

MUSEUM

Overleaf: Grave stela with Coptic inscription. Limestone with traces of red pigment. Tulunid, July 23, 891 (or 892) AD. Ramesseum, Luxor, Egypt. Excavated by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1895/96. 36.0 × 36.0 × 4.5 cm. OIM E1569 (photo D. 027343: Anna Ressler)

MUSEUM

Jack Green

It was an important year for the Oriental Institute Museum in many respects. We continued to increase our public profile and visitor engagement on multiple levels, deliver engaging exhibits, and initiated plans for a Gallery Enhancements Project. Although we have much to celebrate, it has been a tragic year for the archaeological heritage of the Middle East as events in Iraq and Syria, and now Yemen, continue to unfold. The Oriental Institute and the Museum has played its own role in raising awareness of the plight of archaeological heritage in the region.

Visitor numbers are on the rise. The total number of Museum visitors rose in the past financial year (July 1, 2014–June 30, 2015) by 18 percent to 55,308. It is worth noting that our 2013–14 figure of 46,887 represented a 10 percent drop from the three-year prior average, in large part due to the closure of 58th Street to pedestrian traffic in that year. The increase can be attributed to multiple factors: the reopening of the 58th Street streetscape (June 2014), increased marketing efforts, and a sustained increase in tours. The growing popularity of our exhibits, programs, and events must also be playing an important role. Our new poster kiosks have now been replaced and repositioned as of June 2015, with thanks to

Richard Bumstead and Kathleen Golomb of Facilities Services (fig. 1). A change to our opening hours (now 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., rather than a 6:00 p.m. closure), took place in September without significant impact on our numbers. Our average donation from non-tour visitors was \$2.73. I wish to thank Jason Barcus, head of visitor services and security, who left the Oriental Institute in May. He will be greatly missed. We warmly welcome his replacement, Adam Finefrock, who joined us in June.

An important new project initiated in 2014–15 was the Gallery Enhancements Project. This project will enable the museum to fulfil an important objective — to improve the quality of display of its collections to the public in time for the Oriental Institute centenary in 2019, made possible through the generosity of an anonymous donor, although with a portion of funds yet to be raised. There are three main objectives to this project: 1) the design and installation of new free-standing display cases throughout all the galleries that will complement the



Figure 1. One of the newly installed kiosks outside the Oriental Institute featuring a poster designed by Joshua Tulisiak (photo: Amy Weber)

Guenschel wall cases that we plan to retain; 2) improved gallery and in-case lighting, including a transition to LED lighting that will enhance the way we display our collections and result in significant staff, energy, and cost savings into the future; 3) a graphic refresh that will unify and update our labels and panels to provide greater consistency in delivery of information and our institutional voice.

We have hired exhibit designer and architect Elizabeth Kidera, whose experience includes the Field Museum's Ancient Americas Hall and the 9/11 Museum in New York. We also hired Lightswitch Architectural as our lighting consultants. We do not intend to "re-curate" our permanent galleries, but rather enhance the way that information and objects are presented, and improve the aesthetics of our displays and galleries. An advantage of our project is that we will be able to replace many of our older free-standing display cases, which are becoming difficult to access. This project will impact all the staff of the Oriental Institute Museum, and we are also grateful for the significant input and support from Associate Professor of Egyptian Archaeology Nadine Moeller and Head of Public Education and Outreach Catherine Kenyon.

Work has continued in the preparation of catalogs for our permanent collections, including *Ancient Mesopotamia* (by Kathryn Grossman) and *Highlights of the Oriental Institute Museum* (co-edited by Jack Green and Emily Teeter). We are in the midst of editing the text now that photography has been completed. Both volumes will prove to be important contributions and will make our collections more publicly accessible.

