

INTRODUCTION

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I am merely the guest editor of this year's Annual Report for 2016–2017, which covers the period from July 2016 through June 2017, the last year of Gil Stein's tenure — three consecutive terms, spanning fifteen years — as Director of the Oriental Institute, a truly remarkable accomplishment and one matched only by the Institute's founder, James Henry Breasted himself. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Gil, on behalf of the entire Oriental Institute (OI) community, for his years of service, which have transformed and fundamentally shaped the OI for decades to come. For my part, it is difficult to communicate what an honor, and how humbling, it is to succeed Gil as Director. Gil and I came to the University and the OI as new faculty at opposite ends of the institutional spectrum — Gil, recruited from Northwestern to assume the OI's Directorship, and I, a newly minted PhD joining the faculty as an Assistant Professor. Throughout our years together at the OI, I have relied on Gil's support, generosity, and, moreover, friendship. Certainly, I anticipate relying on Gil's advice and wisdom in the years to come.

The pages of this Annual Report represent in many ways the legacy of Gil's term as Director, which saw the expansion of both our field and text-based projects, the former despite the conflict that continues to roil in the Middle East and poses enormous threats to its cultural heritage. In 2016–2017 the OI conducted excavations and research in Egypt, Iraqi Kurdistan, Israel, Jordan, and Turkey, investigating periods that span from the Chalcolithic (fifth millennium BCE) through the Middle Byzantine (early second millennium CE) periods. In Egypt, Nadine Moeller's and Grégory Marouard's continued excavations at the sister sites of Tell Edfu and Dendara in Upper Egypt present a unique opportunity to understand, from a comparative perspective, the development of urbanism in the third millennium BCE, while in Lower Egypt the Giza Plateau Mapping Project, under the direction of Mark Lehner, marked a return to research begun years ago into the origins of the Sphinx and its relationship to the local geology. In Turkey, we maintain a dynamic and extensive research program, with excavations at Zincirli (David Schloen), Kerkenes Dağ (Scott Branting), and Çadır Höyük (Gregory McMahon). In Kurdistan, northern Iraq, Gil Stein and Abbas Alizadeh completed their fourth field season at Surezha. The development of urbanization has long been the topic of intensive study in southern Mesopotamia, but investigating the urban evolution in northern Mesopotamia has been a comparatively recent pursuit. The Surezha excavation promises to critically advance our knowledge of the distinctive urban evolution in the north, while shedding light on the cultural and economic links that connected the Erbil plain with the neighboring regions of Anatolia, Iran, and southern Mesopotamia. Yorke Rowan and Morag Kersel continued work on the two major archaeological projects in Israel and Jordan, respectively, under their direction. The Galilee Prehistory Project traces the dramatic changes that took place in the Galilee between the fifth and the early fourth millennia, while the Eastern Badia Archaeological Project, which involves both survey and excavation in the Black Desert of Jordan, aims to record and analyze architecture, landscape, artifacts, and paleo-climatic data in order to understand the diachronic use and occupation of this little-known region. In northern Israel, David Schloen

engaged in a new excavation at the Canaanite and Phoenician city of Tell Keisan (first millennium BCE).

Our text-oriented projects also made major strides this year. Ray Johnson and his team completed the 93rd season of the Epigraphic Survey at Chicago House in Luxor, Egypt. Beyond the primary objective of documenting the reliefs of Luxor Temple and Medinet Habu — and doing so by continuing to implement state-of-the-art digital methods — the portfolio of projects increasingly includes architectural restoration, conservation, and training programs. The efforts of the Chicago Hittite Dictionary, led by Theo van den Hout and Petra Goedegebuure, were directed at completing the final fascicles of the letter Š, and, particularly, preparing for the 10th International Congress of Hittitology, which was held in Chicago with great success at the end of August. The Chicago Demotic Dictionary, edited by Janet Johnson and Brian Muhs, having completed its original hard-copy mission, has taken aim at its next, longer-term goal, namely, of producing an interactive and flexible web-based dictionary. Finally, the Persepolis Fortification Archive project, under the direction of Matthew Stolper, made important and surprising discoveries in the course of its continuing efforts to record and study these critically important Iranian artifacts in the Oriental Institute's custody.

