

The Research Archives

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In September, 1973, the Research Archives was opened to faculty, staff, members, and students in the old library. This collection provides reference materials in the areas of ancient Near Eastern archeology, cuneiform studies, and Egyptology. During the three years which elapsed between the removal of the former Oriental Institute Library and the opening of the Research Archives, it became increasingly clear that such a collection of materials within the building of the Oriental Institute would be of immense benefit to its programs, inasmuch as the research pursued requires frequent if only very brief consultation of a large variety of published sources which are generally not in the private libraries of scholars.

Over the years, the Oriental Institute had acquired a number of collections of books which were duplicates of the holdings of the old library but which remained separate from it. These included a remnant of the library of the Megiddo Expedition (1925–39) and the personal library of James Henry Breasted, both of which had been for the past two decades in the Director's study. Following the death in 1970 of William F. Edgerton, for many years an Egyptologist at the Oriental Institute, his library was transferred here with the hope that work would continue on a projected Demotic dictionary. These three collections were available to only a limited number of people. After the death of Keith C. Seele, longtime editor of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* and director of the Nubian Expedition, the Oriental Institute acquired his library through the most generous offices of his wife and co-worker Mrs. Diederika Seele. It was envisioned that this collection and the other collections belonging to the Oriental Institute would form the core of a new research unit, which has become the Research Archives.

Beginning in July, 1973, the disparate collections of books were transferred from their various locations into the old library. Explorations of closets and storerooms within the building often revealed useful additions. From one storeroom in the basement came several boxes of journals, seven crates of Breasted's scientific notes and manuscripts, and four wooden boxes containing his personal collection of

some 3000 items. For nine years or so these boxes had helped support shelves holding pottery from the Nubian Expedition.

Once the books were physically present in the library, it was still necessary to process them for use. More than 1000 volumes, unbound or in poor condition, were sent to the bindery, and the slow process of cataloguing was begun. It had been hoped that all such work would be finished before the start of the school year. When it became apparent that this was not to be the case, the Research Archives opened anyway, with the feeling that limited use of the available facilities was preferable to none at all. The complete cataloguing of the original collections was finished only in April, 1974. On May 15, 1974, the collection of the Research Archives contained the following:

Monographs.....	2519 volumes
Series.....	1520 volumes
Journals.....	<u>1927</u> volumes
 Total Books.....	 5966 volumes
 Pamphlets (est.).....	 5250 items

A complete library in the fields of interest of the Research Archives would contain approximately 20,000 volumes.

When the Research Archives opened in late 1973, work had already been in progress from the previous year. A large number of subscriptions to relevant journals and several block purchases of books had been made. Work has since continued to keep current the extensive holdings in Egyptology and to strengthen the holdings in the other fields. At present more than 70 current periodicals require continual control. (Special thanks must be extended to the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* through whose courtesy a large number of items are received.) Wherever possible, small gaps in our holdings have also been filled. A single set of books might contain items from four or five separate sources. During this year a number of exchanges have been established with various other scholarly institutions at work in fields related to the ancient Near East.

One major source of books both new and old has been generous donations by various friends of the Oriental Institute. During the year the Research Archives was the fortunate recipient of all those books it did not already possess which were included in the library of John A.

Wilson, who left Chicago in the summer. His gift is greatly appreciated. Warmest thanks are also extended to other major contributors: Messrs. Klaus Baer, John A. Brinkman, I. J. Gelb, and Charles F. Nims. In addition, sincerest thanks are extended to the very many others who have given of their valuable time and contributed needed items to the Research Archives.

A second but no less significant role of the Research Archives lies in the preservation of the scientific papers of various scholars which have come into the possession of the Oriental Institute. These presently include a wide variety of items belonging to six Egyptologists: W. Max Müller (1862-1919), Wilhelm Spiegelberg (1870-1930), James Henry Breasted (1865-1935), Georg Steindorff (1861-1951), Harold H. Nelson (1878-1954), and William F. Edgerton (1893-1970). Old photographs, notes and notebooks, manuscripts, and paper squeezes of inscriptions provide a valuable source of documentation which might otherwise be lost. At present, these papers are in disarray, but current plans call for their being organized, indexed, and made available to scholars.

The initial year of operation of the Research Archives has been a success, with the reading room in almost constant use. In an average week, some 190 man-hours of research and study are done by its users. As the collection expands and becomes more balanced, this figure too will grow. Between the opening in the fall and the end of April, patronage rose over 30 per cent. With the difficulties of organization behind, it is to be hoped that a more systematic approach can be taken toward the growth of the collection and the improvement in services. In large measure, the routine work of the last year has been accomplished through the diligent work of two student assistants, John Larson and Richard Zettler. Additional thanks are due Frank Yurco, who assisted in the binding of the collection. Even more, the success of the Research Archives is due to the cooperation of those people who have made use of it.