

RESEARCH

Robert K. Ritner

Robert K. Ritner taught a variety of language courses concerning Middle Egyptian, Hieratic, and Demotic texts, in addition to offering a seminar on documents of the Third Intermediate Period, a survey of religious texts, and a series of lectures on New Kingdom Egyptian history. For this second year of construction, the examination of original Demotic materials in museum storage again required instructor and students to sport hard hats — surely a new sartorial trend in Demotic studies. The

assistance, patience, and fashion advice of the museum staff, particularly Registrar and Associate Curator Raymond Tindel, are gratefully acknowledged.

On 15 October a film crew from Toronto-based Paragon Productions filmed an extended interview with Ritner for an upcoming documentary entitled “Grand Illusions: The Story of Magic,” now in post-production. In addition to course and committee work for the Institute and Department, he participated in a series of symposia and conferences. On 25 October he lectured at the Detroit Institute of Arts on “Weapons against Fate: Magic in the Religion of Ancient Egypt,” in conjunction with the touring Heidelberg exhibit “Splendors of Ancient Egypt,” which features a stela first published by Ritner in 1993. On 8 November he spoke at the Third Chicago-Stanford Seminar on Hellenistic Egypt regarding “The Philinna Papyrus Incantation and the Scorpion Wives of Horus,” establishing the Egyptian character of a complex Hellenistic spell. At the end of November, he attended the annual conference of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Francisco in his capacity as an editor of the series *Writings from the Ancient World*. During the blizzard of 9 March he held a “fireside chat” on aspects of Egyptian religion for a troupe of undaunted and indefatigable docents. From 23–26 April, he was in Los Angeles for the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, next to be held in Chicago, where Ritner will oversee Egyptological presentations. During the Oriental Institute Annual Dinner on 18 May, he regaled the diners with “Some Practical Egyptian Magical Spells,” designed to bless a celebratory meal, avert food poisoning, dislodge a fishbone from the throat, prevent hangover, cure a migraine headache, protect books from theft, and bestow health and satisfaction in advanced age. This presentation for “Romancing the Past Comes Home” marked the unveiling of the future Egyptian Hall and formed a ritual counterpart to the ground-breaking and cornerstone reenactments of 1996 and 1997. Ritner’s translations of these spells were made available on the Oriental Institute web page (http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IS/RITNER/Annual_Dinner_1998.html) through the courtesy of John Sanders. On 29 May, Ritner surveyed “Egyptian Medical Theory and Practice” for the Oregon, Washington and British Columbia Academies of Otolaryngology, again in conjunction with the exhibit “Splendors of Ancient Egypt” at the Portland Art Museum.

Between courses and lectures, Ritner completed a study of “Egypt under Roman Rule,” for *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, edited by Carl Petry (in press); a series of articles for *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (forthcoming), edited by D. Redford; translations for *The Context of Scripture*, vols. 2–3, edited by W. Hallo and L. Younger; catalogue entries for *Searching for Ancient Egypt* (1977), edited by D. Silverman; and a refutation of “Fictive Adoptions or Celibate Priestesses?,” published in *Göttinger Miszellen* (1998).

Whenever possible, he has continued his primary research on documents of the Libyan period in Egypt (ca. 946–610 BC), (re)editing published and unpublished sources as *A Chrestomathy of Third Intermediate Period Texts*. Comprising transliterations, translations, brief textual commentaries, and full references, the volume will provide the first accessible source book for Egyptian inscriptions during the pivotal era of the house of Sheshonk, the Israelite kingdoms, Nubian domination, Assyrian conquest, and the Saite reassertion of independence.