

MUSEUM

ROBERT BAIN, DENISE BROWNING, LAURA D'ALESSANDRO,
JEAN M. EVANS, ANNE FLANNERY, AND HELEN MCDONALD

The newly installed galleries of the OI Museum were previewed at our gala on September 14, 2019, and unveiled to the public on September 28—marking the beginning of our yearlong Centennial celebration commemorating one hundred years of pioneering research at the OI (fig. 1). The OI Museum staff worked hard to complete the galleries, a project (the “GEP”) that had been five hundred years in the making. In addition to new display cases, lighting, and graphics, we installed some additional artifacts from the collection that had never before been on permanent display. Most notable is our monumental relief of a lion and bull in combat from Persepolis, now installed in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery after having been on loan to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts for over years. New spaces, including those devoted to the Islamic period (the Larissa Inga Livental's Islamic Collections Exhibit) and to Babylon (the Robert Parrillo City of Babylon Exhibit) were created. Finally, we presented many of our artifacts in new ways, drawing upon original documentation and photography to highlight OI excavations and the unparalleled value of our museum archives.

The OI Museum typically receives around fifty-five thousand visitors annually. Our visitor numbers had been slightly lower these past couple of years, probably due to our periodic closure of certain galleries for the GEP, which also caused us to halt our special-exhibitions schedule. During the first six months of our newly installed galleries, from September to February, we were on track to have our highest number of visitors in decades. However, we announced on March 13 that the OI Museum would close due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we did not reopen until September 29,



Figure 1. Mesopotamia Gallery. Photo: M Tropea.



TOP: Figure 2. OIM reopening, September 29.
 BOTTOM: Figure 3. Ann Hamilton. Photo: JM Evans.

2020 (fig. 2). While the OI Museum was closed, a number of essential museum staff continued their on-site work along with our security staff, checking the galleries and collections and addressing maintenance issues throughout the building.

I am so thankful to the OI Museum staff for all their hard work this past year. The challenges we faced at the beginning of the year with the conclusion of the GEP were very different from those we faced at the end of the year with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is a credit to such a talented staff that we were able to continue our work. In the process of doing so, not only did we safeguard the collections, but we found innovative ways to reach new audiences through our virtual programming and social media.

I would like to highlight just a few of our special OI Centennial projects this past year; a more comprehensive accounting of them is available in subsequent entries of this Museum section as well as in the Communications section, which also highlights our virtual programming during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Most notably, we celebrated the OI Centennial in our galleries and beyond by collaborating with internationally recognized contemporary artists to present new installations inspired by our collections. In the fall of 2018, Ann Hamilton, recipient of the National Medal of Arts and a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship, spent a week in residency working with OI Museum staff to make images of our artifacts using early generation scanners (fig. 3). The images, enlarged to gigantic scale, were affixed



to the elliptical glass dome of the Grand Reading Room in the Joe and Rika Mansueto Library to create Hamilton's new installation, titled *æon* (September 18–December 15). Her project also included a book and a limited edition portfolio of prints.

The Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz created a site-specific installation (September 13–present) in the Dr. Norman Solhkhah Family Assyrian Empire Gallery that included a fragmentary relief in our collection from the Northwest Palace at Nimrud depicting the head of the Assyrian ruler Ashurnasirpal (figs. 4–5). This collaboration was an extension of Rakowitz's series entitled *The invisible enemy should not exist*, which uses contemporary Middle Eastern newspapers and Iraqi food packaging to make "reappearances" of the thousands of Iraqi artifacts destroyed by armed conflict and invasion—reminding us that, ultimately, the most devastating casualties of war are human loss and suffering.

The Syrian artist and architect Mohamad Hafez, who was our first ever interpreter-in-residence at the OI, exhibited *Lamentation* in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery (September 13–present) and developed public programming to connect our collections with contemporary issues in the Middle East (figs. 6–7). Responding to the Syrian civil war, Hafez's installation captured the magnitude of devastation and the fragilities of human life, particularly those caused by compulsory departure and the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis.

The special exhibition, *We Start Here: The OI at 100 (the Marshall and Doris Holleb Family Gallery for Special Exhibits, September 13–present)*, displayed the history of the OI with digitized archival film never or



TOP: Figure 4. Rakowitz. Photo: Michael Tropea.
BOTTOM: Figure 5. Rakowitz. Photo: Michael Tropea.

