The Oriental Institute

Individual Research

The oriental institute is developing open-source agent-based computer simulation software to provide researchers with a tool by which they can model ancient and modern pedestrian based transportation systems. It is named after a king in the Third Dynasty of Ur who was known for his road building efforts and the speed with which he was purported to ambulate. The first test case for the SHULGI software, however, will be the extension and testing of the computer simulations of ancient pedestrians along the city streets at Kerkenes Da© some 1,500 years after the reign of Shulgi.

During the year, Branting presented papers on the work at Kerkenes Da© at the American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., and in a public lecture at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois. He also presented a lecture on “The Geography and Economics of Urban Transportation” in the Economics of Urban Policies class taught in the Department of Economics at the University of Chicago. This was in addition to the Ancient Landscapes I and II classes he taught and a lecture he presented on “Survey and Geospatial Technologies” for the Method and Theory in Near Eastern Archaeology class. Within the Institute he continued to serve as chair of the Integrated Database Committee.

Branting also had a number of publications completed during the year. Kerkenes News 9, co-authored with Geoffrey and Françoise Summers, was published by METU Press. An article on “Technology and the Oriental Institute” appeared as well in volume 193 of the Oriental Institute News & Notes. In addition, two articles were accepted for publication but have yet to appear: “Using an Urban Street Network to Analyze Ancient Activities” will appear in the forthcoming volume Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology 2006, to be published by Archeaopress. While “Geospatial Data and Theory in Archaeology: A View from CAMEL,” co-authored with Joshua Trampier, will appear in the edited volume Space — The Final Frontier? An Intercontinental Approach, to be published by Cambridge University Press.

John A. Brinkman

In the autumn, John A. Brinkman participated in a symposium at Cornell University honoring Peter Kuniholm on his retirement as founding director of the Malcolm and Carolyn Wiener Dendrochronology Laboratory; he delivered a lecture assessing the current status and problems of research in Mesopotamian chronology of the historical period (2350–140 b.c.). With financial support from the Mellon Foundation, he was able to continue museum research on Middle Baby- lonian documents in the Louvre (November–December), New York (April), and the University Museum, Philadelphia (May). He contributed three entries on Babylonian historical subjects to the Reallexikon der Assyriologie and wrote three notes for the French periodical NABU on the results of his museum research. He is currently preparing essays on Babylonian history in the second and first millennia b.c. for the catalog of a Louvre-sponsored exhibition on Babylon to be held in Paris and Berlin in 2008.

Fred M. Donner

Fred M. Donner was engaged in his usual teaching duties in 2006/2007, including a larger-than-ever survey of early Islamic history in the fall, “Introduction to the Middle East” in the spring,
and at various times a seminar on the “High Caliphate,” a course reading passages from the medi-
eval Arabic historian al-Baladhuri’s massive Ansab al-ashraf, a research seminar in early Islamic
history, and several tutorials on Islamic law. He also served on sixteen dissertation committees
and on three MA thesis committees.

Donner was asked to evaluate colleagues for appointment, promotion, and/or tenure at the
University of Pennsylvania, Ohio State University, and University of California at Irvine and was
invited to serve as external examiner for dissertation defenses at Princeton and the Sorbonne. He
was also asked by the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, to evaluate the application of a
French colleague to become “Director of Research.” He served as grant reviewer for the National
Humanities Center (Research Triangle Park, North Carolina) and the American Center for Orien-
tal Research (Amman, Jordan).

Donner delivered lectures on Islam’s origins for audiences of the general public at the Uni-
versity’s Humanities Open House (October), the German Cultural Club (Chicago, February), the
Missouri Valley History Conference (Omaha, Nebraska, March), and Washington University in
St. Louis (March). In February, he gave more specialized presentations on his research on Islam’s
origins to seminars at the Sorbonne and at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris.

As usual, he continued to review manuscripts for various professional journals, including
Journal of Near Eastern Studies, International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, and for Law
and History Review. He also continued to serve as editor of Al-‘Usur al-Wusta: The Bulletin of
Middle East Medievalists, which appears semi-annually.

During the year, Donner submitted to the editors the draft translation of his section of the
History of al-Ya‘qubi, a collective project to translate the works of this important ninth-century
historian and geographer. He also submitted his introduction, bibliography, and other materials
required for a volume of reprinted articles by various authors which he selected on the topic The
Expansion of the Early Islamic State — to appear as volume five in the series entitled The For-
mation of the Classical Islamic World, published by Ashgate. He also submitted two articles, one
entitled “‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, and the Muslim Invasion of Egypt,” for the fest-
schrift of a distinguished colleague, and “Umayyad Efforts at Legitimation: the Umayyads’ Silent
Heritage,” to appear in Umayyad Legacies/Heritages Omeyyades, edited by A. Borrut and P. M.
Cobb (forthcoming with E. J. Brill, Leiden).

At long last, he has completed the draft of his monograph, Muhammad and the Believers: At
the Origins of Islam, and is now contacting publishers to place the work, intended for the general
reader and introductory college classroom.

Two articles appeared in print during the year: “Historical Context,” in Cambridge Com-
panion to the Qur’an, edited by J. D. McAuliffe, pp. 23–39; and “Fight for God — But Do So
With Kindness,” in War and Peace in the Ancient World, edited by K. A. Raaflaub, pp. 297–311
(Blackwell).

Donner is continuing with his research on early Islamic history, particularly the way the early
community of Believers gradually changed its self-definition and grew into what we now recognize as the
Muslim community, during the first century or so following the death of the prophet Muhammad in
632 C.E. He has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for 2007/2008 to pursue research on this
theme on the basis of early Arabic papyri and looks forward to spending much of his time next year at
the great papyrus repositories in Europe (particularly those of Paris, Vienna, and Heidelberg).