Our program of special exhibits (see *Special Exhibits*, below) continues with great success. In Remembrance of Me: Feasting with the Dead in the Ancient Middle East closed in January, and was followed in February by *A Cosmopolitan City: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Old Cairo*, curated by Tasha Vorderstrasse and Tanya Treptow, with the assistance of Donald Whitcomb. The 2015 exhibit and catalog (fig. 2) has fulfilled many of our aims by presenting and studying collections that are less well known, and supported by object loans from the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, especially the Ben Ezra Synagogue ark door. The exhibit provided an unprecedented opportunity for academic, public, and community engagement, including a series of lectures in April and May in collaboration with the Chicago Center for Jewish Studies. Our speakers were Paul Walker, Tasha Vorderstrasse, and Donald Whitcomb (University of Chicago), as well as Amy Landau (Walters Art Museum, Baltimore), and Marina Rustow (Johns Hopkins University). The lecture series generated discussion of relations between the communities of Fustat in the seventh–twelfth centuries. We were able to bring together faculty, students, and staff from varied disciplines to examine aspects of religious diversity, interaction, and economic and political life in Old Cairo. A lecture by Adina Hoffman and

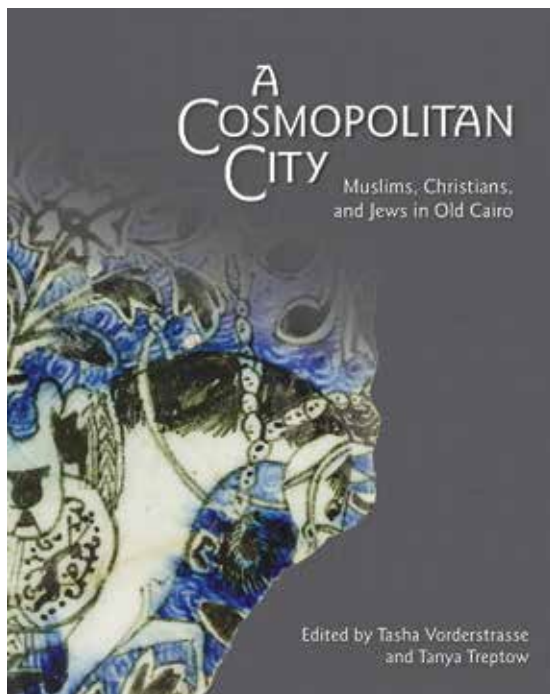


Figure 2. Cover for the exhibit catalog, *A Cosmopolitan City: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Old Cairo*. Cover design by Josh Tulisiak



Figure 3. The Oriental Institute mini-exhibit *Doing Business in the Ancient World* and adjacent touchscreen in the lobby of the Booth School of Business (photo: Erik Lindahl)

hiring outreach coordinators to invite members of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish faith communities to our exhibit. Preparations for our next special exhibit, *Persepolis: Images of an Empire*, curated by Kiersten Neumann of the Oriental Institute Museum, are currently underway. I wish to thank our colleagues in the Public Education and Outreach Department for all their help over the past year, especially the head of the department, Catherine Kenyon, for providing opportunities to work so closely together.

Three mini-exhibits were curated in the past year. *Cairo in Chicago*, curated by Tasha Vorderstrasse (see *Special Exhibits* report) complemented the Cosmopolitan City exhibit and was displayed in the Oriental Institute lobby this spring. A satellite exhibit, *Doing Business in the Ancient World*, was installed in the Booth School of Business within the University of Chicago. This exhibit was curated by myself and Brittany Hayden (PhD candidate, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations). The intention of this small exhibit, installed in the Booth School lobby on May 19 (fig. 3), is to draw attention to the Oriental Institute and its collections. We also show how relevant the study of ancient commerce is to present-day economics and business. The exhibit contains several objects on loan to the Booth School of Business, ranging from a Lydian coin attributed to King Croesus to an Old Assyrian merchant's letter from Kültepe, Turkey (fig. 4). We are very grateful to the dean of the Booth School of Business, Sunil Kumar, and our director, Gil Stein, for initiating the idea for this display, and to Canice Prendergast, keeper of the collection at

Peter Cole, the co-authors of the popular book *Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Geniza*, attracted new audiences. Additional adult and family programs were facilitated by the Public Education and Outreach Department (see separate report), including the half-day event *Celebrating the History and Culture of Old Cairo*. We are grateful for the support from the Franke Institute for the Humanities, the Chicago Center for Jewish Studies, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, and the Divinity School for these programs. We have also experimented by



Figure 4. An Old Assyrian cuneiform business letter from Kültepe, Turkey, ca. 1950–1836 BC. As featured in the mini-exhibit *Doing Business in the Ancient World*. OIM A22181 (photo D. O28172: Anna Ressman)

the Booth School. We thank the staff of the Booth School, especially Tony Gac, Rob Rhoades, and Meredith Wells, for their patience throughout the planning and implementation.

