

RESEARCH ARCHIVES

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Introduction: Building and Renovation Projects

As I sit in the Research Archives office early on a Monday morning during the July heat wave, electricians are wheeling in lifts and preparing to remove the two long banks of fluorescent fixtures before installing the newly minted reproductions of the original fixtures. Outside my window, roofers are working slowly and steadily on the last remaining component of the roofing project — the flat roof over the south and west galleries of the Institute. The electricians and I are grateful to be working indoors in the cool of the Elizabeth Morse Genius Reading Room as the temperature outside rises up into the nineties. The reproductions of the lighting fixtures — cast in bronze and fully re-lamped with modern electrical components — were delivered late last week. A steady stream of colleagues has been admiring them in their crates in the west gallery of the museum. All are excited to see this project finally coming to fruition.

With an end in sight to the lighting installation — it is scheduled to be complete by early August — it appears that a long period of physical change and renovation is drawing to a close. Beginning with the reconfiguring of the stacks nearly a decade ago and proceeding through the building of the new wing and the two phases of the reading room renovation project and the roof replacement, I have had to move the entire collection four times. The consequences of this change are good. We have a facility that is much improved from the point of view of both organization and aesthetics. We have had the space we inhabit increased to help accommodate the ever-expanding collection. We can also provide state of the art research facilities for all our users, local and remote. And finally, the staff of the Research Archives can concentrate on projects that, if less visible, are of equal importance in the ongoing task of building and maintaining a research facility.

Acquisitions Lists

As I announced in last year's *Annual Report*, we had then just begun a plan to provide access to the Acquisitions Lists of the Research Archives by e-mail and online. Regular lists of books and journals acquired in the Research Archives, and by its predecessor the Library of the Oriental Institute (subsumed into the Regenstein Library in the early 1970s) have been produced for many years. Such lists are a feature of many research libraries and are distributed to scholars interested in particular fields as a means of cooperation and mutual support. The Research Archives Acquisitions Lists appeared informally from the early 1970s and were distributed informally, mostly intramurally, until the early 1990s. At that point the beginnings of the development on our electronic catalog and the integration of computers and networking in the administration of the Research Archives (as well as the rest of the Oriental Institute) made it seem possible to produce a radically expanded version of the Acquisitions List. For four years we produced this version of the lists, which included a categorized and indexed listing of each and every essay, article, and review included in all materials acquired by the Research Archives as well as complete bibliographical descriptions of each volume acquired. While it was an interesting experiment to produce these volumes, it was a very expensive enterprise, and for budgetary reasons it was abandoned in favor of concentration on the electronic catalog and ultimately on the online version of that catalog.

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It has been a happy and successful corollary of the development of those resources that we are now able to redevelop publication of the Acquisitions Lists in an almost entirely paperless environment and in a timely and inexpensive manner. In June 2000 we announced the availability of this project and solicited (free) subscriptions to the electronic mailing list. In October we posted the first seven of these lists:

1. Acquisitions: February 2000.
2. Acquisitions: March 2000.
3. Acquisitions: April 2000.
4. Acquisitions: May 2000.
5. Acquisitions: June 2000.
6. Acquisitions: July 2000.
7. Acquisitions: August–September 2000.

Soon followed by Supplement 1. Dissertations Available in the Research Archives in pdf format.

and by

8. Acquisitions: October 2000.
9. Acquisitions: November–December 2000.
10. Acquisitions: January–February 2001.

The next two lists are in process as I write and are in typescript on my desk. They have only to receive a final reading.

As the time of writing we have 408 subscribers to the mailing lists for the Acquisitions lists. This number grows slowly and steadily. We are pleased to be able to provide this service to the community.

For information on how to subscribe and how to view the lists on the Oriental Institute website, see Electronic Resources, above.

