

THE MUSEUM

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“When will the Museum be closing?” was undoubtedly the question most frequently asked by, and of, Museum staff during the past year. Working with so much uncertainty was a constant challenge, to which everyone rose (most of the time) with great good humor. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to them all for doing so.

Despite the possibly imminent closure, Assistant Curator Emily Teeter and Education Programs Assistant Kaylin Goldstein continued to develop long-term publicity strategies aimed at maintaining a public profile during construction and reinstallation. Because of financial constraints, Emily and Kaylin continued to search for ways in which the Museum and its programs could be publicized without direct cost. The Museum’s good working relationship with the Chicago Office of Tourism and the Department of Cultural Affairs ensures that we are included in city-generated listings and resulted in the Museum being represented on informational cultural kiosks produced by the City of Chicago General Services Department in January. The Museum was also included prominently in a brief HBO-produced video on cultural attractions that is shown continually in Chicago area hotel rooms and has brought us a significant number of visitors. And we have managed to receive good placement, with accompanying illustrations, in other in-room visitors’ guides, as well. Emily continues to ensure that listings for the major guide books are up-to-date, and we have seen positive momentum over the last several years, as the Museum receives more extensive coverage in these publications. Other regional guides such as specialty business and cultural directories, and travel guides and books, increasingly feature the collections of the Museum.

In addition, the Museum continues to be highly regarded by the local and regional media. For example, it was featured in an article called “My Kind of Town,” in which Bill Kurtis shared his city favorites in the widely distributed *Home and Away* publication of the American Automobile Association. The Museum also was able to run a series of three humorous informational advertisements in the

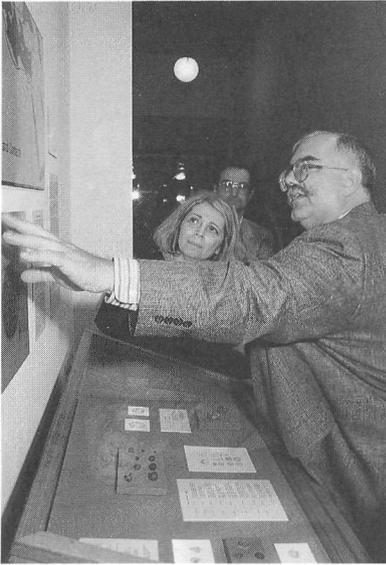


Figure 1. Donald Whitcomb at the opening of “Ayla: Art and Industry in the Islamic Port of Aqaba” discussing the Islamic coins in the exhibit with Dr. Wadad Kadi

widely distributed *Reader*, thanks to Mitch Gordon and Barton Landsman, associates of a nationally based advertising agency, who generously donated their design skills and monetary resources to make this possible.

On November 7, we were pleased to open a new temporary exhibit, "Ayla: Art and Industry in the Islamic Port of Aqaba." Curated by Donald Whitcomb (see fig. 1), Oriental Institute Research Associate and director of the excavations at Aqaba, Jordan, the exhibit focused on the two cultural categories of art and industry to indicate some of the characteristics of this town during the early Islamic period. Don selected objects and graphics for the exhibit and prepared all the text, while Preparators Joseph Searcy and Katherine Luchini designed the layout and mounted the artifacts for a most attractive display. The exhibit was accompanied by an illustrated thirty-two page catalog.

Meanwhile, downstairs in Registration, Registrar Raymond Tindel, Registrar's Assistant Robin Kasson, and an amazingly dedicated and capable corps of volunteers focused their efforts on preparing for the renovation—in particular, packing the collection so that it can be moved to safe quarters within the building during construction. Major collections that were packed include pottery from Egypt, Nubia, Megiddo, Alishar Hüyük, and Khirbet Kerak, and all of the various Iranian survey collections. To date, more than 26,000 registered objects and uncounted unregistered material has been wrapped and carefully placed in somewhat more than 2,500 boxes! In addition, substantial collections of ostraca and other material have been inventoried, labeled, and readied for packing. This keeps them available for scholarly research as long as possible while making sure that we will be able to pack them in very short order when the need arises.

In addition to packing, there have been other projects underway in Registration. Janet Helman continued her research with Abbas Alizadeh on Tall-i Bakun motifs, and Abbas provided the academic guidance for Peggy Grant's registration of some 4,000 more objects from the Oriental Institute excavations at Chogha Mish. Focusing on modern materials in the research collections, Debbie Aliber has nearly completed a massive reorganization and registration of such museum collections as casts and seal impressions.

During the year, those in Registration retrieved about 2,200 objects for use by more than 60 researchers both from inside and outside the Institute and prepared for several loans. These include 13 objects that were sent to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for the forthcoming traveling exhibit "The American Discovery of Ancient Egypt," and 5 items loaned to the Art Institute for their new Galleries of Ancient Art. In addition, 10 Egyptian stone artworks were loaned to Mr. and Mrs. Hugo Sonnenschein and now are shown off to great advantage on the shelves of the library in the University of Chicago President's house.



