

## THE MUSEUM

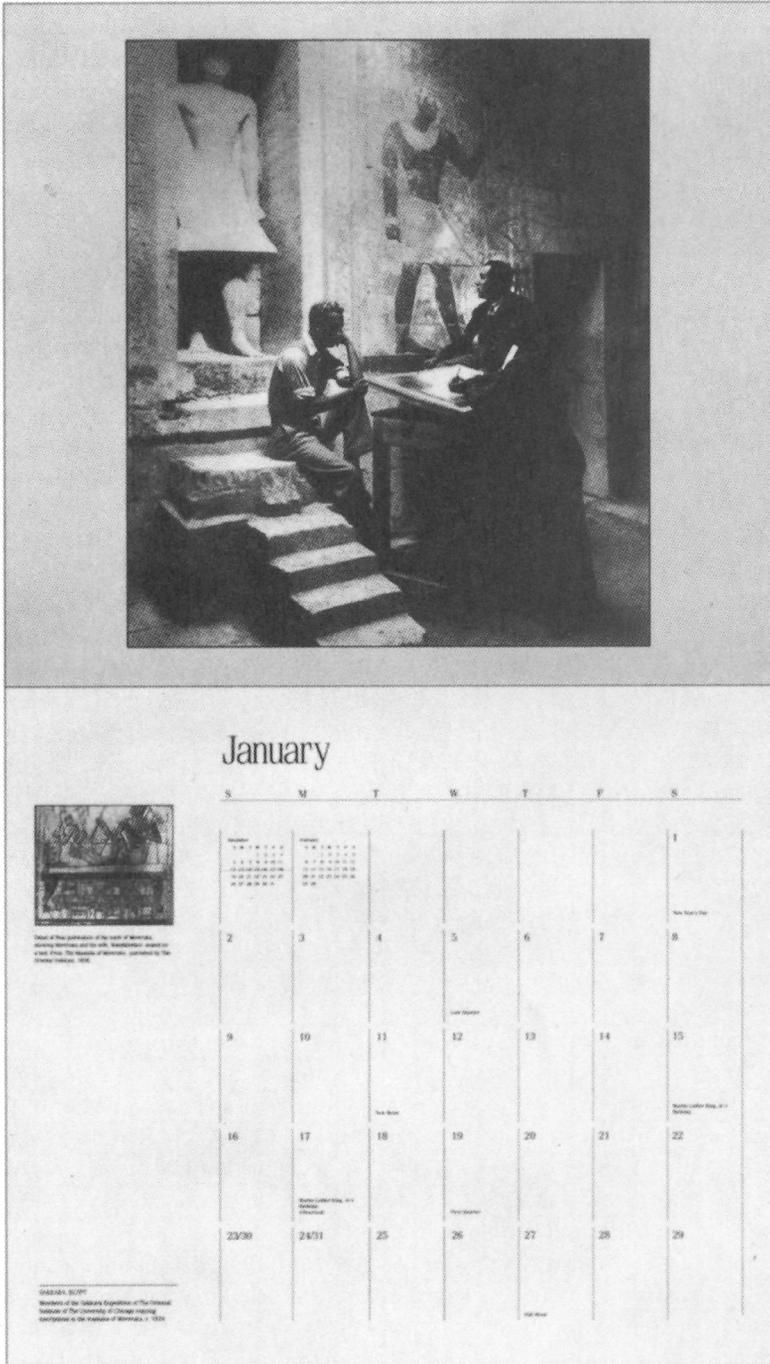
**Karen L. Wilson**

Most of the museum staff's considerable collective energies over the past year were focused on the renovation and expansion project and the many levels of planning for new construction and the introduction of climate control into the present building. In addition to attending regular meetings with the architects and engineers to finalize the schematic design phase of the project, museum staff members contacted and met with consultants to discuss matters ranging from the strength of the building envelope to gallery redesign. As a result of these meetings, much of our time over the past year was spent collecting data and seeking additional advice. For example, we have been compiling information on daily temperatures outside and inside the museum, as well as within the museum's walls. From January through April, temperature and relative humidity probes installed in the northern wall of the Egyptian Gallery recorded conditions there on a twenty-four hour basis. This information will be necessary to enable the engineers to prevent humidity from climate controlled indoor air from migrating into the walls during the winter and freezing, thereby causing damage.

We have also been gathering advice and printed materials on state-of-the-art conservation laboratories and on the best methods for packing, moving, and temporarily storing artifacts during construction. Conservator Laura D'Alessandro visited the Smithsonian Institution last fall to see newly completed conservation laboratories and to speak to museum personnel who have had recent experience moving large collections. She also paid a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to see their new laboratories and to discuss the various climate control systems used by them. In September Laura began the "Assyrian Relief Project" to assess our series of Khorsabad reliefs for removal, conservation, restoration, and reinstallation alongside the human-headed winged bull after climate control has been installed.