The preservation of cultural heritage has long been one of Gil's passions and priorities (and I note that Gil currently serves as the Provost's Advisor for Cultural Heritage). During Gil's tenure, the OI has taken an increasingly active role in this area. For instance, one of the primary foci of the OI's CAMEL (Center for Ancient Middle Eastern Landscapes) lab this year has been "The Afghan Heritage Mapping Partnership," an outgrowth of Gil's Oriental Institute-National Museum of Afghanistan Partnership program, which likewise has been funded by the State Department since 2012. The Afghan Heritage Mapping Partnership employs satellite imagery to identify and map the archaeological sites across Afghanistan. In total, the Afghan cultural heritage projects have received to date nearly 8 million dollars of funding from the US Department of State. Another OI cultural heritage endeavor, reported upon in these pages, is the Modeling the Antiquities Trade in Iraq and Syria (MANTIS) project, which endeavors to combine excavation data with art market observations to predict market values of Near Eastern artifacts for various archaeological sites.

The OI Museum, led by Chief Curator Jean Evans, continued to make excellent progress with its Gallery Enhancements Project — a large-scale project, funded by an anonymous donor, to update many of our galleries and enhance visitor experience by replacing many of the original free-standing cases, improving lighting, and updating the displays and text. The Museum staff was also occupied this year with preparing for our special exhibit, *The Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt*, curated by Foy Scalf, which opened in October 2017 and will be reported upon in next year's annual report. Our Education department — despite the major transition brought on by the departure of two of its members, Carol Ng-he and Leila Makdisi — expanded its efforts to offer hybrid adult education courses, which can be taken either on-site at the OI or remotely, online. A new initiative in the department this year is the Community Scholars Program, which partners OI scholars with metropolitan Chicago organizations; since its inception, OI researchers have lectured before approximately 1,800 individuals across 24 organizations. The OI's Integrated Database (IDB) Project, which will connect all the OI's major archives of objects, images, and data records into a single searchable and publicly accessible digital resource, reached a milestone this year with the completion of Phase III, which included the migration of nearly 100,000 records from the CAMEL lab and Museum archives; currently, there are more than 1 million records in the IDB. Additionally,

Donald Whitcomb and Tasha Vorderstrasse, representing our Islamic Archaeology program, have undertaken a comprehensive catalog of the Islamic holdings in the Oriental Institute Museum, which include Chinese ceramics, book bindings, and nineteenth-century photographs.

A highlight of our year was the celebration on December 4 of the 50th Anniversary of our Volunteer Program in which over 200 people attended the festivities to honor the enormous contributions of our volunteers over the past half century. Carlotta Maher and Jim Sopranos, who were members of the inaugural volunteer class in 1966, remain ardent supporters and active participants in the OI's intellectual life.

We are saddened to report the loss of two of the most passionate members of our community this year — Peggy Grant, who joined the volunteer program in 1971 and served as the Volunteer Manager, and Jane Hildebrand, who was a Suq volunteer and docent for thirty years. Both Peggy and Jane, who gave so much of themselves to the OI, will be deeply missed.

The OI welcomed an impressive cohort of new staff members to its ranks in the 2016–2017 academic year, including Stephanie Black (Assistant Curator for the Gallery Enhancement Project), Vick Cruz (Visitor Services and Security Manager), Charissa Johnson (Editor), and Calgary Haines-Trautman (Youth and Family Programs Manager). This year also saw the retirement of John Larson after a remarkable tenure of thirty-six years as the OI's Museum Archivist and the departure of our long-time Head Preparator, Erik Lindahl. Anne Flannery replaced John as Museum archivist, and Robert Bain joined the OI as Head Preparator. Finally, Ilona Zsolnay was appointed to a two-year term as the OI's most recent Post-doctoral Fellow. In March, Ilona organized a highly successful two-day conference, *Seen Not Heard: Composition, Iconicity, and the Classifier Systems of Logosyllabic Scripts*, which brought together an international panel of experts of early writing systems to discuss the various means by which these systems express meaning beyond the representation of spoken language.

This is only a vignette of the extraordinary scope of our research projects and programs, which are detailed in these pages — a testament to the dedication of our talented faculty, researchers, and staff to advancing the OI's core mission. We are ever mindful, however, that none of this would be possible without the generous support of our members, donors, and Council — and for this all of us at the Oriental Institute are profoundly grateful.
