

COMMUNICATIONS

KIERSTEN NEUMANN AND MATTHEW WELTON

CENTENNIAL COMMUNICATIONS

KIERSTEN NEUMANN

The OI has been an epicenter for the study of ancient Middle Eastern civilizations since 1919. Despite its impressive achievements, the OI has remained a hidden gem, with many in Chicago and beyond unaware of its vast collection of artifacts and pioneering research and fieldwork. The occasion of the OI's one hundredth birthday presented the perfect opportunity to reinvigorate our iconic institution's image while simultaneously attracting new visitors, donors, volunteers, knowledge seekers, and history enthusiasts alike. To this end, in the 2019–20 academic year we devoted our communications efforts towards the OI's centennial communications campaign. Following the launch of the new OI logo and centennial mark and the centennial website (oi100.uchicago.edu) in April 2019 (see Annual Report 2018–19: Communications), for summer and fall 2019 we concentrated our efforts on: 1) fully realizing our stationery, marketing materials, merchandise, and brand guidelines in partnership with UChicago Creative; 2) completing the design print and digital creative for our centennial marketing campaign, working in partnership with Tom, Dick & Harry Creative Co., in tandem with The Well Advertising, Inc., and Jam-tik social media marketing and consulting and; 3) finalizing our media and public-relations strategy, working in partnership with The Silverman Group. The University of Chicago Communications and Creative teams continued to assist us through all of these efforts. Guided by such well-curated and strong partnerships, we successfully kicked off our campaign in August 2019.

Stationery, Marketing Materials, Merchandise, and Brand Guidelines

Utilizing the new OI logo and centennial mark, in combination with our overarching desire to effectively and artfully capture the history and romance of the OI, we designed a range of basic stationery—including letterhead, envelopes, and business cards—for both general use and the OI director, all of which employ the Gotham font. Materials for the development and membership departments, including membership cards, renewal



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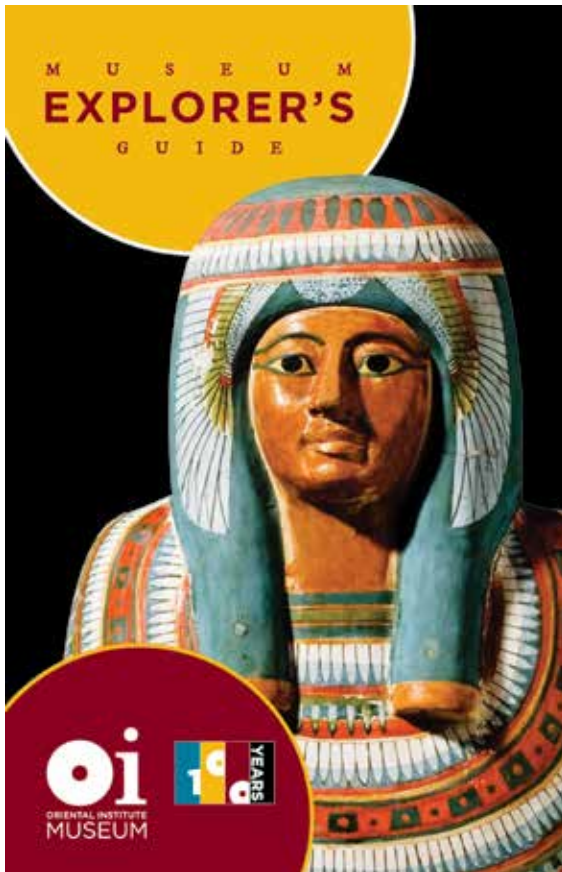
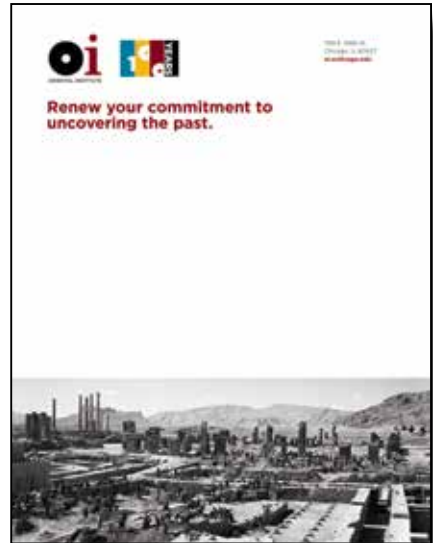
letters, remit envelopes, and a member guide, expanded on these design concepts with additional creative elements—including large archival images to create an immersive feel, the textural “O” graphic element featuring details from artifacts in the OI Museum collection, and the bold OI color scheme (black, maroon, blue, yellow)—and new messaging developed earlier in the year in partnership with consulting firm Lipman Hearne. A dynamic OI Museum rack card, visitor guide, and explorer guide provide the museum companions to this collection, all of which make adventurous use of these same creative elements and messaging to promote the recently renovated permanent galleries. Event posters and Emma email marketing templates were provided to be used by all departments, and pop-up banners and a podium plaque were installed in Breasted Hall. Additional digital components include email signatures and PowerPoint templates. Last, we created an assortment of OI promotional materials to sell through the OI Museum gift shop and to hand out as gifts, ranging from small-scale items such as pens, bookmarks, postcards, and magnets to tote bags, mugs, and T-shirts. An assortment in each type provides a choice among centennial, excavation, and object-themed swag.

