# RESEARCH SUPPORT

## COMPUTER LABORATORY

### John C. Sanders

After a year of preparation, and almost three years after discussions began, the actual switchover took only an instant. I was not involved, however — not even present, in fact, when the change took place. With a single keystroke on a computer located in the university's Networking Services and Information Technologies (NSIT) offices, ten years of hosting the Oriental Institute's Web site from a server located in the Institute came to an end.

### World-Wide Web Site

On March 30, 2004, the single keystroke described above caused all Internet traffic destined for the Oriental Institute's Web site to be rerouted to our new, NSIT-supported server located across the Midway in NSIT's office complex. On that day, nothing about the "look and feel" or the content of the Institute's Web site was altered, only the server that hosts our Web site changed. The future ramifications of this change, however, will be many, varied, and all beneficial to both the operations and the stature of the Oriental Institute as a purveyor of ancient Near Eastern archaeology, philology, history, art, and architecture to the public and scholars alike. Many of the benefits of having our Web site hosted and maintained by NSIT are not yet manifest and will only be realized as we develop our site during the next year or so to take advantage of the programming capabilities NSIT can provide us. Accordingly, detailed articulation of these benefits must be postponed until next year's *Annual Report*. I can, however, mention in broad terms the most critical benefits we expect, those which were sufficient enough to cause us to make this change:

1. Faster Web site access and performance, optimized expressly for Web site hosting.
2. Access to professional Web site designers and programmers.
3. Access to a wide array of e-commerce capabilities.
4. The potential for database back-end serving of much of our Web site's content over time.

Actually, one additional change not mentioned above also occurred on March 30, 2004: the official name, or Web-address, of our Web site was changed. Formerly known as www-oi.uchicago.edu, which, I hasten to add, still works to direct users to our new Web site, we decided a simpler, shorter name (oi.uchicago.edu) was more appropriate.

Working with our NSIT contact, Sandy Weisz, and a cadre of NSIT programmers, during the next year we will produce a new design, a new "look and feel," for the Oriental Institute Web site. This new design will evolve as we cooperate with our new partnerships at NSIT and start to implement the features outlined above. Stay tuned, continue to visit our Web site periodically, and watch the changes as they happen.

## Laboratory Projects

### USAID Grant Proposal

Along with several Oriental Institute faculty and staff, I participated in the formulation of a USAID grant, submitted in July 2003, proposing a collaborative effort by the Oriental Institute, the Iraq Department of Antiquities, and Baghdad University to resurrect a program of archaeological education and instruction for Iraqi university students. Unfortunately, our proposal was not funded by USAID.

### Iraq Museum Database: The "Lost Treasures from Iraq" Web Site

It has been over a year since the looting of the Iraq Museum, libraries, and document repositories in Iraq. Throughout the year, several Institute staff, principally Clemens Reichel and Charles Jones, have maintained contact with Iraqi authorities and Near Eastern scholars worldwide, assessing the damage, documenting the losses, and staying on top of various efforts to rebuild and reopen the museum and other facilities. Throughout this year dedicated Docent/Volunteer Karen Terras has spent many long hours in the Computer Laboratory, three or more days a week, either scanning published Iraq Museum object photographs (mostly ivories and cylinder seals) or creating, editing, and updating textual descriptions of these artifacts. The photographs and text entries she has processed form the bulk of the Iraq Museum Database that Clemens has been constructing on the Institute's Web site since the looting occurred. Thank you, Karen, Clemens, and Charles for your dedicated service to this cause. It is greatly appreciated.

Several major content updates to the Iraq Museum Database occurred throughout the year, and a major redesign of the project's file structure was performed in mid-March 2004. The Iraq Museum Database now contains over 850 objects, the latest additions including 250 ivories from Nimrud and forty-nine seals from Abu Salabikh. Looking ahead, over 1,000 ivories still remain to be added to our database during the next year.

In May 2003, less than two weeks after major combat had been declared over, Professor McGuire Gibson undertook a trip to Iraq, during which he visited several archaeological sites, including Isin, Ur, Nippur, and Umm al-Hafriyat. Upon his return, photographs he took of the looting and damage to these archaeological sites were posted on the Oriental Institute's Web site. During late 2003/early 2004, while on visits to various archaeological sites by United States soldiers, Army SPC William Peterson visited Girsu, Nippur, and Uruk, taking more recent photographs of looting and damage similar to those shot by Professor Gibson. Mr. Peterson graciously offered his photographs to the Oriental Institute for publication on our Web site, which we posted in April 2004. We thank Mr. Peterson for his willingness to share his important documentary photographs of this ongoing tragedy with the public worldwide.