Online Catalog

The Oriental Institute has logged over 50,000 user sessions from nearly 20,000 users in ninety-nine countries since we put the Catalog of the Research Archives online. In all there have been more than 380,000 queries of the database since its inception. Since I reported last year, we have had about 14,000 visitors and more than 250,000 new queries. Almost 4,000 visitors have come back for additional visits, and nearly 2,000 of them may be considered “regular customers.” I consider this to be a great success.

At the beginning of 2001 we began to enter all analytical records directly into the database. Since then, each essay, article, and review appearing in books and journals acquired in the Research Archives has an entry in the online catalog. Each book also has a main entry. This procedure replaces the practice developed in the early 1990s and eliminates a number of stages in the cataloging process. It makes catalog more current — indeed immediately current — and makes the collection more useful. We have added some 8,000 records to the database during the last year.

We have a couple of corpora of records nearly ready to be imported into the catalog. Some 40,000 analytical entries produced in the last six years are nearly ready to be imported, along with another 30,000 records which were produced in the context of our retrospective cataloging project. I intend, finally, to process these for inclusion in the database and begin again in earnest on additional component of the retrospective conversion.

I urge you to visit the Research Archive online catalog at: <http://oilib.uchicago.edu/oilibcat.html>

I welcome any and all comments on how we can make the catalog more useful.

Publications and Projects

A summary of new and developing online publications will be found in this volume under Electronic Resources, above. I mention only a few salient issues here. For more than a year, I have been involved on behalf of the Research Archives in the development of a proposal to develop a digital library for ancient Near Eastern studies. Under the leadership of the Vanderbilt University Libraries, ETANA, as the project is called, is a cooperative project supported by the American Oriental Society, the American Schools of Oriental Research, Case Western Reserve University Library, the Cobb Institute of Archaeology at Mississippi State University, the Institute of Archaeology (Tel Aviv University), the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, the Society of Biblical Literature, Vanderbilt University Press, and the Vanderbilt Divinity Library. We have been extremely fortunate to have received a generous initial grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in support of the project.

ETANA has two initial goals: (1) to develop the Abzu project of the Research Archives, the premier Internet portal devoted to the ancient Near East, into a more robust database structure and (2) to make it part of the developing ETANA comprehensive portal for ancient Near Eastern studies. The grant will also allow ETANA participants to experiment with the digitization of 100 core texts important to scholars of the ancient Near East. Published materials in this discipline can be especially difficult to digitize because of their ancient language content. Each component is of fundamental importance for the Research Archives. It will be an exciting project, and I hope to report on its progress by this time next year.

Abzu, along with other online resources here, continues to be under constant revision and updating. A list of all such publications can be found at:

http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/Research_Arch.html

Current Acquisitions

Following are the acquisitions statistics for the past year

	<u>May 1999 – April 2000</u>	<u>Total</u>
Monographs and Series	895	24,872
Journals	<u>260</u>	<u>10,214</u>
Total Books	1,155	35,086

This year's acquisitions statistics are consistent with the trends of the past few years. We continue to be committed to acquiring all the basic published resources for the study of the ancient Near East.

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I continue to have an excellent and reliable source of assistants in the Research Archives. The pool of graduate students is of the highest quality. The only difficulty is the competition of other projects and units for their time and skill. It has been a pleasure to have had three excellent graduate student assistants this year. Jacob Lauinger, who has just completed his second year as an Assyriology student, remained with us as did Mark Saathoff, who has just completed an M.A. in Egyptology. Leslie Schramer, first year student of Mesopotamian Archaeology joined us in the fall. Between the three of them they shared the various duties of Assistant Research Archivists and covered the weekend and Wednesday evening hours. Leslie and Mark moved on to other employment at the end of the Spring Quarter, and I now have the assistance of Alexandra Witsell. She and Jake are covering the somewhat erratic (due to construction projects) summer hours.

I am eternally grateful to all of these employees, who cheerfully engage with their work and with the users of the Research Archives and respond with energy and imagination. This library simply could not function without them.