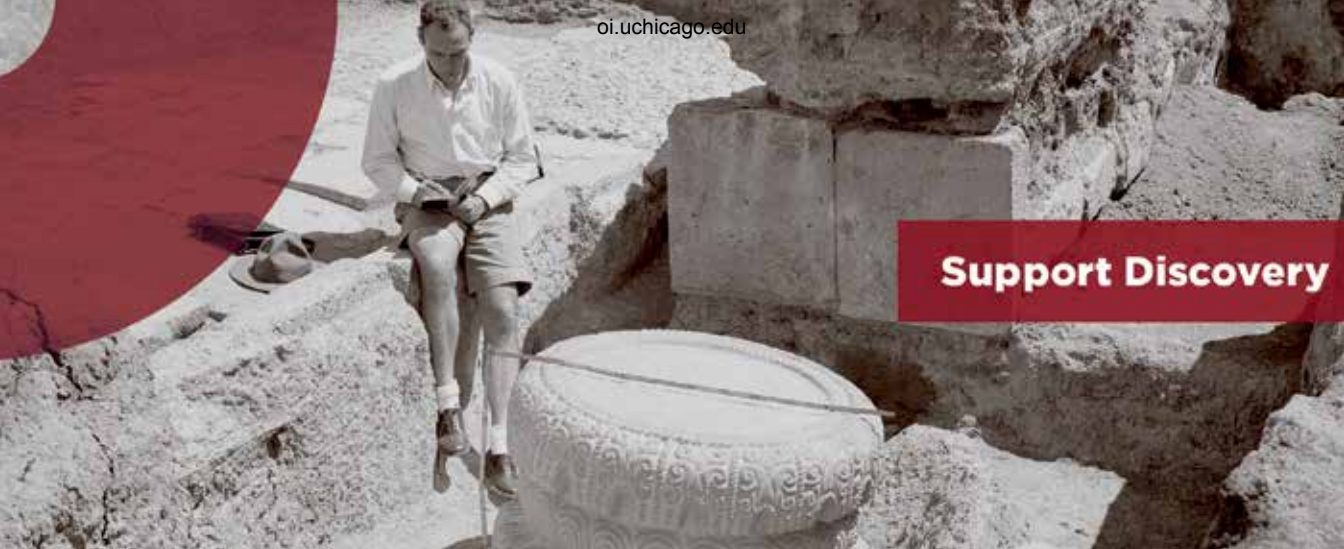
The creative principles that governed the look and tone of all of these materials were codified

in the OI Brand Guidelines, an expansive document that brings together the OI’s nomenclature and messaging, common brand elements for both the OI and OI Museum, and sample applications. This document ensures consistency in tone and appearance across all of the OI’s communication efforts. For one hundred years, the OI has been a leading research center for the study of ancient Middle Eastern civilizations, and through these communication materials, we invite people to join us in uncovering the past and to learn about the beginnings of our lives as humans together.

