

RESEARCH ARCHIVES*

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The Oriental Institute, in its essence, is a group of collections. Each of its components—the museum and its various departments; the publications program; the Research Archives; the faculty and staff; the students associated with the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations; and the members and friends—are collec-

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tions which constantly undergo a variety of forms of filtration and flux, but which maintain their identities because of their relationships to one another and because of the context that their collective existence provides to each component. None of these components makes much sense without the others.

The most visible of these components (even now at a time when it is closed) is, of course, the museum. One of the more often repeated, and to my mind most important, points of distinction of the Oriental Institute Museum is the fact that the largest part of the collection is excavated (rather than purchased), and excavated by Oriental Institute Expeditions for which field records exist in accessible archives. This simple fact adds so much cultural and intellectual value to each artifact as to make it inestimable. It allows the designers of exhibitions, for example, to present material in the museum with a degree of assuredness and confidence that simply does not exist in collections assembled through other means.

But objects, their physical makeup, and their distribution in time and space most properly also have a parallel existence in their published form. As a group, Oriental Institute archaeological projects have, comparatively speaking, an exemplary record of producing both preliminary and final excavation reports. The vast majority of such reports, indeed virtually all of them, have been published by the Oriental Institute itself. The catalog produced by our Publications Office at the beginning of this decade is a substantial volume in its own right, running over a hundred and twenty pages, describing, in brief form, about three hundred volumes. This is, I think, a quite unparalleled achievement for an institution such as this, and by its sheer number this collection of publications would represent a respectable library. But when one looks among these volumes one finds something else that is quite extraordinary. Among these treasures are volumes universally recognized as representing at one and the same time the summation of current thought on a given subject at the time of publication, and the source of entire bibliographic industries following their publication. Just to mention a few of these treasures, it is impossible to conceive of an Assyriologist being able to function without a copy of the Assyrian Dictionary within easy reach. Similarly, the excavation reports of the Megiddo, Amuq, and Diyala expeditions play an absolutely fundamental role in the modern development of the archaeologies of their regions.

In the paragraph above, I made the facile suggestion that this remarkable collection of books would be in itself a "respectable library." Except in a very vague sense, this is of course entirely untrue. It is true, however, that this developing collection is the primary intellectual legacy of the Oriental Institute, both locally, and in the "outside" world. Several sets of Oriental Institute publications exist as 'libraries' within the Oriental Institute. The Publications Department maintains one as a permanent working record of that department. The Museum has several partial sets, and hungrily integrates volumes missing from those sets when they turn up in the antiquarian book market from time to time. The museum's sets are heavily annotated, extremely heavily used, and have in fact been turned into recording devices that sit at the interface of its collections, its working records, and the academic communities' perception of this collections. Whenever I have the opportunity to consult these volumes in the Museum's offices, I am always fascinated—and frequently enlightened—by the elegance with which this public record of the museum collections has been turned back into an archival source.

Despite the intramural importance of these volumes as records of our collection, it is the extramural audience that remains the primary one. This audience, by which I mean primarily the academic community concerned with the study of the ancient Near East, but which also includes a far larger group of scholars and lay people engaged in a huge

variety of areas of interest, uses these publications essentially in two ways. The first is as a simple index to projects of the Oriental Institute and the results of such projects. Frequently such users are in pursuit of the context of a particular object displayed in a museum, or which was published in a textbook, or a volume of the history or culture of the ancient Near East. More often though, these volumes are used in their other, wider, and to me, their primary context, which is the full corpus of scholarship. This is the library.

