

RESEARCH SUPPORT

COMPUTER LABORATORY

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Can you say “This Old Computer Laboratory?” Although the boys from the public television program with a similar name did not make a visit to the Oriental Institute last winter, the changes evident as you enter the Laboratory today would seem to suggest they did help with our 2004/2005 make-over.

The Computer Laboratory and CAMEL Merge Spaces

For functional reasons, space savings, and operational considerations, the teaching, non-project specific portion of the Center for Archaeology of the Middle Eastern Landscape (CAMEL) Laboratory was brought up from the depths of the basement and merged into the Computer Laboratory in Room 202. As a part of this process, a facelift of sorts was given to both facilities. Thanks to efforts by CAMEL director Scott Branting, new countertop surfaces along all the walls have replaced the old assortment of tables, several Middle Eastern carpets now decorate the walls, and two work-study students employed by CAMEL maintain peace and order in the facility on a regular, daily basis. With the arrival of CAMEL, the number of Windows-based computers has grown from two to eight, and two of the Macintosh computers have been upgraded to iMac G5 computers.

The merging of the two facilities also caused us to deal finally with an ongoing problem in the Computer Laboratory. Our former open door policy meant that on numerous occasions over the past few years people with no connection to the Oriental Institute, the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC), or any of our research projects would simply walk in off the street and use our computer facilities for Web surfing, e-mail, and printing. To eliminate this problem, the upgraded facility now requires key access. Although admittedly an inconvenience, unauthorized use of Laboratory facilities has now been virtually eliminated.

The dual nature of the upgraded Laboratory has produced increased activity when compared with usage in the past (and I thought those days were busy), especially among those staff and students working with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) programs on the CAMEL computers. Although the eight Windows computers are primarily for use by CAMEL, others within the Oriental Institute community can access them with prior authority. The three Macintosh computers, however, remain publicly available to all Oriental Institute faculty, staff, and students on a walk-up or sign-up basis.

World-Wide Web site

Fifteen months into the hosting of the Oriental Institute’s Web site by the university’s Networking Services and Information Technologies (NSIT) office, I can report that no major problems have developed. The transition has been mostly uneventful. Although some benefits have been seen immediately, the best is yet to come. Some of the immediate improvements include faster access times for downloading pages from the Institute’s Web site, and, on a personal note, no longer having to maintain the computer hardware that runs our Web site or operates its nightly backup routines. I’ll take this opportunity to thank our liaison with NSIT’s Web Services divi-

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sion, Sandy Weisz, who has been very active and instrumental in negotiating our transition this past year. Good work, and many thanks to Sandy and his NSIT colleagues.

The future developments to the Oriental Institute's Web site that are in the works right now are where the largest and most meaningful benefits of our NSIT collaboration will be found. As I write this NSIT programmers are working on converting all the Web pages (over 32,000) and images (over 12,000) on the present Oriental Institute Web site into a new template, with an updated "look and feel." A large time consuming task, the first sample pages of the new Web site, which are located on a development server until all pages and images have been converted, will be ready for evaluation by Oriental Institute faculty and staff about the time this *Annual Report* is published. Additionally, the ability to use a "backend" database to produce future Web pages on the Institute's Web site in real time from queries entered by visitors is another future development our NSIT collaboration makes possible. Although admittedly a longer range goal than the new Web-site design already underway, the serving of data on our Web site from a database instead of from static Web pages, as we do today, holds much promise for a more efficient, tailored delivery of ancient Near Eastern research and scholarship than anything we could accomplish with our present Web-site configuration.

Laboratory Projects

Iraq Museum Database: The "Lost Treasures from Iraq" Web site

As a part of our efforts to disseminate information on artifacts stolen from the Iraq Museum and its regional branches during looting in 2003, the Oriental Institute's Iraq Working Group received permission to publish on our Web site the three fascicles of *Lost Heritage: Antiquities Stolen from Iraq's Regional Museums*. These publications date back to 1992 during the looting of antiquities from the regional museums following the first Gulf War. These three print publications predated the creation of the World-Wide Web (WWW), and were not available in electronic format until now.

Throughout this past year Oriental Institute staff, principally Clemens Reichel and Charles Jones, have maintained contact with Iraqi authorities and Near Eastern scholars worldwide, assessing the damage, documenting the losses, and staying on top of various efforts to rebuild and reopen the Iraq Museum and other regional facilities. Additionally, Docent/Volunteer Karen Terras continued to spend three or more days a week in the Computer Laboratory and in our museum's basement storage area, either scanning published Iraq Museum object photographs (mostly ivories and cylinder seals) or creating, editing, and updating textual descriptions of these artifacts. The photographs and text entries she has processed constitute the bulk of the Iraq Museum Database which Clemens has been constructing on the Oriental Institute's Web site since the looting occurred in 2003. Their dedicated service in this cause deserves our praise and thanks.

Several major content updates to the Iraq Museum Database occurred throughout the year. The Iraq Museum Database now contains over 1,150 objects, the latest additions including sixty seal and seal impressions from various sites in the Diyala region of Iraq.

Diyala Miscellaneous Objects Publication Project

Volunteer Robert Wagner, who started the year as a semi-permanent resident in the Computer Laboratory on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of each week, eventually migrated to our museum's Registration area in the basement so that he could continue his data entry efforts by scanning all of the original tablet, object, and locus cards from the Oriental Institute's excava-

tions at Tell Asmar during the 1930s (and he's still at it as I write this article, so I'll be reporting on his efforts yet again next year). To paraphrase John Cameron Swazey, Robert "takes a beating, and keeps on ticking." We greatly appreciate Robert's dedicated service to the Diyala Miscellaneous Objects Publications Project.

