

COMPUTER LABORATORY

John C. Sanders and Peggy M. Sanders

Thanks to the generosity of the Luther I. Replogle Foundation, the new William M. Sumner Computer Laboratory opened in December 1999. Located in room 202, the Institute's new computing facility provides faculty, staff, and students with ready access to both Macintosh and Windows computers, scanners up to 11" × 17" for printed materials as well as for 35 mm photographic slides or negatives, a CD-recordable drive for storing computer data in CD format, and a large-format plotter. The new facility is spacious, with room for future growth as the Institute's computing needs expand. In fact, several new computer purchases are being planned, and these acquisitions and the breaking-in process of the new laboratory will be reported in next year's *Annual Report*.

Contemporary with the opening of the new Computer Laboratory was the moving of all the Institute's computer "servers" into a server room on the second floor, a room kept cool year-round that houses the Institute's three web servers, e-mail server, and file server located there. John Sanders' office is now in room 205, which Norman Golb vacated as he moved his office into room 232, the Computer Laboratory's former location.

Besides these new computing facilities, we added a very significant, in many ways the most significant, addition since the laboratory was founded in 1990. Graduate student Katherine Strange was hired as the laboratory's first, part-time, assistant. Currently, she is working on HTML markup for the previous three years of *Annual Reports*, so they will shortly be available on our website. She is leaving soon for archaeological fieldwork in Syria with Don Whitcomb and I hope she will return in the fall and continue working in the laboratory. She has become a valued assistant overnight.

Right next door to the new Computer Laboratory Charles E. Jones has added new public computers in the Research Archives reading room (see separate report). With all of these developments, computing at the Oriental Institute is starting off the new millennium in a very positive direction — to the benefit of ancient Near Eastern scholarship world-wide.

I wish to thank Margaret C. Brandt, a member of the Oriental Institute, for her contribution to the Computer

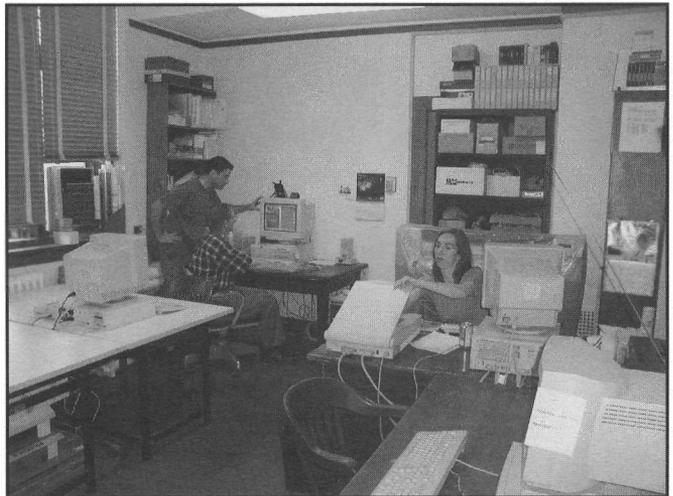


Figure 1. Left, Clemens Reichel (standing) and Docent Volunteer Richard Harter (seated) scanning 35 mm slides at Windows computer; right, Katherine Strange scanning documents for Institute's website. New Computer Laboratory, room 202

RESEARCH

Laboratory's operations. And Docent Volunteers Richard Harter, Irv Diamond, Peggy Grant, Karen Terras, Nancy Gould, and Irene Glasner are due a hearty "thank you" for their efforts working in the Computer Laboratory on several Institute projects. Always eager to help in any way they can, their contributions are most welcome, helpful, and much appreciated.

Conservation Laboratory Web Pages

In March 2000 the Computer Laboratory created several pages for the Conservation Laboratory on the Oriental Institute's website, detailing its new, post-renovation facilities and its current Archaeological Iron Storage Research Project. See Electronic Resources, below, for web address.

Dead Sea Scrolls Exhibition – Comments and Criticisms

Timed to coincide with the spring 2000 exhibition of the Dead Sea Scrolls at The Field Museum in Chicago, Norman Golb asked the Computer Laboratory to post two articles regarding scrolls on the Institute's website: "As the Scrolls Arrive in Chicago ..." and "Small Texts, Big Questions ..." both published in *Oriental Institute News & Notes* 165 (Spring 2000). A short time later we also posted on the website Golb's critique of The Field Museum's exhibit: "Current Controversy over the Dead Sea Scrolls, with Special Reference to The Field Museum Exhibition." See Electronic Resources, below, for additional information and web addresses.

Electronic Publication of Ancient Near Eastern Texts

The Computer Laboratory cooperated with the Oriental Institute and the Franke Institute for the Humanities, University of Chicago, to sponsor a two-day conference, 8–9 October 1999, to assess the prospects for establishing a formal international standards organization charged with developing technical standards for the interchange of Near Eastern data in digital format, from which a working group was formed. For more information on this conference, see the separate report by David Schloen.

To help facilitate the operations of the working group that was created to carry on the recommendations drafted during the conference, the Computer Laboratory offered the use of the

Institute's majordomo list server to operate a Near East Markup Language List (NEML), a closed discussion group for those conference participants who agreed to participate further with establishing standards for electronic texts. The list has been in operation since early March 2000 and work continues on this important initiative for future Near Eastern scholarship.

