

RESEARCH ARCHIVES

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Introduction

As announced in last year's *Annual Report*, Dr. Magnus Widell has moved on from his position as Head of the Research Archives to take a faculty position as lecturer in Assyriology at the University of Liverpool. His jovial spirit around the Oriental Institute has surely been missed, especially by his Assyriological colleagues, and social hours in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations will never be the same. During his tenure he initiated a number of very important developments in the Research Archives which will be maintained and fostered, and we wish him the very best in his new Liverpool home. Having worked in the Research Archives over the last six years with two librarians, Chuck Jones and Magnus, I hope to bring a refreshed approach to the development of the library and continue to make improvements in all facets of its operation. Both Chuck and Magnus taught me a great deal about what the Oriental Institute Research Archives is and isn't, and many of the changes taking place are the result of their legacies.

Soon after the departure of Magnus in November, we had a serious structural concern with the large and beautiful glass window in the Reading Room. Part of the bracing from the large central



*Botti Studio crew
replacing window panes
in the Oriental Institute
Research Archives*

rosette had come loose and was in dire need of repair. The window needed to be boarded for several weeks before being repaired by Botti Studio. All the glass and leading was replaced from top to bottom and a new bracing system was developed to strengthen the window in the future. The supports are now anchored into the stonework itself and the glass is reinforced by being attached to the steel supports via copper wire. In addition, the replacement glass is UV-treated with a protective sheet between two panes of glass. Reduction of the ultraviolet rays should help to conserve our very important book collection for future generations. The previous window had withstood the battering Chicago winds for over seventy years and we hope the new window will last at least as long.

In addition to these repairs, we are now looking at commencing touch-up work on the ceiling murals, which have been damaged by water leaks over the years. As a treasure of the University of Chicago and a popular photographic setting, even for the president of the University, it is crucial that the elegance of the Reading Room be maintained, with an eye to both conservation and tradition. Despite such structural necessities, the most pressing issues facing the Research Archives in the next decade revolve around budget and space. To begin with the former, a number of efforts have been undertaken to relieve the growing problem of space in the library. First, in the fall of 2007, we consolidated our working offices from two to one in order to accommodate the 1,500 books from the donation of Professor Gregory Areshian and another 500 volumes from the library's collection. The Gregory Areshian Collection (formerly our second office) now houses these books as well as a small study area with a table and chairs. Reorganizing our office space has freed up four columns of book shelving on the mezzanine (third floor). Over the course of the summer we will be shifting the entire journal collection in order to take advantage of this space. Several columns of shelving have also been added to the new wing, in the room between the Reading Room and monograph stacks where we currently house the old card catalog. The additional space has allowed us to shift the entire Reading Room, providing space for serials which were double shelved or had no room for growth. Finally, the map collection has now been scanned by the Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes (CAMEL). By the end of fall quarter, I hope to have the maps moved to off-site storage and the room reorganized in preparation for further extending the journals collection. The paper maps will be replaced by a computer with an oversized screen to display digital images of the maps, which will be accessible in off-site storage. Further complementing these additional spaces, we have begun the arduous process of cleaning out the library's storage room, which has been collecting duplicates, offprints, and other miscellaneous volumes for the past thirty years. Another room will be opened up for journal and study space through this process.

As for financial concerns, there have been major impacts on how far we can stretch our budget. On the one hand, academic books are becoming ever more expensive, a trend that is increasing despite the tendency toward digitization. On the other hand, the falling value of the dollar coupled with the increased publication of books abroad have tremendously hampered our buying power, especially in the European publishing market. This has forced us to make hard decisions about which volumes to purchase and I will continue to evaluate the costs, benefits, and use of the various volumes we acquire. In an effort to continue our comprehensive acquisition, we have benefited through the sale of duplicate material from the library collection as well as from personal donations.

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Acquisitions

Our acquisition efforts were strong over the past year, the result mainly of increased revenue through the sale of duplicates to Dove Book Publishers with the help of Sean Dey, Troy Ogle, and Jeffrey Ball. Dove has been able to purchase many of our duplicate volumes, providing credit to the Research Archives with which we order new volumes. We have also raised additional funds through the sale of duplicate material to faculty, staff, and students. The sale of this duplicate material raises funds as well as frees up much-needed space for future volumes. With the added revenue we have been able to catch up on several journals and series for which our collection had fallen seriously behind, such as *Chronique d'Égypte*, *Kaskal*, *Excavation Memoirs*, *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin*, *Bulletin d'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, and *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*. The following numbers reflect our monthly acquisitions over the past twelve months.

	<i>Monographs, Series</i>	<i>Journals</i>
July 2007	45	28
August 2007	24	26
September 2007	64	20
October 2007	111	24
November 2007	80	21
December 2007	100	28
January 2008	86	32
February 2008	69	23
March 2008	37	18
April 2008	48	34
May 2008	30	18
June 2008	99	26
Totals	793	298
Total Volumes	1,091	

Electronic Catalog

The 2007–2008 academic year witnessed an enormous surge in our cataloging efforts, borne out by the tremendous growth of our library catalog. Fortunately, we dodged a bullet and luckily saved months worth of cataloging. Materials cataloged over a decade ago into an old ProCite database (see the *Annual Reports* for 1993–1994: <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/ar/93-94/ra.html>, and 1994–1995: <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/ar/94-95/ra.html>), upwards of 50,000 new records, were feared lost among the personnel changes of the past several years. Fortunately, I was able to obtain copies of these files from Chuck Jones, former archivist and bibliographer for the Research Archives. We have been vigorously incorporating these files into the electronic catalog. Our cataloging efforts have had an added benefit from the cooperation

of several sister institutions. Electronic files from Christian Gaubert for the *Bulletin d'Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, as well as Lewis Lane and Zhe Yang from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York for the *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*, added over 5,000 records to our database as well as links to .pdf copies of these articles available freely online.

