

M U S E U M

Jean Grant

Photography

Doing an annual report on the Photo Lab is like doing an annual report on one's car mileage. Very little of the mileage comes from going to special events, but the time-consuming day-to-day driving includes little that is of interest to others. Despite the time spent in daily driving, some important special events are now going on in the Photo Lab.

P H O T O G R A P H Y

A visiting scholar, Douglas Kennedy, offered us the use of negatives that he had taken in Syria of Ugaritic and Akkadian tablets, which made it possible for us to print them for our archives. There are over 2,000 prints in this collection, in addition to 175 duplicate rolls of negatives and 175 contact sheets. We decided to do this massive project in-house so that we could maintain greater control over quality. I would be able to take care of the car, but someone else would do the driving. The Oriental Institute Junior Photo Technician, Charles Van Lengen, has begun to print the tablet photos. Shirley Jean Fisher volunteered to make the contact sheets and she has completed over a third already. More time will be spent in the next phase of the work when the prints are collated into storage binders. The prints will have to be checked against the negatives, marked with available information, and inserted into binders—perhaps a job for a volunteer.

Another major project is being done with the help of a National Science Foundation grant, which Ronnie Burbank, our archivist, is administering. This grant is for the preservation and protection of material in the Oriental Institute archives (using new acid-free envelopes for negatives and prints and acid-free boxes for storing records), for cataloguing the photo archives, and for making duplicates of negatives in bad condition. We have been involved in estimating and pricing needed photo supplies, in working with William Nassau, our photo consultant from Canada, and with John Larsen, project assistant, and in making suggestions for turning a small room in the basement into a darkroom. If this area can be made into a general-purpose darkroom, it will be available for small projects (such as photo-copy or excavation work) and, in the future, for a large-scale duplicating project. Remaking our negatives should be the first thing that we do, but the size and the cost of such an undertaking have led us to leave it for smaller projects that can be done more readily. We must save our negatives, which are like no others in the world.

Last but not least we were blessed with the help of Joseph Denov, a retired photographer and a new volunteer this year. The one problem with having his help is that he is so talented and knowledgeable that I have too many projects for him. His first task has been to set up a slide-duplicating outfit so we will have guidelines for remaking some of our ancient lantern slides into smaller 35mm slides. This is a difficult assignment, since we do not have the proper equipment. Still, it is nice to know that he is working on one of our many postponed, special projects, so that I can put some mileage myself on the day-to-day work.