MUSEUM



rarely before seen and new comprehensive timelines for the history of our archaeological fieldwork and language projects.

For the Special Collection Research Center at the Regenstein Library, Anne Flannery, head of Museum Archives, curated *Discovery, Collection, Memory: The Oriental Institute at 100* (September 16–December 13), chronicling the origins of the OI alongside the founding of the university.

Kiersten Neumann, curator, reinstalled our display case in the lobby of the Booth School of Business with *The OI at 100: The First Expedition*.

Finally, the OI partnered with Court Theatre for a site-specific performance in the OI Museum of *An Iliad* by Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare. Opening with a promenade through the museum, the play concluded with a seated portion performed in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, performances of *An Iliad* ended prematurely on March 11.



TOP: Figure 6. Hafez. Photo: Michael Tropea.

BOTTOM: Figure 7. Hafez. Photo: Michael Tropea.

CONSERVATION

The year began in much the same fashion as the previous year, with no hint of the changing world that was in our future. Conservation's efforts focused on the last few critical months of activities of the Gallery Enhancement Project (GEP) and the exhibition that would mark the celebration of the Oriental Institute's centennial. Conservation staff continued to assess the conservation needs of objects going out on display, as well as those objects requested by researchers for their projects or professors for use in their classes. Conservation staff also continued with the ongoing material identifications of objects within the collection, a critical component of our work that corrects many old designations that were assigned on the basis of a visual examination. The correct identification of the composition of an object not only impacts the understanding of its historical context in antiquity but also contributes to the choice of conservation treatment that may be used on the object. While our abilities are limited by the equipment at our disposal, the lab's acquisition of its first hand-held x-ray fluorescent analyzer in 2013 opened the door to its use on thousands of objects in the collection, due to its non-destructive nature. The pXRF analyzer allows us to identify the elemental composition of inorganic materials in the collection without requiring the removal of a sample from the object.

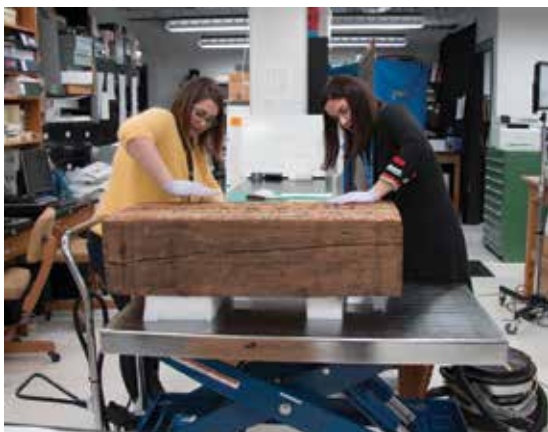
The condition of several thousand objects was assessed by conservation staff over the course of the year, but only a relatively small number were approved for display. The quick turnaround that the reinstallation timetable required meant that only a few hundred objects would be able to receive conservation in the time allowed, and most of the artifacts approved for treatment needed only minor conservation to be able to be safely displayed. The majority of objects that required intensive stabilization were returned to storage until a suitable time could be found that would allow for their proper conservation. The list of high-priority objects that require treatment continues to grow.

In the fall, Conservation worked with Registration and Preparation on several small loans on campus. The thirty-one objects that were on loan to the Booth School were de-installed and packed for the return trip. Although the artifacts only traveled a short distance, the loan included delicate objects such as the Coptic bronze scales (E14458A-C). One of the pieces of the scale, a 1 mm thick beam of corroded copper alloy, had to be specially packed in custom foam cut-outs for even such a short trip. The exhibit *Doing Business in the Ancient World* was replaced by the *OI Centennial Exhibit*. Alison Whyte, associate conservator, took the lead on the Booth School loans. Similarly, a few objects were loaned to the Regenstein Library Special Collections gallery to commemorate the OI's centennial. Stephanie Black, assistant conservator, took the lead in the installation and de-installation of the exhibit at the Regenstein.

