

RESEARCH SUPPORT

COMPUTER LABORATORY

John C. Sanders

PROJECTS

The Oriental Institute Web Site

I am asked every so often about access statistics for the Oriental Institute's Web site: are they up or down from last month? last year? etc. So I take this opportunity to present and compare several overall categories of access statistics for our Web site since 2004, when the University's Web Services Division began to host our Web site. Going back before 2004 for the comparison would be complicated by differences in the statistical software used on our Web site pre-2004 and the program Web Services operates today to generate access statistics. The three most telling numbers, and the ones least susceptible to manipulation due to the specific design of our Web pages, are: total number of visits; total number of unique visitors; and total number of pages served.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Visits</i>	<i>Number of Unique Visitors</i>	<i>Number of Pages Served</i>
2009 (January–June)	658,628	467,450	2,389,702
All of 2008	1,114,023	826,805	3,982,345
All of 2007	900,513	648,534	3,034,531
All of 2006	1,799,795	1,222,188	6,703,885
All of 2005	1,825,126	1,266,735	6,938,389
All of 2004	1,099,329	737,826	4,082,131

By way of partial explanation, the single largest reason for the spike in numbers across all three categories for 2004, 2005, and 2006 was the development and publication of our Iraq Museum Database on the Institute's Web site in late 2003. Under the direction of Dr. Clemens Reichel, the descriptions and photographs of possible objects stolen from the Iraq National Museum during its looting April 10–13, 2003, at the start of the Iraq War, was information which ancient Near Eastern scholars, students, and the general public worldwide were eager to obtain.

Overall, the numbers show gradual but steady growth in the past few years. The Institute's Web site continues to be a major, if not the major, portal for disseminating to the world at large the progress and results of Institute research projects and other scholarly endeavors by our faculty and staff. This fact is made even more pronounced through the efforts of our Electronic Publications Initiative (EPI), whereby all the Institute's print publications, going back to our founding in 1919, are being made available for free download from our Web site. Read more about the EPI below, as well as in the Publications Office portion of this *Annual Report*.

Migration from the Eudora E-mail Program

For the past dozen or so years the Eudora program has been the preferred choice by faculty and staff throughout the Institute for accessing university e-mail accounts. There were always gripes and issues, but overall Eudora functioned adequately. A built-in software limitation within the program's operations, however, foretold the end of Eudora's use on the University of Chicago network this past year when the University announced that due to security concerns it would no longer allow "unauthenticated" e-mails to be sent via the University's e-mail servers. The Eudora program could not accommodate the required changes to its "port" settings. Faced with a certain but unknown date for the mandatory switch to only "authenticated" e-mails, I spent most of October through February installing new e-mail software on the computers of all Eudora users throughout the building. The switch involved moving their e-mail accounts and address books from Eudora to one of several newer e-mail programs of the users' choosing. Migrating the mail accounts was not a major problem for most faculty and staff, but the same cannot be said of their respective address books. Let's just say I wasn't the happiest of campers for large portions of the winter months. We did get everyone converted, however, without any complete disasters, and with only one or two embarrassing faux pas on my part.

Integrated Database

After thorough review of the Integrated Database (IDB) Request for Information (RFI) documents returned by vendors, and their respective on-site demonstrations in fall 2008, the Institute's IDB committee this past year created a short list of three vendors whose software solutions best met our specifications for an integrated database of our Museum Registration records, Conservation records, and Museum Archives documentation; the Research Archives catalog; and various Research Project materials. With these specific solutions in mind, several avenues for obtaining financial underwriting for our IDB initiative were pursued. Both University of Chicago funding sources and outside, Federal, grant applications were submitted in fall and winter 2008, and we'll learn if our IDB initiative receives financial support from these agencies about the time this *Annual Report* goes to press. Being an optimist, I'll report of our choice of software vendor and product, its installation, and the process of initial data migration from our existing databases, textual documents, and image collections into the new IDB solution in next year's *Annual Report*.

Oriental Institute Terabyte Storage Initiative

As I write this *Annual Report* submission, the Institute's terabyte storage system, the OIA (Oriental Institute Archive), now totals 15.8 terabytes (15,800,000,000,000 bytes). For comparison purposes, a typed, double-spaced, 8 × 11" piece of paper is roughly 2,000 bytes! More than one hundred faculty, staff, and research project personnel have access to the OIA for archival storage of computer files and images, as well as for daily computer backup. As more of the Institute's historical records, cards, documents, photographs, and publications are converted to digital format the size of our terabyte storage system will continue to expand. I want to take this opportunity to thank Scott Branting, Robert Tate, Josh Trampier, and the entire CAMEL staff for their assistance in the maintenance and monitoring of this off-site computer storage space.

Persepolis Fortification Archive

During this past year, the Computer Lab continued to assist an ongoing collaboration of scholars imaging and recording of the Persepolis Fortification Archive (PFA) tablets: Matthew Stolper, the Persepolis Fortification Archive Project Director; the University's Humanities Computing department, especially Arno Bosse and Lec Maj; West Semitic Research Project at the University of Southern California; David and Sandra Schloen, and their On-Line Cultural Heritage Environment (OCHRE) program; and a small army of graduate students from the University of Chicago.

An additional computer scanning and image-capture station was set up in the project's basement facilities, and I stayed abreast of the scanning operations as they progressed throughout the year. And thanks to the generosity of Paula Manzuk, Secretary of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, the project now has the loan of a department Hewlett-Packard laser printer, which I set up in their basement laboratory.

For additional information regarding this project, please read the Persepolis Fortification Archive section of this *Annual Report*, where Professor Stolper outlines in detail the current progress of the scanning and cataloging of these most important ancient texts. Also, up-to-date information about the project's work is available in the Persepolis Fortification Archive component on the Oriental Institute Web site.

Building-wide Document Printing and Scanning

The workable solution for student printing in the Research Archives, identified in summer 2008, turned out to have several unforeseen drawbacks that would complicate, not facilitate, our plans for Institute-wide printing to our current Xerox copiers. During the fall and winter I went back to the drawing boards and took a fresh look at our needs and funding. We will find a solution, but the particular combination of hardware, software, and configuration needed to implement ALL our printing and scanning goals has yet to be found. I will continue to search because the redundant or errant printing that has plagued the standalone Hewlett-Packard laser printers on the third floor and in the Research Archives continues, though admittedly at a reduced level throughout 2008–2009.

Electronic Publications Initiative

This past year saw major progress with the Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative. Seventy-five electronic versions of current or past Institute publications, in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF), were made available for free download on the Institute's Web site. The vast majority of these new downloadable publications pertain to ancient Egypt, and the costs for their electronic preparation were offset through a most generous gift from Misty and Lewis Gruber. Their support of our Egyptological research is greatly appreciated.

The Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative dictates that current and future print publications produced by the Oriental Institute Publications Office are also made available electronically 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 many past and current titles of our publications in electronic form:

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

COMPUTER LABORATORY

A list of the volume titles that were processed into digital format and made available to the public on the Institute's Web site during this past year can be found in the Electronic Resources section of this *Annual Report*.

Currently, 202 Oriental Institute publications are available as Adobe PDF. When fully implemented our Electronic Publications Initiative will make accessible all 400+ titles in our Publications Office catalog.

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For further information concerning the above-mentioned research projects and other electronic resources in general, refer to the What's New page on the Oriental Institute's Web site, at

<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.