The two centennial exhibits, "Sifting the Sands of Time: The Oriental Institute and the Ancient Near East" and "Vanished Kingdoms of the Nile: The Rediscovery of Ancient Nubia," continued to be well attended and to attract many first-time visitors to the museum. I am proud to report that in September, the Oriental Institute Museum received a Superior Achievement Award from the Congress of Illinois Historical Societies and Museums for "Vanished Kingdoms of the Nile." Congratulations are due to Assistant Curator Emily Teeter, former Museum Preparator Mary Carlisle, Museum Preparator Joseph Scott, and to everyone else who made the exhibit such a success!

Emily Teeter has continued to work on increasing public awareness of the Oriental Institute Museum through feature stories on the collection and museum activities. Thanks to her efforts, and the assistance of University News Staff Writer William Harms, the Nubia exhibit continues to garner national press coverage, which has included articles in both *Newsweek* and *Smithsonian Magazine*.



**The January page of the new Oriental Institute calendar: (above) The Saqqara Expedition copying inscriptions in the mastaba of Mereruka, ca. 1934; (below) a detailed view of the decoration of the tomb**

Emily also worked with a number of other Oriental Institute staff and Pomegranate Art Publishers of California to produce a stunning 1994 calendar and a book of thirty post cards for the Institute. The calendar and postcards, which will be sold internationally, feature historic photographs of Oriental Institute excavations and projects from the turn of the century to the 1940s. The images represent, among others, the Breasted expedition to Nubia in 1905–7; photographing the coffin texts in the Egyptian Museum in 1923; and the excavations at Persepolis, Khorsabad, Jerwan, and in the Diyala region. Selection of the images proved to be difficult, for as the project progressed we were reminded of how rich the resources of the museum photographic archives are. Emily also worked over the course of the year with the University of Chicago Bookstore to help install a series of window displays highlighting museum exhibits and public programs.

We have continued our on-going project of upgrading the museum's permanent galleries to give them a more contemporary appearance and to improve communication with our visitors. Museum Preparators Joe Scott and Steve Wessley completely relined all the cases in the Persian Gallery, constructing new conservation-appropriate mounts for objects and rearranging items within cases both for the sake of appearance and content. New graphics and labels telling about Persepolis have been installed, and new labels are being prepared for the remainder of the cases in this now completely refurbished gallery.

Joe and Steve also have been installing new fabric in the cases of the Egyptian Gallery to give the displays a more uniform appearance, and Emily has produced new labels and arrangements for the exhibits of canopic material, funerary figurines, mummy trappings, and Old Kingdom stela. In May, an alcove in the Egyptian Gallery was completely redesigned and installed to discuss ancient artists and artistic techniques in Egypt. The exhibit includes tools, partially completed reliefs, and examples of various styles of art that serve as background for other objects in the gallery. In addition, much of the Egyptian Gallery has been relighted, to bring the light levels down to conservationally accepted standards. And many of you have already noticed that the case displaying our fabulous group of Old Kingdom tomb statues has had the dark paint removed from the top so that this unusual group of figures can now be fully appreciated.

Emily and I have been working closely with the Art Institute of Chicago to assist them in the installation of a new gallery of Ancient Art that will open in 1994. As a part of this process, several dozen objects that had been on long term loan to the Oriental Institute were returned to the Art Institute. Transfer of these objects gave Emily the opportunity to revise the exhibit of Old Kingdom funerary art, and to display objects from the permanent collection that have never been exhibited before, such as an Old Kingdom false door and the stela of King Niuserre's manicurist and hairdresser.

In the course of these changes in the galleries, as well as other routine processes such as reorganizing storage, answering scholarly inquiries, checking inventory, and retrieving objects for photography and conservation, those in Registration handled what they calculate to be more than 6,000 objects this year! Mid-June saw the completion of the computerization of currently available data for *all* of the registered collections in the museum, which now number more than 76,000 objects! This is a major milestone for Registrar Raymond Tindel and his

staff and volunteers, who began computerization a relatively few years ago in 1986. The computerization of our records does not end at this point, however, as all of this data has to be edited and proofed, and there is the continuing process of new registrations and new information to be added as research is carried on.

New registrations during the past year included: 62 objects from the Institute's Megiddo excavations of the 1930s; 777 spindle whorls and 198 bone tools from the Institute's Amuq excavations; and 3,744 objects from Tall-e Bakun, Iran.