Centennial Marketing Campaign

Building on the above creative work and messaging, we turned our attention to the OI’s centennial marketing campaign. This brand-awareness campaign was the focus of one of the University of Chicago Communications’ quarterly 360 campaigns, which brought all of the tools and talents of the Communications and Creative teams to create an unwavering impact in helping to build understanding of the OI and its eminence.





We began by partnering with the Chicago-based marketing agency Tom, Dick & Harry Creative Co., in order to leverage the OI centennial to establish a brand idea that drives awareness of the OI's full spectrum of offerings and activities. From the outset we knew that we wanted both the OI's history of archaeological excavation and rigorous research as well as the OI Museum's object collection to feature prominently in the campaign. Before we began the creative process, however, we assembled the OI centennial and new-brand-launch integrated brief, laying out our master brand story, background, objectives, challenge, target, current belief, desired belief, and SMIT ("Single Most Important Thing"); the latter reads as follows: "Humans, together: only through the exploration and experience of our shared past can we understand our present and future." The brief in its entirety paved the way forward for the campaign, entitled "Uncovering the Past, Together." With the goal of raising awareness of the OI's century-long history, the campaign sought to highlight the thrill of discovering long-lost civilizations and preserving the cultural heritage of the Middle East.

OI research has uncovered new ways of seeing what connects humans and why. The creative work for the campaign leans into the OI's unique ability to provide insights into the ancient world and relate them to the challenges we still face today, from environmental change and immigration to disruptive technologies. The creative team devised a sand-inspired graphic device that evokes revelation to elevate images of artifacts in the museum's collection and the OI's archival photography from one hundred years of excavation. "As the OI celebrates its centennial, we're pleased to help tell the story of the OI's field-defining research for the curious-minded through an integrated brand campaign," said Paul M. Rand, vice president of Communications at University of Chicago. "The OI's comprehensive collection of artifacts from the ancient Middle East, as well as its archeological fieldwork, educational programs and events, are a 'must-see' for those looking to understand the world we live in today."

Our target audience for the campaign were knowledge seekers, deep thinkers, and need-to-knowers who are curious in general about ancient civilizations—individuals who engage broadly in the cultural life of Chicago, as well as members of the university community. In working toward being noticed, engaging, and provocative, as well as creating interest in learning more in the short term, our long-term



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objectives were to change the way people engage with the OI on campus, elevate the OI among Chicago’s cultural centers, and support ongoing fundraising efforts.

The “Uncovering the Past, Together” campaign resulted in the production of signage for the OI building—including lobby banners, a museum information board, exterior banners, and kiosk posters—and for the UChicago campus; in August we installed a series of banners across the quadrangle, featuring imagery of both excavations and objects, for which we received very positive feedback from across the campus community. Paid advertisement, which helped drive awareness and understanding about the OI on campus, in Chicago, and around the world, included out-of-house ads (bus shelters and highway billboards), digital display ads, radio spots, social media content, and a print ad for *National Geographic History* (featured in the November/December 2019 issue; pictured right). The paid campaign was seen

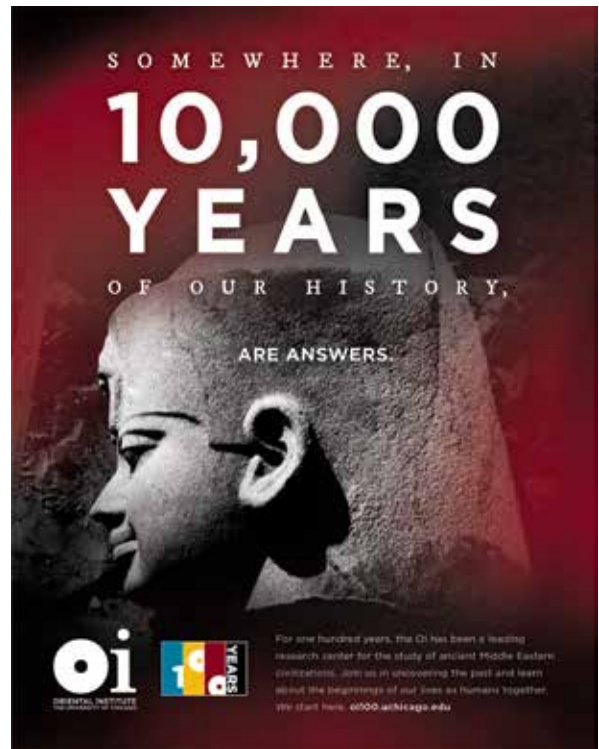
5.2 million times, generating sixty-seven thousand clicks, forty thousand promo video views, and nineteen thousand website visits across Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Campaign-driven traffic to the centennial website also saw an upswing.

