

RESEARCH SUPPORT COMPUTER LABORATORY

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PROJECTS

New Web-site Launch

After more than three years of discussions, planning, development, and testing, the Oriental Institute's new Web site was launched on February 7, 2007. As we had hoped, the new "look and feel" of the site, as well as its improved structure and query capabilities, has met with widespread approval and praise by faculty, staff, students, and the general public.

The new Web site is divided into three primary sections, Research, Museum, and Events. Each page on the Web site, with few exceptions, contains a set of links at the top and bottom for quick access to certain key pieces of information: Visit Us, Contact Us, Get Involved, Calendar of Events, Order Online, What's New, and a site-specific search function. Also present on practically all our Web pages is a "Featured Events" box, with a rotating list of links to current events, courses, sales, and opportunities that the public may take advantage of, without the need for the visitor to search for such information.

If you haven't yet visited our new Web site, point your favorite Web browser at: oi.uchicago.edu

Many faculty, staff, and former staff members within the Institute as well as staff within the University's Web Services division were involved in various ways throughout this multi-year project, and they deserve recognition at this time.

Oriental Institute Director, Gil Stein, and Executive Director, Steven Camp, have both been very supportive and approving of the overall goals of our new Web presence as the "front door" into the Institute's operations. The success of this endeavor would not have been possible without their encouragement, criticism, and guidance.

I cannot say enough about the vision and assistance offered by my partner in this project, former Research Archivist and Bibliographer, Charles Jones. Chuck was an equal participant from the earliest discussions we had back in 1993 regarding the development of the Oriental Institute's original Web site. He continued his critical role as partner in managing and maintaining our former Web site over the years, and was a critical force as we migrated the hosting of our Web site over to the University of Chicago's Networking Services and Information Technologies' (NSIT) Web Services group in March 2004. During our recent redesign process, as a member of the Institute's Web-site Design Committee, Chuck made many vital suggestions as well as operating as a sounding board for other's ideas until he left the university in July 2005, to run the Blegen Library



The new Oriental Institute Web site homepage

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The new Oriental Institute Museum Web site homepage

of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Greece.

Other members of the Institute's Web site Design Committee deserve special mention because of their efforts during years of committee meetings, impromptu discussions around the water cooler, and endless e-mails involving grand scale design issues as well as miniscule arguments over font designs and color schemes. Much credit for the success of the overall design of the Web site goes to: the aforementioned Gil Stein and Steven Camp; Museum Director, Geoff Emberling; former Membership Coordinator, Maria Krasinski; Museum Education Project Coordinator, Wendy Ennes; and Development Director, Monica Witczak.

The efforts of all the above participants would be meaningless without the guidance and coordination provided by NSIT's Web Services group. The following staff members advanced the project from beginning to end, offered their advice and expertise along the way, and undertook all the behind-the-scenes code writing. The final design and deliverable product is a testament to the professional skills of the following individuals: former Web Services director, Therese Allen-Vassar; current Web Services director, John Mohr; former project coordinator, Sandor Weisz; current Web-site coordinator, Jack Auses; and programmers Megan Coleman, Sara Worrell-Berg, Stephanie Smith, Quinn Carey, Justin Sante, Lynn Barnett, Scott Bassett, and Mitchell Kim.

Lastly, I want to thank the countless Institute faculty, staff, and students who offered comments, encouragement, and criticisms of our new Web-site design during the past two years. Our design process could not incorporate all the suggestions they offered, but I hope the final product provides everyone with both a useful research tool and a pleasant web experience.

Integrated Database

Our plans to develop an integrated computer database containing all the relevant records, photographs, publications, and other documents that are the legacy of the Institute's eighty plus years of operation took several major steps forward during the past year. In the fall of 2006 the Institute's Integrated Database Committee (Gil Stein, Geoff Emberling, David Schloen, Raymond Johnson, Scott Branting, John Sanders, Thomas Urban, Steve Camp, and George Sundell) made a visit to The Field Museum, in Chicago, in order to discuss their own still ongoing computer database integration process with members of their administration and information technology staff. Although their collection management issues are more diverse than ours, the overall design and development processes they have already gone through will be very informative as we begin our efforts. Ms. Joanna McCaffrey, the Collections Database Architect who is overseeing their computer integration project, offered to assist us during our initial stage of goals assessment and program development. We greatly appreciate her willingness to help, and her insights and observations as we proceed during the coming year.

