

# INTRODUCTION

**Gil J. Stein**

One of the pleasures of writing the introduction to the Oriental Institute's *Annual Report* is seeing the truly impressive achievements of my colleagues during the past year. The people in the Oriental Institute community can justifiably take pride in the major strides we are making in our museum and research, and in our effectiveness as an organization.

The museum reinstallation is proceeding apace. In October 2003, we formally opened the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery and the Yelda Family Khorsabad Court. The openings were particularly appropriate since 2003 marked the centennial of the University of Chicago's first excavations in Mesopotamia — the expedition to Bismaya/Adab. At the Director's Dinner inaugurating the galleries, we were honored to have as our keynote speaker Dr. Donny George Youkhanna, the Director of Research for the Iraq State Antiquities organization. Dr. Youkhanna has been one of the leading voices in arousing the conscience of the world in the wake of the looting of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad. His presence and his eloquent lecture reminded us all of the vital role of museums in preserving the physical heritage of world civilization. We feel a particular bond with the Iraq Museum because the 1930s practice of dividing the finds from each excavation between the foreign expeditions and the host country means that most of the artifacts in our Mesopotamian Gallery have near exact counterparts in the collections of the Iraq Museum. Their loss is our loss. It is heartening to see an increased public recognition and awareness of the importance of Mesopotamia and of our world-class collections. On the weekend of the formal opening of the Mesopotamian Gallery, we set a record for the largest attendance figures for any two day period.

We plan to build on the success of the Mesopotamian Gallery in the next phase of reinstallation. We are working on the museum's East Wing, consisting of three thematically linked galleries — the Assyrian Empire Gallery, the Henrietta Herbolsheimer Syro-Anatolian Gallery, and the Haas and Schwartz Megiddo Gallery. These galleries will be completed in November 2004 and open in January 2005. My only regret is that Albert "Bud" Haas, one of the dearest friends the Oriental Institute ever had, did not live to see the opening of the gallery named in his honor.

The reinstallation is being ably overseen by Museum Director Geoffrey Emberling, who started in this position in May 2004. I want to thank Geoff's predecessor, Karen Wilson for her years of loyal service to the Oriental Institute and for her tremendous efforts and successes in the earlier stages of the museum reinstallation. The fact that Geoff has been able to move ahead so effectively on the reinstallation of the East Wing galleries is largely due to the solid base that Karen and her staff had already provided. Thanks to the efforts of Karen, and now Geoff, the entire museum reinstallation is on track to be completed in 2006 — appropriately enough — on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Oriental Institute building. The completion of this ten year effort will truly be an event to celebrate.



*Gil J. Stein and Dr. Donny George Youkhanna at a reception in the Director's Office marking the opening of the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery and the Yelda Family Khorsabad Court. Photograph courtesy Clemens Reichel*

## INTRODUCTION

We should remember that while the museum highlights some of the great earlier discoveries of Oriental Institute researchers, this work continues unabated in the field and here at home in Hyde Park. Despite the current political difficulties affecting field research in many parts of the Near East, Oriental Institute archaeologists have been actively expanding the scope of our archaeological excavations in Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. Aslihan Yener, Associate Professor of Archaeology, has been leading the excavations at the Middle/Late Bronze Age urban center of Tell Atchana/Alalakh. This project has been generously supported by University trustee Joseph Neubauer and his wife Jeannette. The Atchana excavations hold great promise for developing our understanding of urban life in the Near East during the second millennium B.C. The Oriental Institute now has a key role in two additional excavations in Turkey. Research Associate Ronald Gorny has been excavating at the Hittite cult center of Çadır Höyük in central Anatolia. As a bonus, the excavations of the uppermost deposits at Çadır also yielded important — perhaps unique — discoveries about the last years of Byzantine rule in Anatolia, including a destruction level that may be associated with the actual Turkish conquest. Also in central Anatolia, Research Associate Scott Branting, the new director of our Center for the Archaeology of the Middle Eastern Landscape (CAMEL) laboratory is co-directing (with Geoffrey Summers of Middle East Technical University in Ankara) the excavations and remote sensing investigations at the first millennium B.C. urban site of Kerkenes Dağ.

In Egypt, Oriental Institute Research Associate Mark Lehner continues his path-breaking work on the Giza Plateau mapping project. At the same time, Stephen P. Harvey, Assistant Professor of Egyptian Archaeology, is expanding his excavations at Abydos. Steve's work promises to make major contributions to our understanding of the origins of the Egyptian New Kingdom. Research Associate (Associate Professor) W. Raymond Johnson and the talented staff of the Epigraphic Survey continue their vital and urgent work of conserving the monumental architecture of Luxor and of recording and conserving the reliefs at Medinet Habu.

In Iran, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of Senior Research Associate Abbas Alizadeh, the Oriental Institute has been able to continue its excavations in Khuzestan, and most recently at a series of prehistoric sites on the Marv Dasht plain near Persepolis. Our scholarly cooperation with Iranian researchers is slowly but steadily improving, and we look forward to developing new projects together.

Here at home, Oriental Institute text-based studies of philology, lexicography, and ancient history are flourishing. The Hittite Dictionary (CHD) under Theo van den Hout, Professor of Hittitology, and Harry A. Hoffner, John A. Wilson Professor Emeritus of Hittitology, has reached a major milestone with the launching of its first electronic (e-CHD) volume. The Demotic Dictionary (CDD), directed by Janet H. Johnson, Morton D. Hull Distinguished Service Professor of Egyptology, continues apace, and the Assyrian Dictionary (CAD), directed by Martha T. Roth, Professor of Assyriology, looks forward to completion of its final volume in two years time. The Oriental Institute continues to be a major center for innovative uses of digital technology in ancient studies through sophisticated database development for the Diyala Project and the Iraq Museum Database, both directed by Research Associate Clemens D. Reichel and McGuire Gibson, Professor of Mesopotamian Archaeology.

The diversity and quality of these Oriental Institute research projects and others are apparent from the summary discussions contained in this year's *Annual Report*. Taken together, the reports reveal an impressive scholarly effort that continues to evolve and grow.