

ARCHIVES

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During the 2016–2017 fiscal year the Oriental Institute Archives went through a major transition. In December 2016, John Larson retired after thirty-six years as Museum Archivist. John's work over almost four decades as archivist made him an invaluable repository of institutional knowledge. As of January 2017, I began heading up the Museum Archive and its digital counterpart after working closely with John for two years as Project Manager of the Integrated Database.

The archive is an essential resource when delving into any topic related to the Oriental Institute. Over the years, the archive has grown substantially. It contains not only essential materials for research related to excavations, dictionaries, documentary photographs and negatives, as well as the Epigraphic Survey, but also the history of the institution through its people in the form of directors' correspondence and faculty papers. At this time the archive is undergoing a long-term organizational process that will result in the incremental cataloging of collections and the production of their finding aids, as well as increased and improved accessibility online. This is only possible with the help of dedicated volunteers, students, faculty, and staff.

Access

As an archive, the OI's is not immune to the practical concerns of proper access to its resources. The most wide-reaching method being used to create access to the archive is cataloging items into the integrated database. These records are available online through the Search our Collections page of the Oriental Institute's website. Recently cataloged items include box records of the collections of Robert and Linda Braidwood, Helene Kantor, and the Oriental Institute Negatives Collection — a collection that contains thousands of images of excavation sites and objects.

Additionally, the archive is taking part in a negative card scanning project. There are thousands of these cards which contain essential information for researching additional details about our negative and photograph collections. Having these cards online and their metadata searchable is a great resource, since image requests are a significant part of our work flow. Considering this, we have also started linking images to our catalog records whenever possible. Part of the mission of the Integrated Database is to create records that give you access to as much information as possible and this is one step towards that goal.

IMLS Grant and Acquisitions

In accordance with the requirements of our latest IMLS grant to catalog and digitize collections under threat of war and terrorism, we have focused on the records of Chogha Mish, Jarmo, Khorsabad, and Diyala. We have also acquired internal and external collections that are currently undergoing processing, such as: Amuq materials, some correspondence of Robert Biggs, and the Woolman Papers.

Archival Space and Born-Digital Materials

In addition to organizing the central archival space, efforts have been made to create an additional storage space and work area for the archives on the third floor. Room 321 has been transformed with the help of many people including: Nate Francia, Brendan Bulgur, D'Ann Condes, Jimmy Gurckek, and Foy Scalf. Additionally, digital spaces are now a large part of the archival process and include an overhaul of the digital archive. This is being done by transferring these materials into the database with the help of volunteers, as well as focusing on the proper preservation of born-digital materials. Most importantly for my work at this moment is the preservation of correspondence and in particular the directors' correspondence of Gil Stein, who is the first director of the OI to have the majority of his correspondence in digital form.

New Projects

In conjunction with digital preservation and access, the archives began two new projects this year in order to bring more attention to the people that made and make the OI what it is today. These projects not only preserve OI history, but connect OI researchers and visitors with the people who made and continue to make that history possible. These projects are the Oriental Institute Oral History Project (in partnership with the Research Archives and IT) and the Oriental Institute Member Lectures Digital Conversion Project.

The goal of the oral history project is to collect and preserve information about the Institute, its people, and their experiences. These interviews represent a unique perspective on institutional history rarely captured by conventional research and publication methods. In order to collect these histories, the project conducts interviews with various members or former members of the Oriental Institute community. These interviews allow faculty, staff, and volunteers to share their knowledge and experience of the OI in a recording that is uploaded to the Oriental Institute's YouTube channel. We have already posted interviews with John Larson (Museum Archivist, 1980–2016); and Professor Emeritus of Assyriology Robert Biggs. The Archives Team plans to release two more before the end of this year.

Similarly, the digital conversion of member lectures provides access to the voices that worked to create the Institute by digitizing lectures that were previously stored only on cassette tapes. On these tapes is a thirty-year history of Oriental Institute Member Lectures and they cover an astounding variety of topics from Erica Reiner's lecture on Hallowed Herbs to Matthew Stolper's lecture on the Kasr Text and Achaemenid Babylonia. These lectures highlight some of the most influential research of Oriental Institute scholars. Both of these projects are available on the Oriental Institute's YouTube channel

Visiting Scholars

With the help of curator Kiersten Neumann, a more streamlined approach to our research requests process has been created. This allows researchers and staff to organize their visits to the OI more efficiently. The archives has seen a number of new and returning researchers this year. They include, but are not limited to:

Visiting Researchers

- Kemal Baran (PhD Candidate, Department of Archaeology and History of Art, Koç University), researching the Papers of Robert and Linda Braidwood
- Emma Piper-Burkett (Independent Scholar and Filmmaker), researching the Jarmo Collection and Papers of Robert and Linda Braidwood
- Will Carruthers (Fellow at the German Historical Institute, London), researching the Nubia Collection
- Rachael Dann (Associate Professor of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Collections Research Grant Recipient), researching the Nubia Collection
- Remi Hadad (PhD Candidate, University of Paris-Nanterre), researching the Papers of Maurits Van Loon
- Lauren King (BA Student of Art History, Southern Methodist University), researching the Persepolis Collection
- Peter Lacovara (Director of the Ancient Egyptian Heritage and Archaeology Fund), researching Past Gallery Redesign Projects
- Peter Raulwing researching the Papers of Hans Güterbock
- Mira Schwerda (PhD Candidate, CMES, Harvard University), researching Persepolis Photographs
- Ariane Thomas (The Louvre), researching the Khorsabad Collection
- Barbara Breasted Whitesides researching the letters of Breasted

Oriental Institute Researchers

- Richard Beal: Researching Hittitology at the Oriental Institute
- Joey Cross: Researching the Amherst Papyrus
- Tasha Vorderstrasse: Researching Nineteenth Century Photographs
- Foy Scalf: Researching the Coffin Text Project and Egyptian Photographs
- Emily Teeter: Researching the Directors Correspondence
- Oya Topçuoğlu: Researching Hittitology at the Oriental Institute
- Grégory Marouard: Researching Dendera Photographs
- Morag Kersel: Researching Bab edh-Dhra.

Acknowledgments

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