A third mini-exhibit (opened May 21), entitled *A Threatened Heritage*, consisted of seven graphic panels throughout our permanent galleries. Plans for this exhibit unfolded in fall 2014 in response to the threats to archaeological heritage in Iraq and Syria, and in preparation for a Neubauer Collegium conference entitled *The Past for Sale: New Approaches to the Study of Archaeological Looting at the University of Chicago*, coordinated by Larry Rothfield and Fiona Greenland. On February 26, just prior to the conference, a video was released that showed the destruction of objects in the Mosul Museum and at Nineveh by ISIL operatives. These images shocked the world, prompting the Oriental Institute to issue an online statement on the destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq. The Museum's response has been one of raising awareness and of cultural heritage advocacy. Our panels did not just focus on ISIL occupied regions, but also Jordan, Egypt, and Sudan. The exhibit provides links to heritage organizations and contact information for reporting suspected looted or illegally imported artifacts from the Middle East including an email address for the Art Crimes division of the FBI in Chicago. Each panel carries the message "What Can YOU Do?" (fig. 5). We hope that this provides proactive suggestions for our visitors to follow. In curating this exhibit I was grateful for contributions from Emily Teeter, Bruce Williams, Morag Kersel, Emily Hammer, and Akiva Sanders. For more information, go to: <https://oi.uchicago.edu/threatened-heritage>.

The Museum was particularly active in lending over the past year. In addition to several small-scale loans and renewals (see *Registration* report, below) we contributed our four-horned altar from the Megiddo Gallery and the Tayinat bronze plaque from the Syro-Anatolian Gallery to the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibit *From Assyria to Iberia* (September 22–January 4). We lent to two exhibits held at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York. Firstly, the Arsinoe base and Isis and Horus statue for the exhibit *When the Greeks Ruled Egypt* (October 8–January 4). Secondly, the Oriental Institute had a major presence in the exhibit *From Ancient to Modern: Archaeology and Aesthetics* (February 12–June 7), which focused on Early Dynastic-period Mesopotamia and the impact of archaeological discoveries on art history, contemporary art, and popular culture. Early Dynastic sculpture, the Agrab cup (fig. 6), the Bilalama seal, and related archival materials were displayed in the "ancient" section of the exhibit, joined

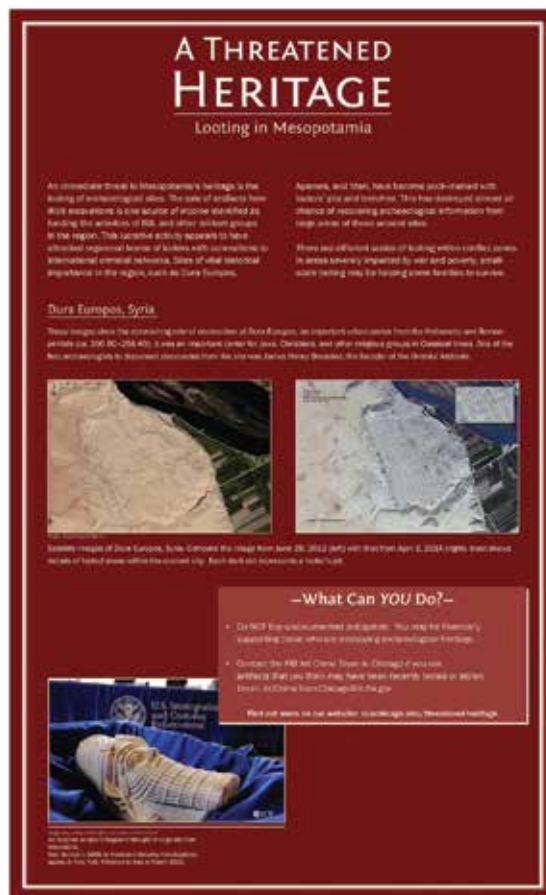


Figure 5. A panel from the mini-exhibit *A Threatened Heritage* that focuses on looting in Mesopotamia. Design by Josh Tulisak