Figure 2. *Barbara Hamann at work in the dismantled Persian Gallery. After the objects were removed from their cases, the conservators packed all the Luristan bronzes in special-purpose boxes, suitable for long-term storage and study*

Our heartfelt thanks to Registry Volunteers Debbie Aliber, Aimee Drolet, Leila Foster, John Gay, Peggy Grant, Mary Grimshaw, Janet Helman, Georgie Maynard, Patrick Regnery, Lillian Schwartz, Dick Watson, and Peggy Wick. And special praises, laud, honor, and gold stars go to Emily, Robin, and Registration Intern Meghan Burke who, along with the volunteers, packed enormous numbers of objects; used acres of bubble wrap, thousands of plastic bags, and a few miles of tape; and did it all with great efficiency and good humor.

Elsewhere in the basement, the effects of the move also were felt. While Associate Conservator Barbara Hamann spent the month of July on Crete as conservator at the Minoan site of Kommos, Head Conservator Laura D'Alessandro began the stone survey. Laura and Barbara are examining all stone objects and deciding which are so fragile that they need conservation before they are packed. At the same time, the conservators treated objects for the Ayla exhibit and for the three loans, and did condition reports and packing for the latter; prepared crucible slag samples for Ashhan Yener for ion and electron microprobe analyses; and entered into an agreement with the Program on Ancient Technologies and Archaeological Materials at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, to conduct a joint project to analyze the pigments present on many of our Khorsabad reliefs. Thanks to Laura's finely honed grant-writing skills, the Museum was awarded an Institute of Museum Services Conservation Support grant to purchase state-of-the-art museum-quality storage cabinets to house three-dimensional objects in the climate-controlled Organics Room. Laura and Barbara also hosted a number of visitors, including Elisabeth Fontan, Curator of Near Eastern Antiquities at the Musée du Louvre, with whom they formally discussed a joint project to analyze pigments on the Khorsabad reliefs in both collections, and British Museum conservator Tracey Sweekes, who provided information on the removal and conservation of their Assyrian reliefs, which now form the core of a traveling exhibit. In March, Laura couriered the loan to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and took the opportunity to visit the site of the new Getty Trust complex. There she met with Robert Combs, Manager of Security

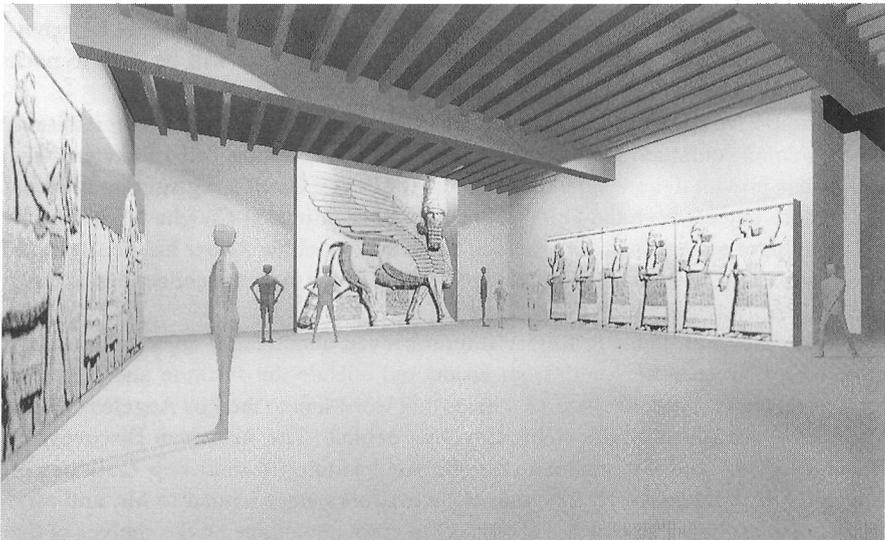


Figure 3. One of Peggy and John Sanders' computerized renderings of the Khorsabad Court as it might look after the reinstallation of the reliefs from Court VIII

Technical Systems, to discuss fire detection and fire suppression systems. Near the end of the year, John Sanders converted the extant conservation databases to a more sophisticated data-management program, FoxPro, and Laura and Barbara continued working to computerize past conservation treatment records.

Photographer Jean Grant continued to work wonders coaxing prints from old negatives, photographing objects, and recording on film the many and varied activities of both the Museum and the Institute as a whole. Jean would like to thank her volunteers—Irving Mann, who is now helping archivist John Larson; Asia Lerner, who is busy making contact prints in the darkroom; Ria Åhlstrom, volunteer in the Photographic Laboratory for many years, who keeps turning up like a good penny, bright and shining; Dawn Prena, who has been giving time to the Photographic Laboratory even after leading tours through the Museum; and Irene Glasner, who has been steady in her volunteerism this first full year.

