

TABLET COLLECTION

Walter Farber and Andrew Wilent

The Tablet Collection and its study space, the Tablet Room, were once again very active throughout the 2015–2016 academic year. We want to mention here but a few of the more extensive visits by scholars using our unique collection for their own research: In August 2015, Richard Zettler of the University of Pennsylvania visited to continue his study of tablets from Nippur excavated by the Oriental Institute. Antoine Jacquet of the Collège de France visited in November to collate Old Babylonian texts from the collection included in the ARCHIBAB online database (www.archibab.fr). In May 2016, Nicole Brisch of the University of Copenhagen and Piotr Michalowski of the University of Michigan each visited, also to study tablets from Nippur. During the same month, Nicholas Kraus, from Yale University, came here to study Old Akkadian school texts in the collection. In addition to these visits, Andrew Wilent, the assistant curator of the Tablet Collection, provided digital photographs of objects for several scholars who were unable to visit the Oriental Institute in person.

As always, the Tablet Collection also served as a source for in-house research and teaching. For example, the curator Walter Farber prepared an edition of two Old Babylonian incantation tablets in our collection, and faculty member Hervé Reculeau used Old Babylonian letters from Bismaya and Tell Asmar in a class on cuneiform epigraphy offered during the Spring Quarter. This course provided students with an opportunity to learn how to read original cuneiform texts, and to produce hand copies of them.

A famous inscribed cylinder of Sargon II excavated by the Oriental Institute at Khorsabad that mentions king Mita (Midas) of Phrygia was loaned to the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology for the 2016 exhibit “The Golden Age of King Midas.” The Adler Planetarium in Chicago returned three astronomical tablets to the collection that had been on loan there since 2012 (see the *2011–2012 Annual Report*). A collection of over fifty tablets, dating mostly to the Ur III period but including objects from a variety of periods, was returned to the W. H. Over Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota. These objects had been on loan to the Oriental Institute since 1971. In two forthcoming articles, Robert Biggs will treat aspects of the Ur III tablets, while Walter Farber will publish the remaining tablets in the collection. A small collection of tablets from Northwestern University Library in Evanston, Illinois, was also loaned to the Oriental Institute for study and publication by Gertrud and Walter Farber, and subsequently returned.

Through the efforts of the curator, a donation of ten cuneiform tablets from the Ur III period was received from Mrs. E. Bingham, Louisville, Kentucky (see also Kiersten Neumann’s account of Museum activities). These tablets are being prepared for publication by Gertrud Farber. Preparations for a donation of one very interesting additional tablet by its present owner were also made. In this case, the process is still pending due to a technicality. Also, an item from our collection that since 1973 had been on loan to Hanover College in Hanover, Indiana, was returned to us and safely brought back to the Oriental Institute by the Farbers.

Looking to the future, a major new project got under way to publish the remainder of the Ur III tablets in the Oriental Institute collection, following upon the three prior volumes (in Oriental Institute Publications series) of Drehem tablets prepared by Markus Hilgert. Magnus

Widell of the University of Liverpool will lead the project in cooperation with Christopher Woods and Gertrud Farber of the Oriental Institute.

Additional Note by Walter Farber

After fourteen years as the Tablet Curator, I have been asked to step aside and make room for one of my younger colleagues, Susanne Paulus, to take over the responsibility for the Tablet Collection and Tablet Room. I want to thank all my previous and current assistants and collaborators, as well as all the scholars who through their correspondence, visits, and publications made the life of the Tablet Collection Curator at the Oriental Institute so interesting, for their patience and understanding, whenever there were any glitches in our daily operations. I hope that my assistants and myself were ultimately successful in supporting their research goals, while keeping a human face on the administrative necessities of a major collection of cuneiform documents, and I wish Susanne the same pleasure for the future that this work has given me in the past.