While the majority of our efforts during the first half of the year were focused on the GEP, time was made in the schedule to assist with other ongoing projects. From cleaning and stabilizing the glass housing of our Greek papyrus collection for a delayed scanning project to assisting with object handling and answering conservation-related questions during a class on ceramic technology, conservators were kept busy. Conservation also assisted with the 3-D scanning of skulls from Alishar that would be sampled for the faculty-driven ancient DNA project by UC geneticists. The University's MRSEC (Materials Preparation & Measurement) Laboratory generously offered to provide a high-resolution 3-D print of the more complete skull so that we would have a copy of the pre-sampled skull for future research purposes.

By the fall, with the OI Centennial Gala behind us, we resumed our more usual activities. In September, Alison Whyte, associate conservator, traveled to the site of Zincirli, Turkey, to carry out analysis of finds from the OI-sponsored excavation. It turned out to be the last trip for our portable x-ray fluorescence analyzer (pXRF). The rigors of travel contributed to the demise of our elderly

MUSEUM



LEFT: Figure 1. Stephanie Black, assistant conservator (left), and Alison Whyte, associate conservator, begin the painstaking process of opening one of the thirty-five crates of bricks from the excavations at the Sin Temple, Khorsabad, Iraq (2020). RIGHT: Figure 2. A detail of the first exposed glazed brick from Crate 25 from the façade of the Sin Temple, Khorsabad (2020).

machine. Very fortunately, Director Chris Woods, appreciating the importance of the pXRF to conservation and research projects in general, authorized the replacement of the analyzer. The new Bruker Tracer 5g, a top-of-the-line pXRF, arrived in mid-March just days before the pandemic caused the shutdown of Chicago and the state of Illinois. It sits in the conservation office, still in its origin packing materials, awaiting the official opening of the boxes and certification of the equipment. The Tracer 5g's higher sensitivity will allow us to identify lighter elements than the older Tracer III model and increase our research capabilities.

In October, a small group led by Director Chris Woods returned another batch of Persepolis Fortification tablets to the National Museum of Iran. The 1,783 tablets, which had been so carefully and patiently packed within their individual boxes by our wonderful volunteers (Sue Padula, Rita Lieber, Steven Scott, and Jeremy Walker), were received with much fanfare by our Iranian colleagues. The opening of the crates, with their many layers of special packing materials, was conducted under the watchful eyes of both our museum colleagues and government representatives. It was with great relief that the tablets were seen to have traveled halfway around the world without damage, proof that the packing protocol was a success. The remainder of the trip was without incident, and the graciousness and helpfulness of our Iranian colleagues contributed to the wonderful experiences that followed. Immediately upon our return, the packing of the next shipment began with the assistance of two University of Chicago students, Camille Gardenas and John Sweeney. In addition to their packing responsibilities, they also selected digital images of the packed tablets that would accompany the next shipment.

In November, the conservation lab hosted a visit from the Education Department of the Museum of Science and Industry, organized by former OI Education staff member Leila Makdisi. After the tour of the lab and presentations by Conservation staff, Whyte provided a special presentation of the conservation of the coffin of Ipi Ha Ishutef to the group. Over the course of the year, Whyte continued her work with public outreach and education by providing a series of talks and classes. She started the year off in July when she presented an OI adult education course: *Caring for the Collection*. In December, Whyte also presented an OI lunchtime gallery talk titled *Bastiani and Beyond*, which was very well received. And in March of the following year, Whyte presented a lecture, "Museum Art Conservation," to Morag Kersel's class on material culture and museums at DePaul University.

After an eighteen-year hiatus, we were able to resume the conservation of the glazed bricks from the Sin Temple at Khorsabad (figs. 1, 2). Excavated during the 1932–33 season of the Iraq expedition and shipped to Chicago at the conclusion of the season, the thirty-five crates of glazed brick from the Sin Temple façade at Khorsabad formed part of the legal apportionment of finds by the Iraqi government. One of the reasons the conservation of these bricks is so important is that they are the only extant glazed bricks from the Sin Temple façade. The opposite (mirror-image) façade of the Sin Temple, which was shipped to Baghdad in the 1930s, has never been recovered. The OI crates remained unopened until the 1990s, when preliminary work began on the bricks, testing the use of modern stabilizing chemicals and their potential interactions with chemicals that had been applied in the field sixty years earlier. Work resumed on the bricks for the 2002 re-installation of the Mesopotamian Gallery, but limited display space only allowed for the re-creation of the head of a bull, a grand total of nine bricks. The hope is to someday complete the conservation and analysis of the approximately 282 bricks and reconstruct the decorated façade of the Sin Temple in our galleries. With the far-reaching effects of the pandemic, this project has had to be put back on hold for the immediate future.