The success of the brand-awareness campaign’s design, visual identity, art direction, and copywriting not only played a key role in driving awareness and engagement, but also created a jumping-off point for many of the supporting elements and activities during the centennial year, including event materials, video content, social content, podcast content, media outreach, news features, member and donor outreach, internal communications, and community engagement.

Centennial Public Programming and Promotional Outreach

Media and public-relations efforts were also at the core of the OI’s centennial campaign. To assist in these efforts, we partnered with The Silverman Group, a Chicago-centric public-relations boutique specializing in arts, leisure, and civic fields, to complement our ongoing work with University Communications. The primary goals of the OI centennial PR campaign were to promote overall awareness and understanding of the OI and the OI Museum; introduce the OI’s new brand identity and celebrate the OI centennial; drive attendance to, and engagement with, the OI centennial celebration, including public kickoff and future events; cultivate the next generation of OI visitors, members, and donors; and enhance the reputation of the OI and the University of Chicago overall. Key audiences that were targeted included informed consumers and families with a desire to understand complex topics, such as patrons of Chicago’s cultural centers; residents of Hyde Park and surrounding neighborhood communities; local, regional, and national visitors, with a focus on the museum-going demographic; and prospective and existing UChicago alumni, donors, and the campus community.

Leveraging the completion of the OI’s multi-million-dollar gallery renovation in September 2019, we hosted a number of events in the museum itself leading up to the public opening. First, we



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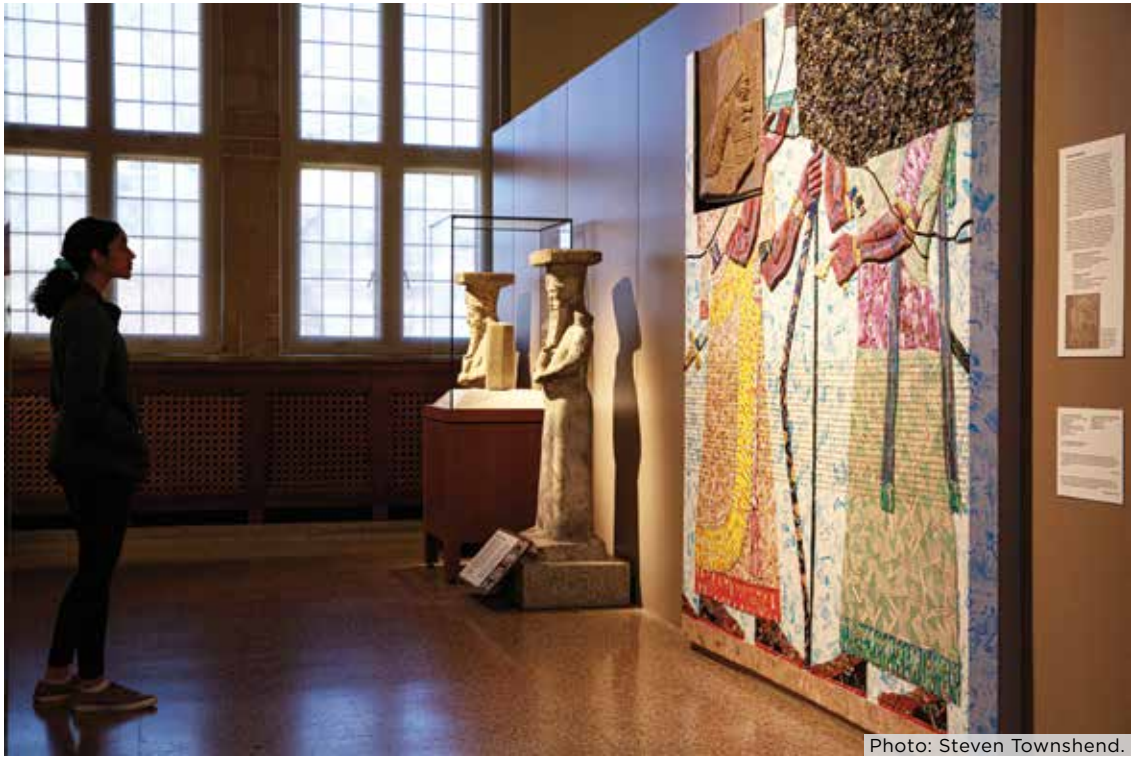