Once again, our thanks go to Margaret Schröder and her staff of supervisors and guards, who simultaneously keep us secure and serve as one of our most public faces. Last February, Margaret attended a conference in Washington D.C., sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution, on identifying cultural property protection needs, followed by a one-day seminar on strategies for coping with disasters in museums. Throughout the year, she participated in the Chicago Area Disaster Group, whose membership consists of local museum security people who meet regularly to discuss and instruct their members about a broad range of security issues such as pick-pocketing, bomb threats, and thefts.

Before moving on to a more responsible and lucrative position in June, Museum Office Manager Lisa Snider kept the day-to-day operation of our vigorous Photographic Services program running on track. During fiscal year 1994/95, Lisa and Archivist John Larson received and processed 209 requests for photographic materials and reproduction permissions. This figure represents a remarkable 30% increase in transactions over the previous fiscal year. In June, former Assistant Preparator Kate Luchini became the new Museum Office Manager and has assumed the consequent Photographic Services responsibilities.

During the year, computerization of the card system for photographs and negatives continued. A staggering quantity of photographic catalog information was entered into a database program by Lisa, Kate, Registry Volunteer Georgie Maynard, and summer museum intern Anne Zimmerman, bringing the total of computerized items to ten thousand. Our profound thanks to these individuals for performing such a boring, but highly valuable, task.

The Museum would like to thank Dr. Russell Peck, widower of Caroline Nestmann Peck, for the thoughtful donation of his late wife's papers relating to her work at the Oriental Institute during the 1940s. Included in this gift are notebooks pertaining to Mrs. Peck's A.M. thesis "The Excavations at Bismaya" (University of Chicago, 1949) and her manuscript notes for *Kingship and the Gods*, by Henri Frankfort (Chicago, 1948), for whom she worked as an Editorial Assistant. The Bismaya material, in particular, is an important addition to the Museum Archives and is proving of immense assistance to me in my work on the excavations.

Significant additions to the Papers of Keith Cedric Seele were made by Ardell Arthur, executor for the Estate of Diederika Millard Seele, through the good offices of Denise Browning, and by former Museum docent Patricia C. Ross, through the kindness of Joan Rosenberg. Thanks to Ms. Arthur, we now have a virtually com-

plete set of original 1930s contact prints for our 1,200 black-and-white Seele negatives, and correspondence pertaining to the Nubian Salvage Project of the 1960s. In addition, a box of notebooks and memorabilia relating to the Oriental Institute activities of the late Teddy Buddington came to the Archives through the generosity of Teddy's daughter Donna. These papers provide us with interesting samples of Museum docent/Oriental Institute member materials over the past twenty years.

A grant of \$25,000 from the Institute of Museum Services Conservation Program enabled the Museum to purchase map-cases, shelving, and archival supplies to house oversized materials (many of which were lying on tables in the basement) and other paper records. John and his volunteers have filled and shelved nearly one hundred archival banker's boxes with correspondence files, newspaper clippings, and financial records that were formerly housed in original, deteriorating containers. And thousands of original drawings and plans have been sorted and transferred to the new map-cases.

We would not be able to perform many of our day-to-day functions at current levels without the dedicated efforts of the Archives volunteers, and we are pleased to record here our heartfelt thanks for their generous support. For 1994/95, they included Hazel Cramer, Marsha Holden, Sandra Jacobsohn, Irving Mann, Helaine Staver, and Pamela Wickliffe. Kay Ginther, Evelyn Ruskin-Gordon, Melanie Petroskey, and Joan Rosenberg are currently on leave, but we look forward to seeing them back in the Archives again whenever their schedules may permit.

Because of the imminent closing and the pressures imposed on Conservation and Registration in connection with packing the collection, the ongoing updating and renovation of the galleries has proceeded at a somewhat slower pace. However, Emily Teeter still managed to install two cases of Egyptian scarabs and related materials, with new descriptive text and a revised selection of artifacts, and to place a never-before-displayed Ptolemaic-era statue of Amunhotep, Son of Hapu, on exhibit. Emily also moved the important and attractive ancient Egyptian snake (*Mehen*) game, which has become a focus of several educational activities, into a new permanent location after deinstallation of the Sports and Games exhibit.