Each year, the museum receives requests from other institutions to borrow objects for exhibition or, more rarely, study. Loaning objects is a way of publicizing the Oriental Institute and its collections and of sharing with the public items that usually lie buried in our basement. This year one Egyptian sculpture, a black granitodiorite statue of a god, joined about 100 other masterpieces at the Cleveland Museum of Art for their major traveling exhibit, "Egypt's Dazzling Sun: Amenhotep III and His World," which opened in Cleveland on July 1, then traveled to the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas from October to January, and on to the Grand Palais in Paris from February to May. The museum also loaned an Egyptian slate palette to the McClung Museum of the University of Knoxville for their new permanent exhibit of Egyptian art; five Mesopotamian objects to the Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University in Atlanta for their permanent exhibition of Ancient Art; a manual of Arabic calligraphy to the Smart Museum to accompany the temporary exhibit, "Art from the Persian Courts: Selections from the Art and History Trust"; and a Megiddo horned altar to the Jewish Museum, New York, for their new core exhibit on the history of the Jewish people.

In fact, our collections are increasingly in demand for a variety of purposes. For example, in April 1993 the Ameritech World Theater opened at the Museum of Science and Industry with a multimedia presentation that features many objects from the Oriental Institute Museum in its history of communications section.

Many people helped Ray with tasks such as data entry, filing, object handling, and assisting some fifty scholars who used the collections during the past year. We have been fortunate to have the support of Assistants to the Registrar Glenn Carnagey and Catherine Sarther; a 1992 summer intern, Eric Poryles, from Antioch College; and a dedicated group of volunteers: Debbie Aliber, Michelle Biehl, Judy Cherchi, Debbie Darnell of the Chicago House Staff, Aimee Drolet, Anita Eller, Leila Foster, Peggy Grant, Mary Grimshaw, Georgie Maynard, Lillian Schwartz, Nicole Simpson, Carolyn Swain, and Peggy Wick.

Photographer Jean Grant was joined in the laboratory this year by volunteers Ria Ahlstrom, David Deckert, and Xiaomei Gu. Ria, and maybe David, will be returning during the coming year to continue to provide valuable assistance to Jean. One of the most interesting tasks that Jean performed last year was the printing of approximately 150 negatives for John A. Brinkman. These negatives record cuneiform inscriptions excavated at Babylon by a German archaeological expedition between 1899 and 1917; many of these documents have since disappeared, some were stolen at the end of the First World War en route back to Germany and some were destroyed in the bombing of Berlin during the Second World War. The original photographs were taken on the expedition in what appeared to be a makeshift storeroom with poor lighting (or, perhaps, by a novice photographer). In at least one case, the tablets were propped up with wooden film



**Assistant Conservator Barbara Hamann putting the finishing touches on the conservation of a not-so-ancient football**

spools (providing one dating device for veteran photographers). Someone recently copied the original excavation photographs, which seem to have been in poor condition, onto 35 mm negatives. It was a thrill for Jean to produce prints from which Dr. Brinkman will be able to read the texts—in a sense excavating them again after seventy-five years, and two World Wars.

The Conservation Laboratory treated 140 museum objects during the year in preparation for display or loan or due to the critical nature of their physical state. One non-Oriental Institute artifact was also treated—an antique football. The football had been brought to McCrone Associates, an analytical laboratory in Westmont, Illinois, in the hopes that their photographer could record the faded signatures on its surface—the signatures of the Notre Dame team that played the last game with this ball under their coach, Knute Rockne, in the 1920s. McCrone’s photographer called Laura looking for a conservator who could restore the flattened ball to its original shape. Laura and Barbara agreed to perform the conservation on a “barter” basis: McCrone would agree to provide analyses of organic materials that we cannot obtain on campus in an amount equal to what Laura and Barbara would charge for the conservation. In this way \$1,500 worth of future scientific analyses were obtained in exchange for Laura and Barbara stuffing the ball with polyester fiber that they inserted through a slightly enlarged tie hole!

In August, thanks to Laura’s grant-writing acumen, the museum received a Conservation Project Support Grant of \$25,000 from the Institute of Museum Services. These funds were used to purchase seven new museum-quality storage cabinets to house our collection of Palestinian textiles. The cabinets were custom-designed to provide optimal storage conditions for this important collection as well as ease of access to individual pieces. The cabinets were installed in Febru-

ary, and Laura and Barbara spent much of the spring repacking and storing the textiles in them. In April, Laura and Museum Archivist John Larson submitted another grant application to the Institute of Museum Services, this time to hire a professional paper conservator as a consultant to survey the paper records of the Oriental Institute Archives and to prepare a report with recommendations for long-term storage and treatments.

