

THE CHICAGO ASSYRIAN DICTIONARY

ERICA REINER

The Assyrian Dictionary Project is pleased to announce that our funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities was renewed, this time for a period of three rather than two years. In a time of reduced spending, it is reassuring to know that we still have the support of the Endowment. We were particularly encouraged when we read the positive reviewers' comments that were sent to us by the Endowment.

During 1991–1992 the staff of the Assyrian Dictionary project worked on several volumes of the dictionary. We have received over 600 pages of first galleys for the T volume, and the pages have been distributed to dictionary staff, members of the editorial board, and outside consultants, who have all begun to read, correct, and comment on the pages. Much of the editing on the R volume has been completed, and the typist is preparing clean copy that can be checked and sent to the printer. Part 2 of the Š volume needs only the corrected front matter before it is printed and the second page proofs of part 3 are being checked. Only a few long entries remain to be written for the ʾ volume.

Some careful readers may notice that we are again working on the letter R after having completed two later letters, Š and T. The R volume was begun by our late colleague Kaspar K. Riemschneider, the German Assyriologist and Hittitologist. He spent one year as a visiting scholar at the Oriental Institute; he was killed in a tragic automobile accident while in this country. Several efforts were made over the years to complete work on the manuscript; we have now undertaken to finish the editing and prepare the volume for publication.

Last summer we were aided by a number of visiting scholars. Hermann Hunger of the University of Vienna revised some previously written manuscripts. Burkhart Kienast of the University of Freiburg made comments on and corrections to the draft manuscript for the R volume. Brian Keck, a graduate student from the University of Michigan, spent six weeks with the dictionary project during the summer of 1991 tracking down errant references and working on indices. Erekle Astakhishvili, from the Institute of History in Tbilisi, Georgia, left us in the fall after having spent a year working on the dictionary.

During the academic year we profited from the able assistance of Erin McKean, an undergraduate at the University of Chicago who volunteered her

services through the College Research Opportunities Program. Ms. McKean, who has wanted to be a lexicographer since grade school (her interest in the field was kindled by reading an article about lexicography in *The Wall Street Journal* at the age of eight), checked bibliographical references, filed cards, and generally provided invaluable support around the office.

While the completion of the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary is the immediate goal toward which we are directing our efforts, we have also started formulating plans for the future use of the data accumulated in connection with the work on the dictionary and of the talents of the resident staff. We hope some of our ideas will have crystallized by next year's report. These plans should include applying many of the individual research projects of the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary staff toward a collective enterprise.

In the winter, the Benton Fellows visited the dictionary project to learn about lexicography and about the Institute's commitment to long term research projects. The Benton Fellows are broadcast journalists who spend nine months at the University and enroll in classes and attend lectures on campus and around Chicago. Professors Erica Reiner and Gene Gragg discussed the rewards and frustrations of producing dictionaries. The journalists eagerly examined clay tablets, texts that had been transliterated, dictionary cards, and the completed volumes, and as you might expect from people who ask questions for a living, had a number of queries about lexicography and about the Institute. Everyone came away from the encounter invigorated and enthusiastic.