Most of my own time has been spent working on the renovation and expansion project with architects and engineers. The spring was particularly exciting because we decided to submit a grant proposal to the National Endowment for the Arts to move and reinstall our Khorsabad reliefs. It is necessary for us to move at least some of the reliefs to accommodate the ductwork that will introduce climate-controlled air into the galleries, and we have decided to take this opportunity to improve the manner in which they are exhibited. Our fourteen Khorsabad reliefs are now displayed in a disjointed fashion as individual slabs on small walls that divide the Assyrian Gallery into alcoves. The color of the surfaces of many of the reliefs is irregular, due primarily to aging and deterioration in areas of 1931 restoration, and the sometimes extensive preservation of ancient pigments is difficult to see. In addition, the reliefs are now separated from the human-headed winged bull that originally stood in Court VIII with the six larger slabs and formed part of the throne room facade with three of them. We plan to move these six reliefs and install them on either side of the bull, creating at that end of the present Egyptian Gallery what we are calling the Khorsabad Court—an evocative reconstruction of the main public courtyard in Sargon II's palace. A corridor lined with reliefs of foreigners bringing tribute will lead out of the Court—as it did in the original palace—into what is

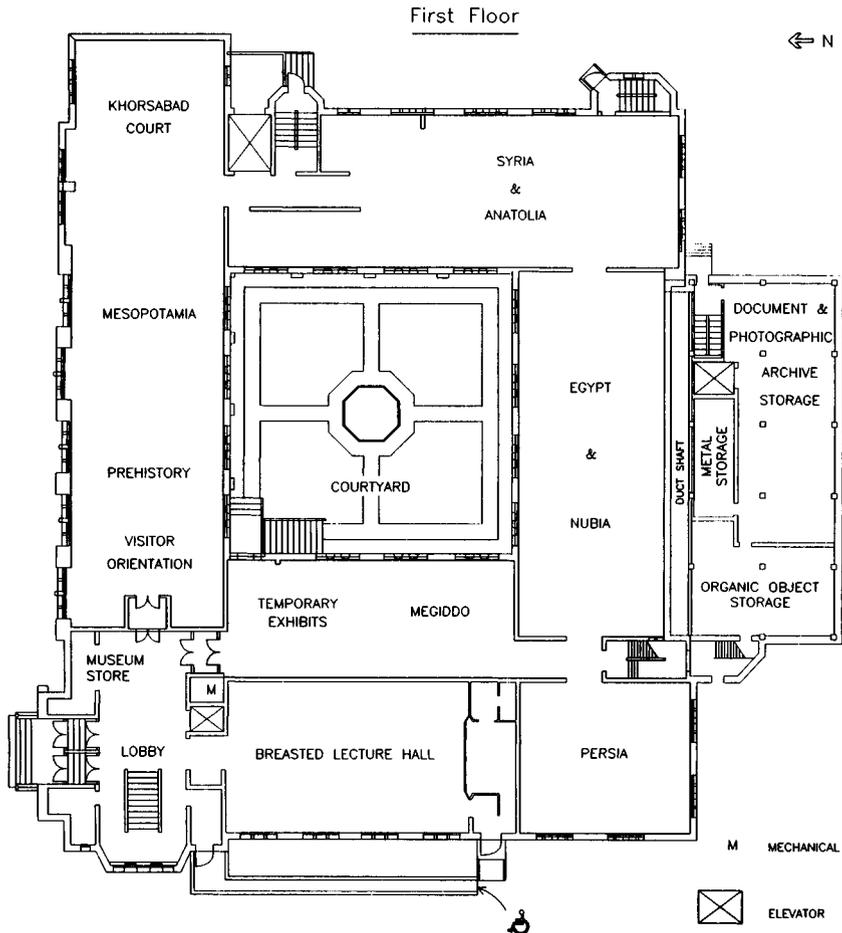


Figure 4. Plan of the first floor of the Oriental Institute after the renovation and expansion project showing one possible plan for allocation of gallery spaces

now the Assyrian Gallery, bridging the transition to the more private areas of the royal residence. The corridor will end at what may have been the king's personal banqueting chamber, decorated with small-scale reliefs showing Sargon II hunting and feasting. The recreated palace, with its colossal sculptures depicting king, courtiers, and the trappings of royal life, will serve as a setting for a wide variety of Oriental Institute events and educational programs.

Laura and Barbara have done a huge amount of work planning the best way to remove, conserve, and reinstall the reliefs—and their research is ongoing. Peggy Sanders digitized floor plans of the present locations of the reliefs, made plans showing their new locations, and created computerized renderings, from a variety of perspectives, of the Khorsabad Court, complete with scale figures of visitors (see fig. 3 and the *Computer Laboratory* section for a more complete discussion of her work). The result of all these efforts was a fine proposal, which we hope will compete successfully for increasingly limited funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Plans for the renovation, expansion, and reinstallation of the galleries are exciting and will be progressing rapidly during the forthcoming year. The Museum staff

will be discussing many topics, including reallocation of gallery space to make more logical sense with the Khorsabad Court. One possible layout is shown in figure 4 (again the work of Peggy Sanders), and we will keep you posted as our plans progress.
