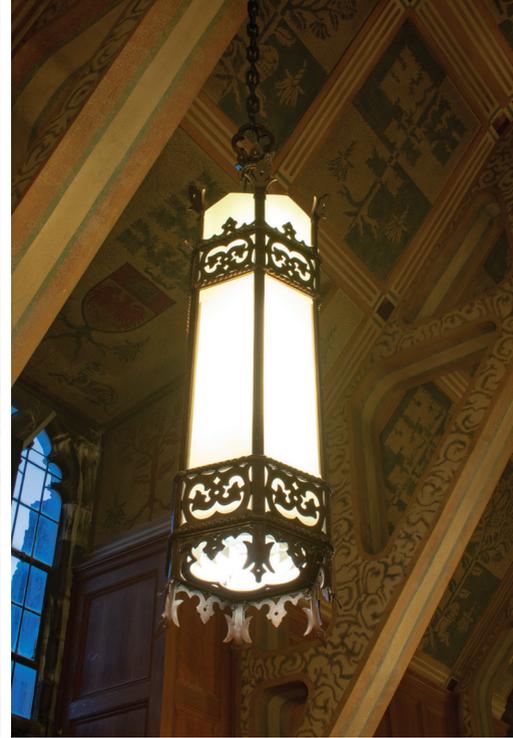
BOTTOM LEFT: Figure 30. Oriental Institute Library, elephant folio cabinet, ca. 1960. Photo: Johanne Vindenas.

OPPOSITE TOP ROW (FROM LEFT): Figure 31. Oriental Institute Library Reading Room, ca. 1931, view to the south west (R. 2156). Figure 32. Light fixture recreated in the 1990s based on original 1930 design suspended from ceiling support arch. Photo: Foy Scalf. Figure 33. Oriental Institute Library Reading Room, ca. 1931, view to the north (R. 2160). Figure 34. University of Chicago President Robert J. Zimmer. Photo: Jason Smith.

OPPOSITE CENTER: Figure 35. Rosette design of the window at the south end of the Elizabeth Morse Genius Reading Room. Drawing by Foy Scalf based on drawings by Charles Jones and Terry Wilfong.

OPPOSITE MIDDLE ROW: (LEFT) Figure 36. Woodwork plant detail. (RIGHT) Figure 37. Woodwork corner detail.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM ROW (FROM LEFT): Figure 38. Oriental Institute Library Reading Room ca. 1931, view to the north west (P. 18595). Figure 39. Heraldic imagery on the ceiling of the Research Archives. Photo: Foy Scalf. Figure 40. University of Chicago crest above the window of the reading room. Photo: Foy Scalf.



both to major paradigm shifts in the methods of our sciences as well as “simple” and incremental scholarly advancements. Throughout the last century, the library has often played the role of catalyst in its narrative of progress. As a space providing the ingredients necessary for the soup of science, the library serves as one of the few communal spaces where all of us—faculty, staff, students, members, visitors, and the public—come together to “excavate” ideas (fig. 28). In fact, all of the most important scientific work for which the Oriental Institute is known, the basis for its legacy and for the writing of this centennial celebration, the reason why it continues to capture the public imagination, exists today in libraries around the world as the written results of the endeavors carried out by the great men and women who spent their careers here and whose brilliance and dedication are reflected in the pages of their books and articles. In the library, we are the stewards and keepers who both make such work possible and fuel the work of the future.

Librarians, often among the unsung heroes of academic institutions, have held steadfast in their mission to save, preserve, and catalog—all the while facilitating access to—knowledge about the world. Legends of their heroic efforts abound, such as the story of Prior Bernhard II, who on November 21st of AD 1237, died while saving books from a fire in Styria (Austria) by casting them out the windows of the library, a narrative apt to characterize the desperate attempts to salvage volumes from the Institut d’Égypte in Cairo as it burned in December 2011 after clashes between the military and protestors near Tahrir Square. While the Oriental Institute is fortunate to lack such a tragic story, there is an oral history account of a fire that started in the motor of an oscillating fan when curtains covering the library windows were caught between the blades, thereby overheating the motor. At the time, climate control had not yet been installed in the building and it was common in the hot, humid summers of Chicago to open the windows of the library and circulate the air by means of electric fans. To extinguish the flames and avoid catastrophe, the fan was kicked through a second story window onto the gravel roof of the museum galleries below where it was summarily extinguished, thereby saving the priceless knowledge in the Research Archives for us and future generations.

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The Research Archives catalog, as part of the OI’s Integrated Database and Collections Search, can be found online: <https://oi-idb.uchicago.edu/>.

## FOY SCALF

*Egyptologist Foy Scalf (PhD, University of Chicago, 2014) specializes in the textual culture of ancient Egypt, with particular interest in ancient religious literature. He has published on Egyptian language and linguistics, religion and philosophy, as well as textual transmission and knowledge production. In 2017, he curated a special exhibit at the Oriental Institute Museum, The Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt, and edited the accompanying catalog—a fully illustrated guide to the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead. At the Oriental Institute, he is a research associate, head of Research Archives, and head of the Integrated Database Project.*