

# RESEARCH SUPPORT

## COMPUTER LABORATORY

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### Projects

#### *Integrated Database*

Several of my IT compatriots, both on and off campus, commented during the past year “I told you it would take longer than expected” whenever we discussed the building of the Institute’s integrated database (IDB). As the year went by I knew they were correct, and their expectations have come to pass. It has taken longer than scheduled to design and construct the new EMu (Electronic Museum) database interface and to migrate our data into the system. We are close, however, with a planned October/November 2012 target date, thanks to the efforts of several key people who deserve special recognition. Foy Scalf (dealing with Research Archives data), along with Helen McDonald and Susan Allison (dealing with Museum Registration data), have worked hundreds of hours during the past year and, along with Jay Kohut, our project coordinator from KE Software, they have structured the EMu software to work with our data and have worked out the multitude of kinks involved in migrating data from our old programs into the new IDB system. The work is not quite finished, but I salute all four of you for your tremendous efforts to get us as close as we are today!

Additionally, I should mention the dozens of hours of work contributed by Dora Fraeman, Alan Takaoka, and Rose Pezzuti Dyer, and other programmers from the university’s Web Services division who have been an integral part of our database team, specifically designing and building the web browser-based interface to our new IDB system, the component which the public, students, and most scholars worldwide will utilize to access our Museum Registration and Library information online. As above, their work is not quite finished, but I also salute all of you for your tremendous efforts!

My efforts with the integrated database project this past year, other than assisting Foy, Helen, and Susan with their particular efforts, dealt with tailoring the EMu software’s Registry, the program’s internal configuration database which controls how user accounts interact with the EMu software. The Registry maintains security settings, access privileges, and other presets that determine how the EMu application presents itself to the user, and what capabilities each user possesses.

Based on the work completed to date, the Institute’s new integrated database for the Museum Registration and Library catalog, even in its initial, first phase of development, will be a giant step forward in terms of access and capabilities for all types of researchers in the field of ancient Near Eastern studies. When combined with future phases of development, when the Museum Conservation records, Museum photographic archives, map collections from our CAMEL laboratory, several specific archaeological field project records, and the Museum archives records are added to the IDB, the Institute will have developed an incredibly valuable and unique online resource for scholars and the general public.

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***Electronic Publications Initiative***

Once again, this past year saw great progress with the Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative. Twenty-three electronic versions of current or past Institute publications, in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF), were made available for free download on the Institute's website. These new electronic publications pertain to ancient Mesopotamia, Syro-Palestine, and Anatolia, with one Egyptian and one Islamic title. Currently, 321 Oriental Institute publications are available as PDFs. When fully implemented our Electronic Publications Initiative will make accessible all 400+ titles in our Publications Office catalog.

Alongside these formerly print-only publications, the Publications Office also made available electronic (PDF) versions of all Chicago House Bulletins going back to 1989, a tremendous resource for scholars and the public who follow the epigraphic work of our flagship research project in Egypt.

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 website, where you can download these past and current titles of our publications in electronic form:

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

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

***The Oriental Institute Website***

The first joint Palestinian-American archaeological excavation, the Jericho Mafjar Project, under the direction of Donald Whitcomb, has been added to the Archaeological Research section of the Institute's website. The project is excavating the northern areas of Khirbet al-Mafjar, located north of Jericho in the Palestinian territories.

The Epigraphic Survey added several updates to the project's homepage with notes and photographs from their latest field season, which ended in April 2012. In conjunction with the addition of the Chicago House Bulletins mentioned above, the Epigraphic Survey added a significant amount of information about their fieldwork to the website this past year.

Two Museum exhibits were added to our website: Commerce and Coins in the Ancient Near East, a mini-exhibit at the Oriental Institute Museum from August 11 to August 28, 2011, looked at commerce and trade from 3000 BC to the fourth century BC; the Museum's special exhibit Picturing the Past: Imaging and Imagining the Ancient Middle East, which will end about the time you read this *Annual Report*, presents paintings, architectural reconstructions, facsimiles, casts, models, photographs, and computer-aided reconstructions that show how the architecture, sites, and artifacts of the ancient Middle East have been documented over time, and examines how such representations have shaped and/or obscured our perception of the ancient Near East. In conjunction with the Museum's special exhibit, our Public Education department sponsored a public symposium, Picturing the Past, which took place at the Institute on March 10, 2012. Its program is available on the website as a PDF.

The program for the 2012 Oriental Institute Symposium Heaven on Earth: Temples, Ritual, and Cosmic Symbolism in the Ancient World, held March 2-3, 2012, was added to the website in PDF format.

The Research Archives added their May 2011 through April 2012 Acquisitions Lists to the website, and the Oriental Institute's 2010-2011 *Annual Report* was converted to PDF by the Publications Office and added to the website.

And lastly, several Institute scholars added content to their sections of the Individual Scholarship component of the website: three articles by Norman Golb; six articles by Seth Richardson; five articles by Yorke Rowan; and three articles Foy Scalf. All these resources are now available as PDFs.

### ***Laboratory Equipment/Institute Resources***

Overall, the Institute's computing and networking infrastructure avoided the effects of several widespread computer virus and/or spam attacks during the past year, with one major exception. Someone, somewhere in the world, successfully logged onto our public file transfer (FTP) server and surreptitiously altered several account settings, interrupted the computer's virus and malware software's ability to operate, and completely disrupted the server's FTP operations. Needless to say, the server had to be completely rebuilt, but was then "hit" again within days, presumably by the same individual, requiring a second rebuild *and* a complete revamping of the machine's security and password structure. Needless to say, this episode was a ridiculous, time-wasting experience during the past winter that I hope I don't have to revisit in the future.

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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 website, at

<http://oi.uchicago.edu/news/>

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

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