Figure 6. The “Agrab Cup,” a stone cup with nude hero, bulls, and lions. Tell Agrab, Shara Temple, ca. 3000–2650 BC. Iraq Expedition of the Oriental Institute, 1930–1937. OIM A17948 (photo D. 015848: Anna Ressman)

by loans from the University of Pennsylvania Museum, the Field Museum of Natural History, and the British Museum. I am grateful to all the Museum staff who contributed the time and effort required of this exhibit collaboration as well as research associates Jean M. Evans and Clemens Reichel for their essay contributions in the exhibit publication, as well as the co-curators of the exhibit, Jennifer Chi and Pedro Azara.

An important project that the Museum has been engaged in over the past year is the Egyptian Coffin Conservation Project. Through the generous support of the Antiquities Endowment Fund of the American Research Center in Egypt, we are finally able to tackle one of our long-standing conservation and redisplay projects. This important First Intermediate Period coffin of Ipi-haishutef (OIM E12072) is currently undergoing conservation treatment and analysis of its pigments. We will be able to display it in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery this summer after many years in storage. More information is available on the project and its aim is outlined in *News & Notes* 224 (pp. 14–15), in the Conservation

report (see below), as well as in the progress reports on the Oriental Institute website (<http://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/coffin-project>). Emily Teeter, Erik Lindahl, and Josh Tulisak assisted with this project, and to Simona Cristanetti and Alison Whyte conducted conservation research and treatment of the coffin.

The Oriental Institute Achemenet Project, in collaboration with our partners at the Louvre, was able to continue for an additional several months following funding from the France Chicago Center of the University of Chicago and continued support from the Oriental Institute. This enables Tytus Mikołajczak (project researcher) and Austin Kramer (project photographer) to continue this digitization and collections characterization project focused on the Achaemenid period (ca. 550–330 BC). At the time of writing, approximately 360 objects have been photographed and 600 objects have received updated catalog entries (see Achemenet Project report).

I am grateful for all the hard work and dedication of our Museum staff, as well as a number of work-study interns, graduate students, and volunteers who contributed a huge amount of their time and effort in the past year. Josh Tulisak, who has been our part-time preparation and exhibit design assistant over the past year since Keeley Stitt left the Oriental Institute, has done excellent work and provided consistent support. Anne Flannery has been working with Foy Scalf as part of our Integrated Database (IDB) project and has provided much needed support to John Larson in labeling and rehousing the Museum Archives,

allowing the entry of 7,508 new entries on to the database (see Integrated Database and Museum Archives reports, below). Museum staff continued to play an important role in the National Museum of Afghanistan-Oriental Institute partnership project, with in-person visits and ordering of conservation supplies by our head of conservation, Laura D'Alessandro. The Museum will continue to support this heritage project into the coming year (see National Museum of Afghanistan-Oriental Institute report). Museum Curatorial Assistant Kiersten Neumann has further streamlined the processes for image-request management and the uploading of data and images to the IDB. The Museum Office fulfilled 132 image requests in the past year and 3,982 new multimedia records were created on our database.

Work-study interns from the University of Chicago (mostly from the MAPSS program) who assisted the Museum in the past year include: Alexis Faust, Terri Morris, and Jeffrey Newman (IDB project and processing image requests); Joseph Hermiz (Museum Archives); Adam Bierstedt and Christian Leavitt (Prep Shop). Kathleen Cescon's work was supported by Don Whitcomb to help work through the Aqaba Expedition material for Museum Registration. Our summer interns included Angela Spidalette (2014) and Danielle Zwang (2015). Jordan Galzynci also assisted the Registration Department. Volunteers continue to assist us, including Kiera Foley (Gallery Enhancements, Registration), and Carole Yoshida (Museum Archives). Without the support of our student workers, interns, and volunteers, only a small fragment of our output would be achieved.

