

INTRODUCTION

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In the introduction to the *1995/96 Annual Report* I spoke of that year as being “an unusually eventful year.” But, as I read the articles submitted for this year’s report and riffled through the pages of the other reports we have produced since I arrived in 1989, I realized that all of our years are eventful, this year no more so than the others. However, some events of this year were firsts in the Institute’s history — the visit of an External Review Committee and the construction of a new wing are both unprecedented.

Members of the External Review Committee, chaired by Professor T. Cuyler Young, Jr., University of Toronto, and including Professors Anne Kilmer, University of California Berkeley; W. Randall Garr, University of California Santa Barbara; Antonio Loprieno, University of California Los Angeles; Peter White, University of Chicago; and Alan Kolata, University of Chicago, visited the Institute for several days in February. The committee report to University President Sonnenschein praises the organization, faculty and staff, teaching, research, Museum, and support facilities of the Institute. The report also comments on the need for more vigorous planning for the future, and raises a number of questions that might help to organize and facilitate the planning process. Finally, the committee offered specific suggestions concerning research and teaching that also provide food for thought about the future of the Institute. Now that our facilities are on the verge of significant improvement it is time to turn our attention to the fundamental aspects of our mission — research and teaching.

This has indeed been “The Year of the Hard Hat” for all of us, but most particularly for the staff of the Museum. On 15 August we held the groundbreaking ceremony for our new wing. Construction proceeded apace, guided and executed by Joe Auclair, Karen Wilson, and our colleagues at Hammond Beeby & Babka and Turner Construction. We raised the final steel beam, decorated with images from our Museum, at a topping out ceremony on 18 March. On 12 June friends and supporters joined us on the east lawn to dedicate the cornerstone. Now we all wait impatiently for the day when the switch is turned, and climate control changes forever the environment in the Museum. When the reinstalled galleries open some months later, we will have a grand occasion for celebration.

I wish to thank all of the friends of the Institute who have so generously supported the Legacy Campaign. As of 17 September 1997 this campaign, under the inspired direction of Cynthia Echols and her staff, has raised a bit over \$9 million of the \$10.1 million needed to finish the project. This success — unmatched since the

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founding gifts of the Rockefeller family — gives me confidence that our many friends and members will assure that we easily meet our goal.

Faculty and staff research projects this past year exhibited our customary intensity, high standards, and diversity. At the same time new collaborative analytical programs in materials science and remote sensing were initiated. Archaeologists were in the field at Kestel and Tell Kurdu in Anatolia; in the Western Desert of Egypt; in Israel; in the coastal town of Aqaba, Jordan; at Chogha Bonut in Persia; along the Nile River in the Sudan; and among the terraced fields of Dhamar in Yemen. The staff of the Epigraphic Survey were busily recording the Temple of Amun and involved in a variety of conservation projects. One of the more gratifying of these conservation projects gives new meaning to the term “head hunting.” Ray Johnson discovered the long lost head of the Goddess Mut in Cairo. Mut’s head was returned to the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple and placed back on the shoulders of the goddess. Archaeological analysis and publication projects included work on the great collection of some 12,000 small finds from the Diyala, analysis of flints and bones from Çayönü, and publication of the first report on excavations at Chogha Mish (OIP 101).

The National Endowment for the Humanities renewed support for the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (CAD) and the *Chicago Hittite Dictionary* (CHD) and work on both dictionaries moves along at a smart pace. Additional Research Associates were appointed to accelerate preparation of the Demotic Dictionary. Other projects — the Royal Achaemenid Inscriptions Project, the Afroasiatic Index, and the Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon — continued and made excellent progress. Institute scholars were engaged in other studies on a great variety of topics: Hittite oracle questions, Babylonian medicine and concepts of disease, Neo-Assyrian prosopography, Hittite law, the legal status of women in ancient Egypt, the art of Amenhotep III, astral influences on diseases and remedies in Mesopotamia, and ancient Egyptian magical practices — to cite just a random selection.

Other notable events enlivened our year. The Illinois Association of Museums bestowed its highest award on the Oriental Institute/Chicago Public Schools Collaboration for the World History Curriculum, a program generously funded by the Polk Bros. Foundation. Congratulations to Carole Krucoff and her staff. Professor Emeritus Hans Güterbock was elected honorary member of the Turkish Academy of Sciences and received an Honorary Doctorate from Ankara University. Peter Dorman stepped down as director of the Epigraphic Survey in order to focus his energies on personal research and teaching. Ray Johnson, Research Associate (Assistant Professor), was appointed to succeed Peter as director of the survey. Aslihan Yener was promoted to Associate Professor and granted tenure. Tim Harrison, Ph.D., a recent NELC graduate in the ancient field, accepted appointment as Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto.

The Research Archives collection surpassed 30,000 items and our electronic publications continued to grow. The Oriental Institute web site was transferred to a more powerful server, thanks to a grant from the University of Chicago Women’s Board, and John Sanders redesigned our web page. We recently had over 100,000 connections to our Internet site in one week.

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This is my last year as director of the Institute. For your dedication to the Institute's mission, and for your hard work to realize our full potential, I thank all of you — faculty, staff, students, volunteers, docents, and Visiting Committee. Working with you has been a challenging and rewarding experience made pleasurable by your friendship and many acts of kindness. Gene Gragg has been appointed to succeed me as director, and I am confident that he will provide strong leadership as we approach the turn of the millennium.
