

THE CHICAGO ASSYRIAN DICTIONARY

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During 1992–93 the staff of the Assyrian Dictionary worked on several volumes of the dictionary. We now have in hand the published Š, vol. 17, part II, and we expect Š, vol. 17, part III, to arrive soon. We have received all 800 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 are all reading, correcting, and commenting on the pages. Two hundred of the galleys for the T-volume have been corrected and mailed back to the printer. Professors Martha Roth and Erica Reiner have finished the editing of the R-volume, and the volume is being typed. Two-thirds of the R-volume has been checked. Professor Matthew Stolper has almost finished writing draft articles for the T-volume.

The innocuous word “checking” covers the painstaking process of comparing every entry in the manuscript to the original cuneiform text, as it appears in handcopies in various publications; as yet unpublished texts must often be compared to the photograph of the tablet. This process is absolutely necessary because the manuscripts are based on file cards that have been prepared over a period of more than fifty years and are sometimes outdated. Of course, the checking also catches typographical errors and any other errors that may have crept in during the writing and editing. This process requires not only an excellent knowledge of Akkadian but also great familiarity with the status of the field. In fact, Professor Thorkild Jacobsen used to say that only full professors should be permitted to check references.

We have had the good fortune to have been assisted this year by Remigius Jas of the Free University of Amsterdam. Mr. Jas joined us in September 1992 and will be with us until September 1993. He has written drafts for the R-volume, checked thousands of references, and updated the R-volume manuscript by adding recently published references.

Keeping the card files up to date is one of the most important tasks of the dictionary. Professor Martha Roth is in charge of seeing that no new references escape our attention. She reads material as it is published and adds new references to the card files for the dictionary. New texts are being published constantly and the references need to be collected for the current volumes we are working on, as well as for the previously published volumes in preparation for a Supplement volume.

As last year, we have again enjoyed the dedicated, competent, and enthusiastic help of Erin McKean, a University of Chicago undergraduate who volunteered for five hours a week to help with the dictionary. This year, before receiving her B.A. and M.A. in June, she compiled various indices to recently published text editions and noted any newly edited or discussed text in the copies of older publications. From those recently published volumes that contain word indices—a

rarity, alas!—she was also able to update the card file, without being a trained Assyriologist.

The fame of the Assyrian Dictionary is attested to by the now annual visit of the Benton Fellows. The Benton Fellows are broadcast journalists who spend nine months at the University of Chicago and enroll in classes and attend lectures on campus and around Chicago. This year, they visited the dictionary project in October. The journalists, who rarely have the luxury of spending extended periods of time on a lengthy research project, were fascinated by the idea of spending years on the same project. They asked numerous questions about life in ancient Mesopotamia and saw how a reference moves from being signs on a clay tablet to a citation in a published volume. They also experienced first hand the University of Chicago's and the Oriental Institute's commitment to such a long-term research project as the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary.