As I have said in these pages before (*1991/92 Annual Report*, p. 131), it is my belief that the library is the most essential feature of scholarship in any humanistic discipline. At any given moment it encompasses the full corpus of primary sources, as well as the indexes and analyses that permit the continuing interpretation of those primary sources. It is thus both the foundation upon which the scholarly process stands, and the source from which that process draws sustenance. In the final analysis, it is the repository of future as well as past scholarship. It is fairly obvious that such a library is a conceptual reality which seldom, in fact, exists. It is, however, also obvious, from all his writing on the subject, that James Henry Breasted, in his characteristically grand way, took it as a basic assumption that such a library should and would exist at the Oriental Institute. Breasted summarized his intentions for the Oriental Institute library in his 1933 plan for the Oriental Institute. In uncharacteristically terse prose, Breasted expressed his intention to have "the entire specialized group of books representing the field of research with which the Institute is concerned ... conveniently accessible" within the walls of the Oriental Institute building (*The Oriental Institute*, by J. H. Breasted; *The University of Chicago Survey*, vol. 12; Chicago, 1933; p. 122). A decade before he wrote that, at the time of his first published conception of the Oriental Institute, Breasted had already proposed that the library be fundamentally associated with a series of indexes, or as he called them, archives (*The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago: A Beginning and a Program*, by J. H. Breasted; *Oriental Institute Communications*, no. 1; Chicago, 1922; pp. 87–89). These archives were to constitute a thesaurus of ancient civilizations and were to include a vast array of visual and written material, providing a complete index of the corpus of the published record on the ancient world. Of central importance among these was to be the bibliographical catalog of the library collections themselves, the compilation of which was assigned to the Librarian of the Oriental Institute. Half a century later, when the University of Chicago consolidated its departmental collections upon the completion of the Regenstein Library, the 50,000 volumes in the collection had long outgrown their physical space in the Oriental Institute and the catalog had grown to more than 280,000 cards; the file cards for this collection were printed in a seventeen volume set that remains to this day an invaluable research tool (see *Catalog of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago*; Boston, 1970; 16 volumes + 1 supplement).

The old Oriental Institute Library was, by all accounts, an extraordinary place. The librarians remain legendary in their fierce commitment to the collection and in their iron-willed enforcement of the rules. Far more importantly, though, was their clear and constant commitment to the development of a collection in which every single reference could be found. They worked with each member of the faculty and staff and with each of the projects of the Oriental Institute, to assure that the resources necessary for each were available (see "Johanne Vindenas Remembered," by Robert Wadsworth; *Access*, vol. XXXVI, no. 23; November 11, 1988; pp. 2–3). The old Oriental Institute Library was a place of academic pilgrimage for scholars from around the world.

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It was only very shortly after the collection was moved to Regenstein that it was discovered how essential the local availability of a reference library was to work in the Institute. Individuals and teams with research strategies and styles of scholarship that had been in place for decades discovered they could not function comfortably without a library within the walls of the Oriental Institute. Very quickly, funds were allocated, personnel hired, and a number of small collections immediately gathered, organized, cataloged, and shelved in the reading room.

The rebuilding of a library at the Oriental Institute has offered some really extraordinary opportunities. The very first Research Archivists very wisely conceived of the idea of organizing the library on the model of a large private collection. That is, they organized the material on the shelves in the way that the books are actually used by scholars engaged in research on the ancient Near East, rather than by one of the other logical systems current in the library world. At the same time they conceived of the catalog as a far more detailed resource than would be found in a university library system. In a very real sense this freed the catalog and the books it described from one another, at the same time as it began to make the catalog into a powerful independent research tool in its own right. From the very beginning of the Research Archives, it was assumed that the initiated user of the collection would not have to consult the catalog simply in order to find a book. Because of the intuitive principles of organization, it was intended that the user be able to successfully “dead reckon” the location of the required books. The catalog was intended to provide a detailed index to the literature in the collection, by, for example, the names of archaeological sites, or by historical periods, or by museum collections.

Having established the organizational goals of simplicity of physical organization and complexity of cataloging and indexing, the first librarians in the Research Archives spent a huge portion of their time during the first decade of the library’s existence in assembling the material components of the collection. This was a really monumental and very expensive task. Runs of serials had to be located purchased, cataloged, bound, and shelved. Individual volumes, many—perhaps most—of which had originally had very small press runs, and which were then and remain today virtually never available on the antiquarian book market, had to be located and acquired. By the early 1980s, when the current Research Archivist was appointed, the task of building the basic collection was essentially complete.