In the retrospective cataloging, we have now processed all serials, monographs A–L and Z–R (leaving only M–P), and large sections of the journals (these take the longest because of the many articles and reviews contained in each volume). It truly won't be long, perhaps one to two years, before all the material in the Research Archives is cataloged and publicly searchable online. In the *Annual Report* for 1991–1992, when the electronic catalog contained just 20,000 records, former bibliographer Chuck Jones estimated that a complete catalog of the Research Archives would result in roughly 500,000 records (<http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/ar/91-92/ra.html>). His estimate is probably not too far off the mark and we are slowly seeing a light at the end of the tunnel. At 300,000 records, the electronic catalog of the Research Archives provides users with the most complete, searchable index of ancient Near Eastern studies.

On the Web

Beginning in September 2007, we have revived the tradition, dormant for some years now, of publicly distributing the acquisitions lists of the Research Archives (<http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/library/acquisitions.html>). As a premier library for ancient Near Eastern studies, it is hoped that personal and academic libraries worldwide will be able to benefit from knowing our acquisitions, as this collection stands as an important benchmark among both North American and global libraries focused on the ancient Near East. Recent NELC dissertations have also been added to the Web site for free download with the generous permission of their authors (<http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/library/dissertation/>). They will benefit through the public distribution of their work, further developing the Oriental Institute Web site as a hub of the scholarly community. Though not directly linked with the Oriental Institute Web site, the online links in the library catalog have produced a seamless connection between query and scholarship. The online catalog of the Research Archives now contains roughly 50,000 links to articles available over the Web (both freely available and subscription based). Far beyond its powerful bibliographic functions, the catalog is quickly becoming indispensable as a scholarly tool, allowing users quick and easy access to both the most comprehensive public index of ancient Near Eastern studies as well as to a broad range of scholarly content.

Visitors

The Research Archives is a popular place for visiting scholars and we have had the pleasure to accommodate the research trips of many individuals, including (in alphabetical order): Claus Ambos, Gojko Barjamovic, Jeff Blakely, Ray Bratcher, Pearce Paul Creasman, Katrien De Graef, Ake Engsheden, Fumi Karahashi, Jacob Lauinger, Edward Oluokun, Eva Von Dassow, Andrea Seri, Stuart Tyson Smith, Lawrence Stager, Gábor Takács, Steve Vinson, Caroline Waerzeggers, David Weisberg, Bruce Williams, K. Lawson Younger, Andrzej Zaborski.

Acknowledgments

The value, growth, and very existence of the Research Archives is dependent upon a wide array of people. We have received and accommodated the very generous donation of Dr. Gregory

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Areshian, consisting of nearly 1,500 books on the archaeology and languages of central Asia. With the mourned passing of Erica Reiner, one of the true giants in the field of Assyriology, many of her library materials were donated to the Research Archives through Martha Roth, now Dean in the Division of the Humanities. Dianne Yurco made a very remarkable and sentimental donation of books from the library of Egyptologist Frank Yurco, a well-known scholar who had been tremendously dedicated to the public outreach of the Oriental Institute.

A number of volumes we acquired through exchange with various institutions across the globe. I would like to see such numbers increase as these relationships are both crucial and cost-effective for scholarly institutions. Our exchange relationships would be absolutely impossible without the help of Wadad Kadi and the dedicated staff of the *Journal for Near Eastern Studies*, as well as Tom Urban, Leslie Schramer, and the entire Publications department. Thanks are also due to the following people for their donations to the library: Abbas Alizadeh, John Ingham, Robert Biggs, and Donald Whitcomb.

The day-to-day operations of the Research Archives owes much to the very capable staff with whom I have been lucky to work this year. Kenneth Yu has worked for the Research Archives for the past two years. With his recent graduation from the Department of Classics at the University of Chicago, he will be off to Boston for graduate study. Kenny has been responsible for the retrospective cataloging of monographs, starting with Z, which we hope to finish by the end of the summer. Laura Cappe, a graduate student in NELC studying Egyptian archaeology, spent the majority of her time this year cataloging recent acquisitions. She will be leaving us this fall to study ancient glass manufacturing. Erika Morey, who is currently finishing her M.A. in NELC at the university, has had the least enviable job among the library assistants: retrospective cataloging of the journals. The 10,000+ articles from *Bibliotheca Orientalis* have been the bane of her existence for the last eight months. We will also miss Erika when she leaves us in the fall for the scholarly pursuit of ancient bones. Laura Holzweg, who is currently in Cairo studying Arabic, focused on cataloging the monographs in cooperation with Kenneth Yu, starting with the letter K. Maria Yakubovich helped by entering links to online journals in the catalog before taking a full-time position with the university Career Advising and Planning Services department. I am grateful to the staff of library assistants for all their hard work over the course of the year. May we continue to have such dedicated staff members in the future!

I should also like to thank my library predecessors Chuck Jones and Magnus Widell for their continued support and assistance in every aspect of managing the Research Archives. They have been, and will continue to be, indispensable resources.