We have had a number of VIP and professional visits to the Museum over the past year. The following list is by no means comprehensive. In September, we received a visit from staff working on the Field Museum of Natural History's new Cyrus Tang Hall of China. In January, we received a delegation of museum and heritage professionals from Zhejiang Province, China. In February, we received a visit from members of the US State Department in relation to our ongoing project in Afghanistan. Toward the end of that month, we hosted a reception for the Neubauer Collegium Past for Sale conference delegates. In May, we received a visit from members of the Council of the Getty Conservation Institute, hosted by its director Tim Whalen and associate director Jean-Marie Teutonico in collaboration with Andy Vaughn, Michael Danti, and Susan Penacho of the Syrian Heritage Initiative, a project of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

The Museum also provided input to the playwrights and actors of the University of Chicago's Court Theatre production of *The Good Book* (March–April) which explored the history of the Bible through complex characters and shifts forward and back in time. In addition, we provided graphics and information supporting the TimeLine Theatre's play *Inana* (May–July), about an Iraqi museum curator on the eve of the US-led invasion in 2003. Curatorial Assistant Kiersten Neumann helped provide images for both ventures and enthusiastically in supported our collaboration with TimeLine.

The Museum continues to play an active role on the University of Chicago campus and the wider South Side community. Gil Stein and Jack Green attended several meetings as part of the University of Chicago Arts Steering Committee, chaired by deputy provost for the arts, Bill Brown. The intention of this committee is to identify the direction of the arts on campus and its role in the wider Chicago community, an initiative that the Oriental Institute is very much engaged in. We have also played an active role as members of the Museum Campus South, and I especially thank Emily Teeter for her role in building up our support and presence for the group (founded August 2014; see *Publicity* report, below).

Following a number of 3D scanning trials in the Oriental Institute by staff of the Center for the Art of East Asia (Department of Art History), the Oriental Institute made a financial contribution to share ownership of its 3D imaging equipment: their Artec Eva and Spider scanners and related software. Since that time, Josh Cannon (graduate student, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) has conducted a number of scanning trials of artifacts and replicas in our collection to prepare for a season at Çadır Höyük, Turkey, where he will scan ceramic objects excavated from the site that would take a long time to illustrate by hand. His familiarity with the equipment will provide an ideal test of how such handheld equipment can be used in the field, which we hope will lead to further 3D imaging at the Oriental Institute. Katherine Tsiang and Charles Crable of the Center for the Art of East Asia supported this collaboration.

Our sole collections acquisition in the past year was to the Museum Archives. Twenty-two early twentieth-century drawings, lithographs, and paintings were generously donated to the Oriental Institute by Margaret Green of Northern California. Named “The Lillian E. Beaumont Collection of Artworks by E. F. Beaumont,” the collection provides insights into the history of the American Colony, Jerusalem, and the reception of images of the Holy Land (see *Museum Archives* report, fig. 16 below). A forthcoming article in *News & Notes* 227 will provide further information on the artist, E. F. Beaumont (1871–1952), an archaeologist who served as a surveyor for the University of Chicago’s Expedition to Megiddo in the 1930s.

A new initiative in 2014 was Oriental Institute Collections Research Grant. Through the generous support of O. J. Sopranos, the Oriental Institute supported four researchers in their efforts to utilize our collections: Jamie Novotny (University of Pennsylvania), Katharina Streit (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Eric Cline (George Washington University), and Elon Heymans (Tel Aviv University). Our database is proving helpful in facilitating further interest in the collections, although the complexity of external research queries, often with requests for sampling or use of our handheld p-XRF machine, has increased considerably. We continue to encourage Oriental Institute and University of Chicago faculty to use our collections for teaching. A recently conducted online survey of faculty/instructors and students is providing us with important information that will help us further improve our engagement with object-based learning.

In summary, the Oriental Institute Museum continues to serve and facilitate a wide range of academic, public, and professional services that helps to build both our local and global standing as a leading collection and research hub for ancient Near Eastern archaeological research, as well as a resource for heritage initiatives. I wish to thank all our close colleagues in the Oriental Institute, and especially Director Gil Stein and Executive Director Steven Camp for their sustained support for the Museum staff in 2014–15.
