Research Archives

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It has been one of the primary goals of the Research Archives during the past year to determine the availability and usefulness of computer programs dedicated to the administrative and cataloguing requirements of the small academic library. It was my belief as I began the search, and as I reported one year ago, that it would not be possible to perform the required tasks on the level of the personal computer. It is now my pleasant duty to report that I was wrong. A number of advances in technology, notably the increasing availability and size of mass-storage devices, and the development of a number of software packages specifically designed for this purpose, have made the full automation of the Research Archives a practical possibility. We have already begun the entry of acquisitions data including accounting and ordering. During the next year we will begin the production of a full scale automated on-line catalogue of the holdings of the Research Archives. Our initial thrust will be to produce a detailed catalogue of our current acquisitions, and in doing so to establish clear cataloguing and editing procedures. Ultimately we will expand the scope of the on-line catalogue to include our entire collection, including detailed analysis of serials. We expect to be working closely with the staff of the Epigraphic Survey in Luxor, and by sharing catalogued information, to accelerate the processing of backlogged material, and to simplify access to the unique resources of each collection.

While the production of an on-line catalogue, with its incalculable increase in flexibility and productive capability over a traditional card catalogue is a compelling goal in itself, there will be a number of important corollaries. Most important among these is that time spent performing clerical tasks will be substantially reduced. I estimate that we can rescue a total of approximately eight hours per week from repetitive typing, and apply this time to more useful bibliographic work. In addition, our cataloguing will be more closely in line with international standards than has heretofore been the case, making our collections more accessible to the scholarly community in general. I would like to stress that we will continue to maintain our card catalogue, which will remain for the foreseeable future an integral and irreplaceable part of the Research Archives.

The bi-monthly acquisitions lists of the Research Archives continue to be in demand. We now distribute more than one hundred copies of each issue. We have begun producing supplementary materials with each list. We expect to continue these appendices, hoping to illustrate various areas of ancient Near Eastern studies, and to illuminate lesser known resources of the Research Archives with topical bibliographies. The six acquisitions lists produced during the past year included 141 pages of bibliography. Interested persons or institutions should contact me if they wish to be added to our distribution list.

One of the results of our increasingly distinct profile among libraries with substantial holdings in ancient Near Eastern studies, is the use of our facilities by the national and international scholarly community. We are welcoming more and more visiting scholars for increasing periods of work in the Research Archives. Because of our policy of restricted circulation, and because of the breadth of our collections, we are becoming known as the place where research can be conducted and references can be checked.

✦ The two perennial concerns of a growing collection of any sort are space and funding. It has become one of my primary goals as Research Archivist to establish the fiscal independence of the Research Archives through the development of endowment. During the next months we expect to announce the establishment of a number of named funds for the purchase of books in particular areas, for which contributions will be invited. We will also announce our intention to establish additional funds, with names and areas to be determined in conjunction with contributors. Books pur-

chased with monies from these funds will be marked with bookplates naming the donor and the fund. In addition to endowment funds we will identify a number of important reference works needed to broaden the scope of our research facilities, for which we will be soliciting sponsorship.

✦ The Research Archives facilities have been improved by the addition of a second photocopy machine and an air conditioner in the office. New computer equipment has been installed, and we are already in electronic communication with the world in general, and particularly with the University of Chicago library system through telephone and modem. We are still in critical need of a modern microfilm reader and printer to make our important collection of microfilmed materials generally available.

I am fortunate to have the very able assistance of Terry Wilfong, graduate student in Coptic and Egyptology, for a fourth year as my chief assistant.

As the statistics on the following page indicate, acquisitions continued this year at a rate comparable to that of the last three years. We have initiated a number of new exchanges, notably for the 'orientalist' publications of the Oriental Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. We are grateful for the cooperation of the Journal of Near Eastern Studies, the Publications Office, and the Membership Office; and for the continued support of our many friends.

ACQUISITIONS STATISTICS

The Research Archives acquired and catalogued 1,630 items with the following results:

	April 1988 - March 1989	Total
Monographs	721	10,753
Series	177	4,290
Journals	241	7,536
Total Books	1,139	22,579
Maps	67	
Pamphlets	64	