Photo: Steven Townshend.

ushered in the OI's centennial year with a formal gala (pictured opposite top) held on September 14 on the University of Chicago campus, part of which took place inside the OI Museum galleries themselves. This event hosted the OI's most prominent donors, senior executives and board members of the University of Chicago, world-renowned archaeologists and researchers of the ancient Middle East, local and national political leaders, and other longtime and new supporters. Viewed by the attendees for the first time were contemporary works by internationally acclaimed Syrian artist and architect Mohamad Hafez (pictured opposite bottom) and Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz (pictured above). Hafez's mixed-media sculptural compilations, entitled *Hiraeth*, *Collateral Damage*, and *Baggage #5*, and Rakowitz's reappearance of panel G-13 from the Northwest Palace at Nimrud as part of his series *The invisible enemy should not exist* uniquely illuminate and engage with the OI collection. Also on view was the special exhibition *We Start Here: The OI at 100*, as well as the stone relief of a lion and bull in combat from Persepolis, recently returned to the OI Museum after eighty years on loan to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and up to five hundred additional artifacts on display for the first time in the renovated permanent galleries. On September 17, the OI Museum opened its doors to participants of EXPO Chicago South Side Openings, joining up with nearby DuSable Museum of African American History, Logan Center Exhibitions, Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society, Renaissance Society, and Smart Museum of Art. In addition to the works of Hafez and Rakowitz exhibited at the OI Museum, the OI showcased Ann Hamilton's project *aeon*, which featured a series of translucent images of OI artifacts that Hamilton produced using a small flatbed desktop scanner and a handheld wand scanner affixed to the massive glass dome of UChicago's Joe and Rika Mansueto Library. Also highlighted was the OI exhibition *Discovery, Collection, Memory: The Oriental Institute at 100*, at the Special Collections Research Center, Regenstein Library. On September 25 we invited the campus community to a special reception held in the museum to commemorate the OI's century of discovery and research, offering an opportunity for a private viewing of the renovated galleries



Top and bottom photo: John Zich.

and centennial exhibitions. At long last, September 28 was the big kickoff event to our centennial celebrations, unveiling to the public for the first time the recently completed galleries and centennial displays. The event drew well over five hundred attendees throughout the day, with much excitement and talk of the forthcoming year of events and experiences to be offered to the public as part of the centennial year.

Throughout September and October, we also hosted events off campus, both in Chicago and in the digital world. On September 18 we moved slightly outside of our comfort zone in order to join the world of Reddit, hosting a “Reddit AMA” (Ask Me Anything) on r/Archaeology, entitled “I’m the director of a world-renowned museum & research center focused on the ancient Middle East. AMA!” Christopher Woods—with sup-



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port from UChicago’s social media experts Brian Battle and Kevin Castro as well as Jean M. Evans and me—responded to a host of questions posed by Reddit users on diverse topics related to archaeology, and more specifically, Sumerology. Chris also joined UChicago Communications’ Paul Rand on his podcast *Big Brains* on September 20 for a show entitled “How Politics and Archaeology Intersect in Iraq, with Christopher Woods.” On October 18, the OI shifted north to the Arts Club of Chicago, where we hosted a joint lunchtime program—a talk by Michael Rakowitz on the site-specific installation of the Northwest Palace relief at the OI Museum; this most interesting and well-attended program included a dialogue with OI director Christopher Woods and OI deputy director and chief curator Jean M. Evans.