At that time, I took it as my task to concentrate on acquiring the currently produced material relating to the ancient Near East, to stimulate, simplify, and promote the use of the collection by the individuals and projects at the Oriental Institute, and to develop the research tools that the Research Archives provided to its users. It was, I believe, extraordinarily fortunate that this change in emphasis coincided almost precisely with the introduction of the affordable personal computer. One hears it so often that it now generally seems trite to repeat, but it is nevertheless true that computers have revolutionized the way scholars work. The use of these machines spread throughout the Oriental Institute with amazing rapidity—in the Research Archives, the computer offered huge advantages over the previously available technology. It was no longer necessary to type multiple sets of cards and file them manually in the card catalog, it allowed the construction of records in which librarians, scholars, and casual users could search for any particular word or sets of words. Most importantly, from my point of view, the use of the computer offered the promise that publications, the fruit of scholarly labor, could be produced and delivered in forms not yet dreamed of.

The on-line catalog, as it now stands, covers materials acquired in the Research Archives over the past decade. We have been fortunate during this time to have been able to purchase virtually everything produced in the fields represented by the Oriental Institute. The catalog now holds some seventy thousand records, which, in terms of the traditional card catalog, stands in place of nearly half a million cards. There is no other library in ancient Near Eastern studies, indeed there is not even a standard bibliographical reference for these fields that provide such a detailed index to the literature, let alone one which provides not only the index, but also immediate access to the books, articles, essays, and reviews. We are currently adding records to the database at the rate of about twenty thousand records (the equivalent of one hundred and fifty thousand catalog cards) per year.

In the past couple of years another technological development has accelerated the change in the role of the library and the librarian. New ways to move information from one place to another, ways which we group together under the name the Internet, are beginning to challenge seriously and honestly the notion of the library as the owner or possessor of information and suggest that libraries take on an increasing roles as the broker and organizer of information. Our on-line catalog, which is currently available from terminals in the library, on each faculty staff and student desk, and from other terminals in the University of Chicago system, will shortly be accessible from any networked computer in the world. I am very pleased to report that the Women's Board of the University of Chicago has agreed to fund the equipment necessary for us to take this next essential step.

The increased availability of our resources to the academic community at large is matched by our newfound ability to make comparable use of resources provided by other institutions. Catalogs of collections are no longer used in isolation from one another. Many of our peers are beginning to provide the means to have access not only to the careful analyses of data and data-sets as has been the role of traditional publication, but increasingly also to provide complete sets of "raw" data, along with the tools to organize and analyze them. It is the task of the librarian, and the place of the library, to collect and to catalog such efforts and to integrate them within the context of other such projects and within the corpus of the scholarly literature. Here at the Oriental Institute we have taken this challenge seriously. We are not only recognized as holding the best collection of print material, but we are now universally recognized as the leader in the cataloging and organization of electronic resources (see our World-Wide Web site, *Abzu: Guide to Resources for the Study of the Ancient Near East Available on the Internet*, at <http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/ABZU/ABZU.HTML>).

The Research Archives is not yet twenty-five years old, young by almost any standard, and particularly the usual standards of the Oriental Institute. The resources that we have managed to collect and analyze during that period bear out the promise and expectation of Breasted's plans. I began by describing the Oriental Institute as a group of collections, and would like to end with two reflections. The Research Archives is the one collection, facility, and resource that is communal. It is used intensively and regularly by each and every member of the Oriental Institute community. The purpose of this collection, and the tools that make it useful, is to offer a place and a means for the scholarly community, the students at the University of Chicago, and the members and friends of the Oriental Institute to study the ancient Near East easily and effortlessly. It is not a simple task, but I believe we are accomplishing it with energy and imagination. With the help and support of all members of the community, we can continue to do this into the new century.

