

MEMBERSHIP

Rebecca Laharia

I would like to thank the membership for the warm welcome I have received. It has been a pleasure serving you over the last six months, and I hope that you will continue to see positive changes after the transitions of the last year. As examples, we re-investigated the most efficient way to manage membership renewals, the *News & Notes* newsletter has been receiving incremental make-overs (including the occasional use of full-color images) that will result in a more readable format, the Members Lecture program has been re-invigorated, the office has been reorganized for improved efficiency, and new travel opportunities are being examined.

Last year, the James Henry Breasted Society enjoyed two special events. A dinner and lecture were held for the Breasted Society on December 4, 2002, at the University Club of Chicago. Mark Lehner, Director of the Giza Plateau Mapping Project, presented the results of his recent archaeological discoveries in Giza. On May 1, 2003, the Breasted Society visited The Field Museum to view *Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from The British Museum*, an exhibit for which the Oriental Institute's Robert K. Ritner served as academic consultant. As always, the Oriental Institute is grateful to the members of the Breasted Society who recognize the necessity for an annual renewable source of unrestricted funds to be used at the Director's discretion for the most pressing needs of the Oriental Institute. A wide range of Oriental Institute activities, from Anatolian archaeology to seed funding for new projects, benefit from the generosity of the Breasted Society.

The March 2003 trip to Egypt, *Oases of the Western Desert*, was cancelled due to the political climate. However, Clemens Reichel, Research Associate, escorted a trip to Atlanta, Georgia, in August 2002. Clemens guided our group through temporary exhibit *Ancient Empires, Syria: Land of Civilizations* at the Fernbank Museum of Natural History, while Peter Lacovara, Curator of Ancient Art at Emory University, gave a tour of their Near Eastern galleries at the Michael C. Carlos Museum.

New travel opportunities are being developed. We have brought back the Egypt destination, *Oases of the Western Desert*, escorted by Robert K. Ritner. Our 2004 destinations also include *Splendors of Western Turkey*, escorted by Gil J. Stein, and a voyage aboard a three-masted sailing ship: *Crossroads of Empires: Cairo to Crete*, with Emily Teeter as the Oriental Institute leader.

In Chicago, W. Raymond Johnson, Director of the Epigraphic Survey, gave a gallery talk on the temporary exhibit *Lost Egypt: Images of a Vanished Past* to the membership on July 10, 2003. Approximately fifty people enjoyed the informal lecture and refreshments. The exhibit features exquisite photographic prints culled from the Epigraphic Survey's archive. Taken in Egypt between 1880 and 1930, they provide an extraordinary impression of the land and people of the Nile Valley as they appeared before the onset of the modern era.

Five Members Lectures were offered last year. On October 30, 2002, Christopher Woods, Assistant Professor of Sumerology at the Oriental Institute, gave a lecture titled "Sumerian Writing: Some Problems Relating to Origin, Nature, and Development." Lawrence E. Stager, Dorot Professor of the Archaeology of Israel at Harvard University, visited the Oriental Institute on November 13 and gave the Members Lecture "Two Phoenician Shipwrecks Off Ashkelon in the Deep Sea." On January 22, 2003, Stephen P. Harvey, Assistant Professor of Egyptian Archaeology at the Oriental Institute, lectured on "Egypt's Last Royal Pyramid: The Monuments of King Ahmose and His Family at Abydos." William Dever, Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology,

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University of Arizona, gave our April 2 Members Lecture, "Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Popular Religion in Ancient Israel." This lecture was co-sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA). Our May 7 lecture, also cosponsored by the AIA, was given by Yizhar Hirshfeld, Associate Professor at the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, on "Qumran in Context: New Discoveries Along the Dead Sea Shore."

Those of you who were disappointed in the absence of our annual dinner, *Romancing the Past*, may rest assured that it is returning next spring. As of this writing, I am working on finalizing the date for our gala at the Drake Hotel.

Many people have contributed to last year's successes. Tom Urban, Senior Editor in the Publications Office, was instrumental in the publishing of *News & Notes* and this *Annual Report*, sharing his skills at layout and his advice on editing. Carole Krucoff, Head, Museum Education and Public Programming, shared her insight into the community that composes our membership and her extensive knowledge of resources for events and programming. Emily Napolitano, former Membership Coordinator and current Assistant to the Director, Epigraphic Survey, edited the Winter *News & Notes*, continued to maintain the web pages, and shared her familiarity with functions of the Membership Office freely. Faculty members including Robert Ritner, Martha Roth, and Jan Johnson took the time to explain their research so that I could better communicate with our members. Karen Wilson, Museum Director, Chuck Jones, Research Archivist, and John Sanders, Head, Computer Laboratory, have been generous with their time. Nicole Torres, Assistant to the Director, and Matthew Szydagis, work-study student, were essential to the day-to-day running of the office last fall and winter. My thanks, as well, go to the many contributors to *News & Notes* and the *Annual Report*.

Oriental Institute volunteers have been quick to offer their assistance, and I look forward to working with more of you. Last year, Rita Picken and Gabriele Da Silva generously gave of their time. University student Mica Shender, Laboratory School student Levi Smith, and recent Lab School graduate Jo Burgess helped with tasks as varied as making name badges, updating scrapbooks, organizing our bookshelves and binders, and, endlessly, stuffing and stamping envelopes. Thank you for your help.

The Membership Office can be contacted by phone at (773) 702-9513 or by e-mail at oi-membership@uchicago.edu.