Back at the OI Museum we hosted an OI Indiana Jones Film Festival in Breasted Hall on October 11–12, followed by the first iteration of *Mummies & Martinis* on October 24, drawing a new audience to the OI with craft cocktails, music, and gallery talks on all things “mummies.” The OI also offered two gallery talks as part of the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial—I presented one entitled “The Social Imaginary of an Assyrian Imperial City” in the Khorsabad Court on October 19, and another entitled “Frank Lloyd Wright’s Vision for Greater Baghdad” was given by Tasha Vorderstrasse on November 16 in Breasted Hall. Stepping yet again off campus and gearing up for the holiday season, the OI team participated as a table partner in *Key Magazine’s* Holiday Showcase, a concierge event held at the Lyric Opera House on November 25 that connected us with over 950 concierge, guest-service, and tourism VIPs (pictured above). At the outset of the new year, the OI partnered with University of Chicago’s Court Theatre to host a groundbreaking site-specific performance of *An Iliad* in the OI Museum. Combining promenadestyle elements throughout the museum, as well as a seated portion performed in the OI’s Robert and Deborah Alibert Persian Gallery, this explosive combination of theatre and history brought the epic poem to life in a thrilling new way, with performances kicking off on February 26 and scheduled through March 11. Due to COVID-19, performances of *An Iliad* ended on March 11, and the OI Museum temporarily closed its doors to the public on March 17.

This assortment of exceptional programming took place in addition to our regular OI offerings, including members’ lectures, youth and family classes, podcasts, lunchtime gallery talks, continuing-education courses, travel programs, and beyond. Noteworthy annual events include *Mummies Night: 100 years of Mummies!* on October 26 and the Persian Nowruz Celebration on March 7. Our social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, You-



The Politics of Archaeology In Iraq With Christopher Woods (Ep. 31)

The director of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago explains how archaeological investment becomes a form of diplomacy.





Tube), digital communications (*eTablet*, volunteer newsletters), and quarterly members' magazine, *News & Notes*, were rich with centennial content, promoting events past and present, highlights of the collections and renovated galleries, fieldwork, research projects, and ground-breaking publications.

The centennial celebrations and completed gallery renovations also drove our media-relations efforts with pitches to local, national, and international outlets from the beginning of fall 2019 through the first months of 2020. The OI Museum frequently served as the location for media interviews conducted with Christopher Woods and Jean M. Evans, as well as with Gil Stein for an Al Jazeera feature on the OI's cultural-heritage work in Afghanistan. We also organized press events in the galleries and at the Joe and Rika Mansueto Library to highlight the contemporary art installations by Hafez, Rakowitz, and Hamilton. All of these media-relations efforts, in combination with our centennial brand-awareness campaign, helped us in gaining local, national, and international media coverage, exceeding our goals of five to ten million impressions with a final number of sixty-five million total impressions. Some of the most noteworthy placements included the Associated Press,

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Reuters, Conde Nast Traveler, USA Today, the Washington Post, BBC, Al Jazeera, Forbes, CS Magazine, ABC7 Chicago “190 North,” KEY Magazine, and Choose Chicago. Select features include the following:

- *UChicago Magazine*, “The OI at 100,” Summer 2019
- *Harper’s Bazaar*, “A Passage Through Time,” May 2019
- *The Art Newspaper*, “For Its Centennial, Oriental Institute Weds Ancient Artefacts with Contemporary Art,” July 31, 2019
- *The Washington Post*, “In Afghanistan, Experts Work to Restore a Trove of Buddha Figurines Smashed by the Taliban,” July 3, 2019
- *UChicago News*, “OI Marks 100 Years of Discovery in the Ancient Middle East,” August 6, 2019
- CBS News, “Afghans Restore Art Destroyed by Taliban as Peace Deal Nears,” August 20, 2019
- *Associated Press*, “Afghans Restore Art Shattered by Taliban as Peace Deal Nears,” August 20, 2020
- *UChicago News*, “Burned Buildings Reveal Sacking of Ancient Turkish City 3,500 Years Ago,” August 29, 2019
- *UChicago News*, “Ancient Persian Artifact Nearly 2,500 Years Old Returns to Oriental Institute,” September 12, 2019
- *Hyde Park Herald*, “U. of C.’s Oriental Institute Celebrates Centennial,” September 17, 2019
- *Chicago Tribune*, “The Oriental Institute Has a 100th Birthday Makeover Wish — To No Longer Be Chicago’s ‘Hidden Gem’,” September 19, 2019
- *Chicago Sun-Times*, “Chicago’s Oriental Institute — A Hidden Gem Celebrates 100th Anniversary in a Very Public Way,” September 26, 2019
- WBEZ, “New Oriental Institute Art Exhibits Range from Giant Images Overhead to Scenes in a Suitcase,” September 27, 2019
- *Hyde Park Herald*, “Renovated Oriental Institute Brings Contemporary Middle Eastern Art into Galleries,” September 27
- *Iran Front Page*, “Ancient Persian Artifacts Held in US for Decades Return to Iran,” September 30, 2019
- *UChicago News*, “Artist Reimagines Ancient Middle Eastern Artifact in Vivid Color,” October 2, 2019
- WTTW TV “Chicago Tonight,” “Oriental Institute Unveils Multimillion-Dollar Makeover for Centennial,” October 3, 2019
- WGN TV, “A Hidden Gem’: A Look inside the Oriental Institute,” October 4, 2019
- *Tehran Times*, “We Revealed How Achaemenids Ruled Persia: Oriental Institute Expert,” October 5, 2019
- *Reuters*, “Afghan Museum Restores Buddhist History, One Broken Piece at a Time,” October 12, 2019
- *NWI Times*, “Dig into History: Oriental Institute Celebrates 100th Anniversary with Renovated Galleries, Special Programming,” October 17, 2019
- *The Chicago Maroon*, “Discovery, Collection, Memory: The Oriental Institute at 100,” November 10, 2019
- *The Chicago Maroon*, “After Eight Decades at OI, Ancient Tablets Return to Iran,” November 18, 2019
- *The Standard*, “Totally Digging It,” December 10, 2019
- *UChicago News*, “Shattered Buddhist Statues Restored with Help from the OI,” January 8, 2020
- *BBC Travel*, “The Afghan Artefacts that Survived Taliban Destruction,” February 4, 2020
- *EL PAIS*, “Un Nuevo Museo en Afganistán para Sanar la Peor Guerra,” February 12, 2020

EXPLORING THE OI FROM HOME DURING COVID-19

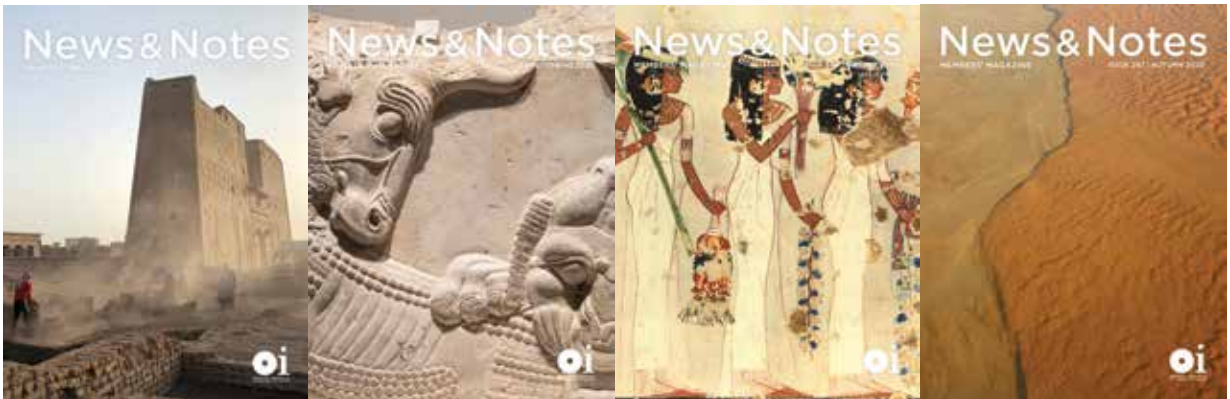
MATTHEW WELTON

In March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and social-distancing orders required the University of Chicago to shut down, closing the OI to the general public, students, faculty, and staff. During the time of closure, OI Centennial Year programming was in full swing. The Court Theatre's *An Iliad*, along with the OI's in-person Members' Lectures, planned Breasted Society and Young Professional events, gallery talks, film series, and other public programs were cancelled, many restructured in the coming weeks as online offerings.