After months of discussions, and with assistance provided by Ms. McCaffrey's Field Museum experience, our Integrated Database Committee prepared a Request For Information (RFI) dur-

ing the winter of 2006/2007. Once the vetting process for the document was completed, the RFP was mailed to nine software vendors in late April 2007. Responses will be received and evaluated during the summer, and a shortlist of candidates will be invited to demonstrate their proposed museum management software in the fall of 2007. We expect to choose a single software vendor for the Institute's Integrated Database by the end of the 2007 calendar year.

Oriental Institute Terabyte Storage Initiative

The Oriental Institute Archive (OIA), the Institute's terabyte (1,000,000,000,000 bytes) computer storage array maintained by NSIT, grew in two increments to its present capacity of seven terabytes in July 2007. Approximately seventy+ faculty and staff members, as well as over a dozen units and/or projects within the Institute, are currently using this long-term computer storage space for daily back up and/or archiving of their electronic data and numerous computer files. Given the ongoing plans to digitize the Museum's Photographic Archives, the continued scanning of the Research Archives' map collections by the Institute's CAMEL facility, and the ever-increasing datasets created by both the archeological and philological projects in the building, we can expect to see a continual increase in both the use and the storage capacity of the OIA throughout the coming year, and beyond.

Building-wide Document Printing and Scanning

The Institute's primary Xerox copier in room 228 and its twin in the Research Archives were replaced with newer, faster, more capable models in August and December 2006, respectively. As mentioned in last year's *Annual Report*, these new machines were installed and setup for network printing and scanning, and the predicted wave of data capture to Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files by the faculty and staff did occur starting immediately and shows no signs of a slowdown these many months later. Whether, however, this scanning directly to PDF files has actually reduced the amount of paper consumed in the building remains to be seen. Although having an electronic version of a paper, article, or an entire book has its definite advantages, many people still want a paper copy for ease of reading, editing, and as a backup.

During the coming year we expect to add a similar Xerox machine on the Institute's third floor as well as one in the Archaeology Lab in the basement. Once these are installed we will be able to retire the various public access laser printers located throughout the building, as these new Xerox machines are more than capable of doing double duty as both copiers, scanners, and laser printers for the faculty, staff, and students. I will report further on this issue in next year's *Annual Report*.

Macintosh Computer Upgrades

By the time you read this *Annual Report* all the Institute's faculty and staff who use Macintosh computers for their work will have been migrated to Apple's System X operating system, the vast majority of those users doing so with brand new Intel-based Apple computers purchased during summer 2006. Although a couple of the older, System 9-based Macintosh computers will remain running in the Institute's Server Room, in order to provide backwards compatibility if need be, and one or two research projects will continue to maintain System 9 Mac's because of legacy font issues relating to older document archives, all present and future Macintosh-based research will only be conducted using the much improved System X.

Because of this migration by the Institute's Macintosh users to System X, they have the added bonus of being able to take advantage of the Institute's new terabyte storage space, the OIA mentioned above, something that would not have been technologically possible had they continued

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to use their older, System 9-based computers. Needless to say, many such faculty and staff were pleased to switch knowing that the backup and archiving of their data would now be much simpler than before the upgrade.

Electronic Publications

As a part of the Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative, this is the first full year of work producing Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files of out-of-print volumes previously published by our Publications Office and the University of Chicago Press. In addition, this initiative dictates that current and future print publications produced by the Oriental Institute Publications Office are also made available in this same format through the Institute's Web site. I encourage everyone to read that portion of the Publications Office section of this *Annual Report* regarding the status of the Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative, then visit the Catalog of Publications page on our Web site where you will be able to download these past and current titles of our publications in electronic form:

<http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/catalog/index.html>

This Electronic Publications Initiative, when fully implemented through the electronic publication of all 400+ titles published by the Oriental Institute, promises to be a great benefit to scholarly research in the various fields of ancient Near Eastern studies.

For further information concerning several of the above mentioned research projects, the 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/news/>

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