Later in the year, the Oriental Institute Museum was invited to join the APPEAR (Ancient Panel Painting: Examination, Analysis and Research) project. Sponsored by the Getty, the APPEAR project is an international collaboration of museums that focuses on the study of Romano-Egyptian funerary paintings with the stated goal of expanding the understanding of these ancient materials and technology. We will be collaborating with conservation scientists from the Art Institute, another member of the project, as we examine and study our own two examples from the Fayum in Egypt, depicting portraits of a male and a female. The male portrait (E2053) is shown here (fig. 3). Interrupted by the pandemic, plans are underway to resume work on the project as soon as circumstances allow.

The Sevruguin exhibit, originally scheduled for the fall of 2020, brought the condition of the Sevruguin collection of albumen prints to our attention. Beyond storing them appropriately in archival housing, no conservation efforts had been applied to them since their acquisition. The albumen prints are adhered to cardboard backing that dates to the origin of the prints. Due to the delicate nature of the albumen print, they cannot be safely removed from the cardboard. There is no

Figure 3. The first reconstruction of the glazed bricks from the Sin Temple façade revealing the head of the bull figure in the OI conservation lab in 2002.



MUSEUM



Figure 4. The framed Fayum mummy portrait of a male figure (E2053) from Hawara, Egypt, in the OI collection. Dating to the Roman period, it is one of two portraits in the collection that will be studied as part of the APPEAR project.

information on their condition when first acquired, but currently the print and cardboard backings are brittle and generally dirty. Museum director Jean Evans recognized that the exhibition would present an opportunity to promote the long-term preservation of this important collection. To that end, photograph and paper conservator Carol Turchan was brought in to assess the collection and make treatment recommendations. At this time, the collection of 152 prints is undergoing conservation treatment by Turchan who is cleaning and stabilizing the prints and their backing.

By mid-March, the pandemic had reached Chicago, and the stay-at-home order was issued by the governor of Illinois. Conservation staff had only a few hours to figure out how to transfer some of our responsibilities to a remote work situation. Whyte took on the task of updating the materials fields in our integrated database (IDB), replacing incorrect material identifications with scientifically based identifications as a result of our work during the GE project. Stephanie Black, assistant conservator, took on the momentous task of beginning the digitizing of the conservation lab's first twenty years of paper records, color slides, and photographs dating back to the 1970s. She was able to scan 4,433 items (prints, slides, negatives, and written reports) by the end of June, and she developed a protocol for digitization

of the different types of records. There is still a significant portion of the collection to be scanned, but Black made a heroic effort and put a major dent in the task.

As the stay-at-home order was extended indefinitely, we realized that we would not be returning to work in the building in two or three weeks, as originally believed. To deal with this new reality, the core senior collections staff—the heads of each unit, led by Museum director Jean Evans, began conducting weekly collection checks that supplemented the daily building inspections carried out by the OI security team. Additionally, the University's Building Automation Department wrote a short program for their HVAC-monitoring system, software that normally runs on a PC, which allowed D'Alessandro to check on our climate-control remotely with a Mac-based computer. Their quick response was much appreciated, and the ability to conduct these daily checks on our system was very reassuring as the stay-at-home order continued.

Stephanie Black's contract ended in June, and we were saddened to have to say goodbye. She was with us for three years, working as an integral member of the Conservation team, and will be missed by the museum as a whole. Her work on many of the projects over the course of the three years, most notably the GEP and Sin Temple bricks, was integral to their success. But there is a happy ending—Black accepted a position with the Field Museum as assistant conservator for the Native North American Hall project and starts there this summer.

As this report goes to press, the pandemic is still very much a reality of life. We hope that next year's annual report will have a more positive story to tell.

REGISTRATION

Once again, most of Museum Registration's time has been taken up by Gallery Enhancement Project activities (GEP). Some five thousand object movements took place in relation to the GEP this year. As the year progressed and the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery was reinstalled, we began returning to storage those objects that were no longer on display or that came out for exhibit consideration but were ultimately rejected.