During these months of museum closure and social distancing, OI Communications restructured social media and enhanced digital content on YouTube and Zoom in order to bring the OI to a global audience sheltering at home. Starting on March 16, when the order to work at home and closure of the OI were announced, we began offering weekly thematic at-home explorations across all of our social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). Each Monday we announced the theme, and through Friday we offered daily links and suggestions designed to inspire our followers to investigate a century of OI scholarship. Daily, we used our online resources to inspire our patrons to interface with historical and current OI research on the ancient Middle East using both our existing databases and newly created content. Examples of our free, at-home material include: reading lists highlighting a century of OI publications, scavenger hunts using OI online collection searches, online workbooks, virtual tours on our OI app, live chats and discussions, and new and archived videos of workshops and lectures. Over the past few months, our themes have included: food in the ancient Middle East; the ancient history of wine, art, and artisans in the ancient Middle East; landscape archaeology; essential workers in the ancient world; ancient languages; epics; games; household goods; and more. Each week allowed an intersection with the contemporary and the ancient world, offering multiple avenues designed to foster a sense of community and occupy some time during this period of social isolation. If you missed any of our weekly material, we have created a dedicated online portal for quick access. Log on to oi.uchicago.edu/visit/join-us-online-and-explore-oi and explore from home!

Focusing our Communications efforts online, we were able to continue to offer our regularly scheduled OI events in at-home formats while ramping up content with new offerings. Our monthly Members' Lectures were recorded by our faculty in their living rooms and home offices and premiered on YouTube. Our monthly gallery talks turned into Facebook lunchtime live chats, youth and family classes were offered on Zoom, we engaged with our Breasted Society members through online live Zoom salons, and we offered free weekly ancient language seminars, an online book club, and even OI tour reunion happy hours. Transitioning our online programming and content allowed us to build on our recent practice of livestreaming events and lectures from Breasted Hall. Our original pre-shelter-at-home goal was to reach out past Chicago to engage with our patrons on the coasts, and all points in between; the reality of COVID-19 allowed us to use digital programming to reach not just a national audience, but a global base. The growth of our video offerings provided a forum where our faculty and grad students reach the world at large. We learned that we have OI fans everywhere. Our online chats, seminars, and lectures are regularly viewed live by patrons from the UK, Egypt, Serbia, Turkey, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Amsterdam, Iran, Germany, South Africa, Switzerland, and Australia, to name a few examples. By using social media to highlight new content on our YouTube channel, the OI's reach has become global overnight.

YouTube provided the OI with a successful outlet as we continue our mission to share our scholarship on the ancient Middle East with the general public. Engagement on YouTube has shown a massive increase as we offer more content during the pandemic. Between March and May of 2020,



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our YouTube subscriptions increased 284 percent, with views increasing 459 percent. After the first phase of online creation, we continue to use YouTube to reach an international audience to bring the work of our faculty, staff, and graduate students to the world with new, regular, original video content and live premieres. We invite you to visit our OI YouTube channel and subscribe at the following link: www.youtube.com/c/TheOrientalInstitute. Our YouTube channel is filled with new and archived Members' Lectures, youth and family classes, recent podcasts, talks about the collections, and more.

Through the pandemic our patrons and members have kept up to date with OI news, events, and opportunities through monthly and supplemental E-Tablet emails, regular social media posts, volunteer newsletters, and our quarterly members' magazine, *News & Notes*. It is our plan to continue to highlight and honor the OI centennial into the 2020–21 academic year and to invite our patrons and members back into the OI for in-person celebrations once social-distancing rules abate.