Throughout the year, Museum Office Manager Lisa Snider kept us all afloat, cheerfully answering the phone, purchasing our supplies, keeping running records of museum accounts, and cajoling other departments within the university to repair our leaks, fix our electrical circuits, and the like. In addition to all this, Lisa assisted John in the day-to-day operation of the Photographic Services program. Over the course of the year, we received and processed 149 requests for photographic materials and reproduction permissions. About 40% of those requests were for publications by scholars who work primarily in subject areas relating to the study of the ancient Near East. The other 60% were from commercial sources, which generated a modest income to fund the purchase of archival supplies for the Museum Archives, as well as routine expenditures for photographic paper and darkroom chemicals.

Whenever she gets a chance, Lisa has also been entering data on Oriental Institute photographic images into the computer and has completed almost 2,000 records. Eventually, computerization of these records will enable us to generate a series of specialized lists and catalogues for in-house curatorial and research needs and for outside photographic researchers.

John and his volunteers have continued to implement some of the recommendations that were made by a professional photographic conservator in November 1988. Archives volunteers Sandra Jacobsohn and Melanie Petroskey have nearly completed re-sleeving approximately 61,000 negatives that are currently stored in the Archivist's office; an additional 15,000 field negatives in the adjacent "Photo File Room" await similar processing.

The crisis in the Research Archives during the summer (see pp. 118–22) resulted in the immediate need to find alternative space for the paper records in the Oriental Institute Archives, and it was decided—not without some reluctance on the part of all concerned—to transfer our paper records to basement storage locations within our building. Responsibility for supervising and carrying out the move naturally fell on the shoulders of John, and Ray Tindel faced the unwelcome prospect of having to accommodate the space requirements of the archives within storage areas normally used for museum objects—already badly overcrowded—under his supervision in the basement. He carried out this task with his usual efficiency and great good humor. In addition to Ray, John would like especially to record his thanks to the following museum staff members for deferring their own work in order to assist him in accomplishing the move: Laura D'Alessandro, Jean Grant, Kate Sarther, Joe Scott, Barbara Hamann, and Lisa Snider.

Fiscal year 1992–93 was a noteworthy year for archives acquisitions. Three items of historical interest were donated by Helen Ewing Breasted, widow of James Henry Breasted, Jr. In September, John visited the Breasteds at their family home in New Hampshire, where he identified a rare copy of a confidential document prepared by Howard Carter, entitled *The Tomb of Tut.ankh.Amen. State-*

*ment with Documents, as to the Events which occurred in Egypt in the Winter of 1923–24, leading to the ultimate break with the Egyptian Government* (London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1924, 'For Private Circulation only'). Mrs. Breasted very kindly presented the copy of Carter's *Statement* to the Oriental Institute Archives, where it joins the other Carter-related documents among the Breasted Papers. In addition, the Breasteds donated an original letter from the English Egyptologist, Sir Alan H. Gardiner, and a file of photographs and correspondence relating to the re-discovery of the famous head of the ancient Egyptian Queen Nefertiti in 1945. In December, thanks to Professor Walter Farber, Mr. David Mui presented to the Museum Archives an interesting end-of-season letter written in 1930 at Chicago House by Diederika (Mrs. Keith C.) Seele to a friend in the States. In the spring, Beverly (Mrs. Lloyd George) Allen, daughter-in-law of the late Dr. T. George Allen, presented a collection of postcards, negatives, and other memorabilia of her father-in-law's voyage to the Middle East in 1924. Dr. Allen was Editorial Secretary of the Oriental Institute from 1927 until his retirement in 1950.

For 1992–93, the roster of regular volunteers working in the Museum Archives included Lilian Cropsey, Kay Ginther, Sandra Jacobsohn, Carolyn Livingood, Melanie Petroskey, and Joan Rosenberg. In August, following the massive reorganization of the archives that was necessitated by the crisis in the Research Archives, Melanie and Sandy worked many extra hours, joined by volunteer Lilla Fano, until we could see the floor in the Archivist's office once again. We still have a great deal to do, but we would not have been able to continue many of our day-to-day functions without the tireless efforts, dedication, and moral support of these volunteers, and we thank them for their generous help.

We were also fortunate this year to have the assistance of another intern from Lake Forest College, Ms. Vanessa Villani, who worked 150 hours in the Museum Archives between January and May, organizing the inactive personnel files of Oriental Institute employees. This group of archival records serves as an important source for useful biographical information on past faculty and staff members.

In October, Security Supervisor Scott Neeley moved to the kinder climate of California. He was succeeded by Margaret Schröder, who has cheerfully assumed the duty of keeping us and our collections safe from harm, while simultaneously serving as information desk and welcoming committee for our visitors.

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