Electronic Publications

The Chicago Hittite Dictionary Project ventured into the realm of electronic publication in late 2004 with the initial release of its P volume. Without getting too technical, unlike our other electronic publications which are available in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) format, the eCHD (as it is known) is served via the World-Wide Web (WWW) from an XML database program, XSTAR, developed by Oriental Institute faculty member David Schloen and his wife Sandra Schloen, and hosted on a server at the Digital Library Development Center in the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library. This database was specifically designed to provide scholars with a variety of query and presentation methods necessary for a thorough analysis of these critically important cuneiform texts from ancient Anatolia. Access to the P volume requires downloading to your computer an executable file for either the Windows 2000 & XP platforms or the Macintosh OS X platform (it will not run on Macintosh computers running System 9.x).

During the past year Professor Janet Johnson finished work on letter N for the Chicago Demotic Dictionary. This brings the total number of Demotic Dictionary letters published electronically to fifteen. Work continues on the remaining eleven letters. Additionally, an electronic version of her book, *The Demotic Verbal System*, published in 1976 as Volume 38 of the Institute's series titled Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, was finished in November 2004. With the assistance of Tom Urban, Oriental Institute Publications Office, these documents are now available on the Oriental Institute's Web site as Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files.

Two new books from our Publications Office, both published during 2004, are now available electronically on our Web site as Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (PDF) files: OIP 124. *Excavations at Tell Es-Sweyhat, Syria, Volume 1: On the Margin of the Euphrates: Settlement and Land Use at Tell Es-Sweyhat and in the Upper Lake Assad Area, Syria*, by Tony J. Wilkinson; OIS 1. *Changing Social Identity with the Spread of Islam: Archaeological Perspectives*, edited by Donald Whitcomb. In addition, a corrected version of Chapter 34, "Implicit Models of Cross-Cultural Interaction: A Question of Noses, Soap, and Prejudice," Robert K. Ritner's contribution to our 1992 publication, SAOC 51, *Life in a Multi-Cultural Society: Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine and Beyond*, is now available on the Institute's Web site in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) format.

In early 2005, Professor Peter Dorman gave our Publications Office permission to preprint his contribution, "The Long Coregency Revisited: Architectural and Iconographic Conundra in the Tomb of Kheruef," to a volume of essays in memory of William Murnane. The projected title of the book is: *Causing his Name to Live: Studies in Egyptian History and Epigraphy in Memory of William J. Murnane*, edited by Peter Brand and Jacobus van Dijk. The book will be published by Brill Academic Publishers in 2006.

Professor John Brinkman's "Mesopotamian Directory" was updated for 2005, and is now available as an Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) file on the Institute's Web site. It lists the names and addresses of persons domiciled in North America who are engaged in research on the pre-Islamic archaeology, history, and languages of greater Mesopotamia (including Syria east of the Upper Euphrates, the Elamite plains, and regions using a standard cuneiform script).

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It includes academics, museum personnel, library staff, and senior graduate students with a formally approved dissertation topic.

Two recent University of Chicago dissertations from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC) are now available in Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (PDF) on our Web site: *The Architecture of Defense: Fortified Settlements of the Levant During The Middle Bronze Age*, by Aaron Alexander Burke, June 2004; and *Urbanism and Society in the Third Millennium Upper Khabur Basin*, by Jason Alik Ur, December 2004.

Circumstances inside and outside the Computer Laboratory this past year conspired against our finishing the HTML coding and scanning of photographs for the electronic version of the 1980 Oriental Institute publication *Ptolemais Cyrenaica*, by David Nasgowitz (Chicago, 1980). Working with Oriental Institute Museum Archivist John Larson and his staff, we hope to complete this project in 2005/2006, so that we can add this publication to the Photographic Archives section of the Institute's Web site.

Laboratory Equipment/Institute Resources

As mentioned above, the Computer Laboratory replaced its two oldest Macintosh computers with 20 inch iMac G5 computers running OS 10.4, and six new Dell OptiPlex GX280 Windows computers, each with 17 inch flat panel displays, were added as part of the CAMEL merger. Additionally, two new scanners — an Epson Perfection 2450 and an Epson Perfection 4870, both able to scan transparencies as well as printed material — have joined the Laboratory's other five scanners.

With the retirement of our longtime Oriental Institute e-mail server, "babylon-orinst," in early July 2004 after eight years of practically error-free service (see explanation in the Computer Laboratory's entry in the *2003/2004 Annual Report*), a new computer was needed to function as the Oriental Institute's File Transfer Protocol (FTP) server. Although not an ideal choice, and admittedly only a temporary solution, a seldom used data entry machine, a 700 MHz iMac G3, with 80 gigabytes of disk space, currently running OS 10.3.9, was converted for use as our new FTP server.

For further information concerning several of the above mentioned research projects, the Oriental Institute's World-Wide Web (WWW) database, and other Electronic Resources in general refer to the What's New page on the Oriental Institute's Web site, at (NOTE: this URL is case-sensitive):

http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/INFO/OI_WWW_New.html

See the "Electronic Resources" section of this *Annual Report* for the complete URL to each of the Web-site resources mentioned in this article.