Laboratory Equipment and Resources

In a repeat performance from last year, the Computer Laboratory's 35 mm slide scanner continued to be used frequently as several graduate students,

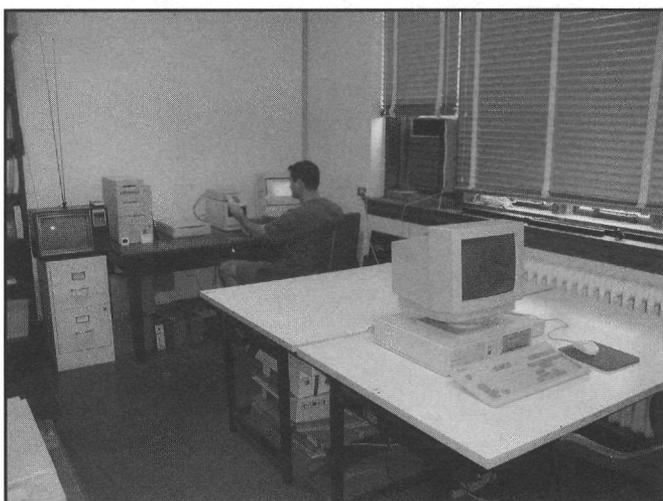


Figure 2. Clemens Reichel preparing CD-ROM disks at Macintosh computer. New Computer Laboratory, room 202

including Aaron Burke, Joey Corbett, and Gabrielle Novacek, continued to scan the entire Ashkelon slide collection into digital format for inclusion in the Ashkelon database being developed by David Schloen.

Use of the ArcView Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software by several of the Institute's archaeological projects, primarily to view and manipulate satellite imagery and aerial photographs, has produced fairly steady use of the Computer Laboratory's CD-ROM "burner" throughout the year as a means of creating data backups of their work. Photographic mosaics of the landscape of northeast-

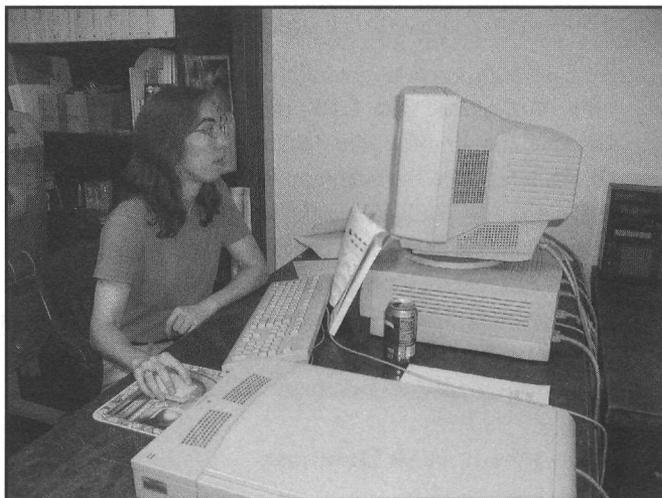


Figure 3. Katherine Strange preparing documents for Institute's website. New Computer Laboratory, room 202

ern Syria, photographs of artifacts from the Diyala Objects Publications Project, and many other types of data are now being "archived" in CD format in the Computer Laboratory. Some of these same projects are also using the laboratory's large-format plotter to output color maps of survey regions, pottery concentrations on site maps, and other archaeological data in graphic format.

Website Coding Changes

With the release of Netscape version 4.7 for the Macintosh and Windows certain display discrepancies between it and Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser software developed when looking at the Institute's website. To correct this issue I undertook to rewrite portions of the HTML code on about one hundred pages on our web server. Now these pages produce a similar display regardless of which browser program or platform viewers use to access the Oriental Institute website.

Year 2000 Problem (Y2K)

I can report only the most minor computer coding problems with the Institute's web server occurred due to the transition from calendar year 1999 to 2000, the Y2K "problem," with all but one dealt with immediately. No interruptions were reported by the faculty and staff regarding their desktop computers. Having prepared for the event by performing all the well-published precautions on all the Institute's Windows and Unix computers, we experienced a most pleasant end to the Y2K hype of the past few years!

As a part of our Y2K preparations the Institute's three Sun SPARC Unix-based computers were upgraded to the latest version of the Solaris operating system (2.7), and the web server was outfitted with dual, external 8.3 gigabyte hard disks (quadrupling our capacity for website online data storage), utilizing Sun's Disk Suite software to create a level 0 RAID system for redundant data storage. This type of protection of our electronic data insures the hard work involved in producing all of the Institute's website documents will remain accessible even in the case of a hard drive failure on our web server.

RESEARCH**1905–1907 Breasted Expedition to Egypt and the Sudan**

As I write this report several docent and student volunteers are being gathered to start the scanning of the more than 1,100 photographs from the Institute's Photographic Archives, taken by Oriental Institute founder James Henry Breasted during his early travels throughout Egypt and the Sudan. Once the scanning is complete, these images will be linked to their respective captions, already available on the Institute's website thanks to the help last year of Docent Irv Diamond. These images and captions were originally published in the 1975 Oriental Institute text/microfiche publication entitled *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expedition to Egypt and the Sudan: A Photographic Study*. Through the use of the Internet, and the gracious assistance of our volunteer staff, the images are now available to scholars and the public world-wide via our website. See Electronic Resources, below, for web address.

World-Wide Web Database

For further information concerning several of the above mentioned research projects, the Institute's World-Wide Web (WWW) database, and other electronic resources in general, refer to the *What's New* page on the Oriental Institute's website at:

http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/INFO/OI_WWW_New.html

The homepage for the Oriental Institute website is at:

<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu>

(NOTE: web addresses are case-sensitive)