### Diyala Miscellaneous Objects Publication Project

Starting in fall 2003, Volunteer Robert Wagner became a semipermanent presence in the Computer Laboratory, at least on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of each week. Clemens Reichel gave Robert the seemingly unending tasks of creating an electronic copy of the field registry from the Oriental Institute's excavations at Khafaje during the 1930s, followed by the scanning of all of the original tablet, object, and locus cards from the Institute's excavations at Tell Asmar, again during the 1930s. This latter task will require many months of work by Mr.

**RESEARCH**

Wagner. Thank you, Robert. We greatly appreciate your dedicated service to the Diyala Miscellaneous Objects Publications Project.

### Scanning an Egyptian Slide Collection

Professor Janet Johnson, in early 2004, asked Docent/Volunteer Ruth Goldman to use the Computer Laboratory slide scanner to digitize her private collection of 35 mm slides of Egypt in order to make these photographs available for use in PowerPoint presentations for her classes. Because of her almost weekly presence in the Lab, Ruth is close to becoming one of the "usual suspects" in the Computer Lab, joining Karen and Robert in that select group. Welcome aboard!

### Language Instruction via the Computer

In December 2003, Professor Gene Gragg started using the Institute's Web site to access an XML-coded database he created for presenting certain philological topics for his ancient language courses, including Hurrian and Urartian. This teaching resource, however, is presently accessible only to those students registered in Professor Gragg's courses during 2003/2004.

### Electronic Publications

During the past year, Professor Janet Johnson finished work on three additional letters for the Chicago Demotic Dictionary: the letter Ayin, in July 2003; the letter Q, in February 2004; and the letter G, in May 2004. With the assistance of Tom Urban, Oriental Institute Publications Office, these documents are now available on the Institute's Web site as Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files. This brings the total number of Demotic Dictionary letters published in PDF format to fourteen. Work continues on the remaining twelve letters.

Peter Friedman, the son of Docent/Volunteer Coordinator Terry Friedman, gave up part of his 2003 summer vacation volunteering to undertake the HTML markup of the 2001–2002 *Annual Report*. Thank you, Peter, for your time and skill in preparing these documents for the Oriental Institute's Web site.

Unfortunately, work on the electronic version of the 1980 Oriental Institute publication Ptolemais Cyrenaica, by David Nasgowitz, which will become part of the Photographic Archives section of the Institute's Web site, was not able to be completed during 2003/2004. John Larson, the Institute's Museum Archivist, and his staff have completed the cross-checking of references, photograph numbers, and negative numbers, and we expect to finish the HTML markup, scan the photographs, and add this component to our Web site in 2004/2005.

### The Institute's E-mail Server

Much of my time from March through July 2004, was spent moving all faculty, staff, and student e-mail accounts on the Oriental Institute's e-mail server (babylon-orinst.uchicago.edu) to either the university's e-mail server or another e-mail account of their choice. We are retiring "babylon" in early July 2004, after eight years of practically error free service. Several recent developments make this change a necessity at this time: the ever-increasing amount of e-mail spam and security concerns, the convenience of worldwide Web-based access to the university's e-mail accounts, and a regime of 24/7/365 maintenance and backup at no additional cost to the Oriental Institute.

## Laboratory Equipment/Institute Resources

Once again, thanks to the generous assistance of the University's Networking Services and Information Technologies department, all of the remaining public rooms in the Oriental Institute are now capable of wireless Internet connections. Between November 2003 and January 2004, the LaSalle Banks Education Center, the Archaeology Laboratory, the Director's Office, the Museum Registration area in the basement, and both classrooms (Rooms 208 and 210) were equipped with wireless base stations for Internet access.

In July 2003, a new Windows-based computer system was purchased to improve the high-end capabilities of the Computer Laboratory: a 3.0 MHz Dell Optiplex with 2 GB RAM, dual 120 GB hard disks, a DVD-R/CD-RW drive, and a 19" monitor, running the Windows 2000 operating system.

The Oriental Institute's e-mail server since the mid-1990s, babylon-orinst.uchicago.edu, has also functioned as the Institute's File Transfer Protocol (FTP) server. In simple terms, an FTP server acts as an intermediary storage location whenever person A wants to either give or get a computer file from person B; person A connects to the FTP server via the Internet and "puts" the file in question on the server, then person B connects to the server and "gets" the file. Because of the pending "babylon" shutdown a new FTP server was established in November 2003. It is an older Macintosh G3 computer, currently running System 10.2.8, with 16 gigabytes of disk space for file transfer.

For further information concerning several of the above-mentioned research projects, the World-Wide Web (WWW) database, and other Electronic Resources in general, refer to the What's New page on the Oriental Institute's Web site, at (Note: this URL is case-sensitive):

http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/INFO/OI_WWW_New.html

See the "Electronic Resources" section of this *Annual Report* for the complete URL to each of the Web site resources mentioned in this article.

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