Requests

In total, the Registration Department has responded to eighty-two different requests this year, generating over 14,800 object movements. Apart from the requests relating to the GEP already mentioned, other requests included research and analysis (1,325 object moves), class use (620 object moves), and photography by both staff and researchers (1,650 object moves). Just over 3,100 object moves involved objects being returned to storage after all uses (including the GEP).

Visiting Researchers

Kyra Kaercher (University of Cambridge) visited to study a selection of Islamic sherds and submitted a sampling and analysis request for a selection. Sophie Kroft visited to study a few pre-dynastic objects for her PhD. Professor Anastasia Maravela (University of Oslo) took the opportunity to examine a selection of Greek and Coptic ostraca from Medinet Habu (while a visiting professor in the Department of Classics). Jennifer Thum (Harvard University) inspected a few wooden objects in the Egyptian collection. Lorenz Rahmstorf and Nicola Ialongo of the Weight and Value project visited to study and weigh the weights and coil money from the Diyala sites (and gave a lecture on their ERC project that is based at the University of Göttingen, Germany). Luckily, they were able to complete their visit just before the COVID-19 restrictions came into force.

Collections Research Grant Recipients

Father Sharbel Iskandar Bcheiry made numerous visits to study folios from a Syriac manuscript (OIM A12000 to A12006). Mudit Trivedi came to study Islamic glass bracelets and made a selection for LA-ICP-MS analysis. Artur Stephanski examined a few Khafajah objects while consulting Diyala excavation records. Due to COVID-19, visits by the following CRG recipients are currently on hold: Moritz Jansen (LA-ICP-MS analysis of gold objects), Alice Williams (study of the Amarna house model), Bart Vanthuyne (Ballas and Naqada pottery, excavated by Petrie), and a second visit by Mudit Trivedi. Hopefully all these visits will happen in the 2020–21 academic year.

Oriental Institute Faculty, Staff, Researchers, and Students

Postdoctoral researcher Delphine Ponsoit studied the Sassanian stamp seals in the collection. Michael Johnson continued to photograph sherds and objects from Tell al-Judaidah (Amuq, Turkey) for the Judaidah database in OCHRE. Foy Scalf photographed some five hundred Medinet Habu ostraca. James Osborne, together with Maanasa Raghavan of the new human genetics lab on campus, began to look at the possibility of taking DNA samples from some of the human skulls from Alishar Höyük (Turkey). This interest led to the registration of several Alishar skulls and 3-D scanning of two that are to be sampled to see if DNA can be retrieved (see image IMG_5655 or 5657). NELC student Theresa Tiliakos studied hieratic ostraca for her PhD. Tynan Kelly came in to study a Druze manuscript (A16385). Emily Teeter examined some Medinet Habu figurines. Kathryn Bandy has continued to work on digitizing drawings of some Semna South sealings for the volume in preparation by Joan Zabkar. Emilie Sarrazin photographed a few pots from Mendes (Egypt) for her PhD. Professor Sofia

MUSEUM

Torallas-Tovar requested a selection of Greek papyri for possible scanning.

Classes and Special Events

James Osborne taught his ceramic technology class in the Winter Quarter. Over three hundred sherds and pots were used in the classes. The registrar gave the students a backstage tour of the ceramics collection to help them select a ceramic vessel for an end-of-term paper. Foy Scalf used a selection of manuscripts and tablet casts for a class for Dominican University in February. A selection of ostraca was used by Theresa Tiliakos for a Hieratic class. Tasha Vorderstrasse used some Indo-Greek coins for part of Professor Gil Stein's Archaeology of Afghanistan class.

Photo Permissions

Over 150 photo permission requests were processed this year, including new external photography and internal photography (nineteen requests). Over twelve hundred images (new and existing) have been registered and added to the database. Around 155 objects were photographed, including both new photography and study photos (but not including the five hundred ostraca photographed by Foy Scalf).