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Retrospective Cataloging Project

During the past year we have been able to add nearly twenty thousand records to the on-line catalog. The database now holds nearly seventy-one thousand records. We have concentrated much of our energy during this year in a number of parallel projects. We have finally managed to organize and begin the cataloging of our duplicate periodicals and a number of other uncataloged collections, which will put us in a position very shortly to be able to sell or trade some of these duplicate materials, and to fill in some of the gaps in our own holdings. In addition, we have devoted more than the usual time to stacks maintenance. The very heavy usage of the collection as a result of the expansion of the undergraduate program in ancient Near Eastern studies has required us to pay much closer attention to the care and repair of books than had previously been required. One of the consequences of stacks maintenance was to show me the necessity of expanding our retrospective cataloging efforts to materials other than periodicals. Our collections are really extraordinarily good, but as the on-line catalog grows, the dependence on it also grows to the point where users of the collections frequently do not look at the old card catalog at all. It is therefore necessary to expand our coverage in the on-line catalog. We do this in a number of ways. As a book passes through my hands, I generally recatalog it, or check the on-line catalog record for accuracy. When multiple records are required, as in the case of a volume of contributed essays, we also endeavor to create records for them. This form of "triage" allows us to create and maintain records for books that are in active use, active use being defined by the fact that a book passes across the bibliographer's desk. It is my intention during the next year to systematize this process a little more regularly and to process more of these older books, integrating the records into our database.

Publications

The Research Archives published two items during the past year.

Abzu: Guide to Resources for the Study of the Ancient Near East Available on the Internet, by Charles E. Jones. Chicago: The Oriental Institute Research Archives; 1994, 1995. (Oriental Institute Research Archives Bibliographical and Informational Documents: Supplements to Oriental Institute Research Archives Acquisitions List; v. 3). This evolving publication continues to grow, and to command respect. *Abzu* and its editor have recently been solicited for inclusion in the Argos Project. Argos is a limited area search engine (LASE) of a portion of the Internet dedicated to the ancient world. *Abzu* is available exclusively on-line at:

<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/ABZU/ABZU.HTML>

This summer we began, at the invitation of and in collaboration with Richard Wilkinson of the University of Arizona, the exclusive on-line publication of *The Directory of North American Egyptologists*, which replaces the annual paper-based publication and provides the ability to maintain the directory on a day to day basis, keeping the address list current at all times. It is available exclusively on-line at:

http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/ABZU/EGDIR_INTRO.HTML

Later this summer we expect to begin the revision and recasting of *Women in the Ancient Near East: A Select Bibliography of Recent Sources in the Oriental Institute Research Archives*, by Terry G. Wilfong (Chicago: The Oriental Institute Research Archives, 1992), pp. v + 42. (Oriental Institute Research Archives Bibliographical and In-

formational Documents: Supplements to Oriental Institute Research Archives Acquisitions List; v. 2). The reprinted edition is available exclusively on-line at:

<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/WOMEN.HTML>

Last year's *Oriental Institute Research Archives Acquisitions List with an Indexed List of Essays, Articles and Reviews* (RAAL), February 1994–July 1994, Numbers 11–12, was the final paper-based edition of the acquisitions list to appear. Budgetary restrictions prevent the continued production of this resource. We continue to investigate alternative, probably electronic, methods of disseminating the information we distributed in RAAL.

CURRENT ACQUISITIONS

Following are the acquisitions statistics for the past year

	April 1995–March 1996	Total
Monographs and Series	298	21,194
Journals	180	<u>9,072</u>
Total Books	478	30,266
Pamphlets	4	

It will be obvious from a comparison of these figures with those of previous years that current budget constraints have cut into our ability to achieve comprehensive coverage of the current literature on the ancient Near East. We are nevertheless able to maintain our high standards and to fulfill the standing collections policy as outlined in the *1994/95 Annual Report*, pp. 102–03.

It has been, as always, my pleasure to have had the help of an excellent, and all new staff this year. Alexandra O'Brien, Ph.D. Candidate in Egyptology, has taken on the burden of the cataloging of analytics, and of general reference work in the office. Justine Way has worked diligently at stacks maintenance and a number of other special projects. Without the help and industry of these two excellent employees, the Research Archives simply could not have functioned.

The friends of the Research Archives are legion, far too many for me to single out but a few. First and foremost, to all of you who attended or contributed to the fundraising efforts focusing on the Annual Dinner in May 1996, I am exceedingly grateful. Your help is essential, and your comments and suggestions are valued. Robert D. Biggs, Pierre Briant, O. J. Sopranos, Martha T. Roth, and Karen Wilson all made substantial gifts of books and periodicals to the Research Archives. Many others gave of time, funds, and support of other kinds. On behalf of the Research Archives I offer you thanks.