As well as working with the exhibit preparation department on the GEP, Kathleen (Kate) Cescon was also Photo Archives assistant from December 2019 through June 2020. She assisted Susan Allison with photography and photo permission requests and added images from the museum server to the database. The server holds all professional digital photography from the past ten years. When processing new photography, the images need to be assigned a digital number and added to the database. There are thousands of folders on the server containing images that were never assigned a number or added to the database. This is a huge project that will take years to complete. Kate created a systematic process of locating images that only exist on the server, processing them, and adding them to the IDB. Since mid-December, Kate added roughly nineteen folders of images into EMu, eleven of which were completed while working remotely during the pandemic. The folders range in size and number of images, but also in how many new images need to be created per folder. Some images only need to be added to the "Supplementary" tab in EMu, while others must be registered with new digital numbers and added to the server as well as the database. Since December, Kate created around 364 images for input into EMu, (339 of them during the pandemic). In total this year, four hundred images were added from the server to EMu.

After more than ten years at the OI, Bryce Lowry left as museum photographer in October and successfully defended his PhD. With no photographer on staff, associate registrar Susan Allison has taken over the role.

Inventory and Rehousing

Over 1,330 objects were inventoried, rehousing in archival materials, and relabeled in four cabinets. These cabinets had been moved for the construction of the support in the storage area below the gallery floor for the Persepolis lion and bull relief returned from a loan to the MFA Boston (OIM A73000). Kate Cescon reconfigured one of the cabinets to insert drawers for the housing of the stone mace heads from the Diyala (Iraq). Kate also carried out an extensive inventory of ten Chogha Mish storage cabinets in order to ascertain how much material was unregistered. (This involved some forty-six shelves of complete or partial vessels and some 230 boxes). This will be very useful when we move back to registering material, and it was prompted by a research request for Susiana culture sherds. An inventory of the Khorsabad glazed bricks was carried out by the registrar. While some of these Neo-Assyrian bricks from the Sin Temple have been treated by Conservation and are

on display, others are still in their original packing crates. These crates are marked with the brick numbers used in the excavation photos. In OI Museum terms, all the bricks are registered as OIM A11810, with the individual brick numbers used in the field being re-used as suffixes to the main A11810 registration number. All the bricks now have records in the integrated database (IDB) indicating which crate they are in. We hope this will help Conservation as more of the bricks are unpacked and treated. Upon his retirement, McGuire Gibson handed over around some twenty boxes of Nippur sherds to the OI Museum. These have been rehoused, given temporary storage box (TSB) numbers, and entered into the IDB.

Loans

The loan to the Louvre's *Forgotten Realms* exhibit, including two large column bases from Tayinat (Turkey), returned in August. In September, a loan of OI archival material and a small selection of objects went over to the Regenstein Library on campus for an exhibit marking the OI centennial (it returned in December). In October, a small loan of objects and archival material also commemorating the OI centennial was installed in a case in the lobby of the Booth School of Business lobby. For the Centennial exhibit in the OI's own Marshall and Doris Holleb Family Special Exhibits Gallery, we borrowed some Japanese bronze flowers that were once in the old Haskell Museum collection (now housed at the Smart Museum of Art on campus). Works by living artists Mohamad Hafez and Michael Rakowitz are presently in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery and the Dr. Norman Solhkhah Family Assyrian Empire Gallery, respectively.

The Effects of COVID-19

As already mentioned above, several research visits and analysis requests have been postponed (for both CRG recipients and others). A project to scan a selection of OIM objects so that the resulting 3-D scans and prints could be used in artworks by Mohamad Hafez is currently on hold; likewise, a project to scan some Greek papyri in our collection. The process of finding new permanent locations for the material no longer on display in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery was interrupted. Kate Cescon was in the process of taking photos of the new display cases labeled with object registration numbers. However, there have also been opportunities. An enormous amount of sorting and registering the digital images backlog has been carried out by Susan Allison and Kate Cescon. This could not have happened on such a scale if it had not been for the time spent working from home. The registrar took a quantity of printouts and other paper records from her office home and shredded, recycled, or filed it. With regular loan meetings on Zoom, progress continued to be made on contracts and other documents needed for forthcoming loans. We have been able to answer queries of all sorts due to remote access to the IDB.

From September until the COVID-19 shutdown, we had the capable assistance of work-study student John Shannon. He continued to take digital images of objects while they were off display during the GEP and added them to the IDB (920 images added, record shots rather than publication quality photos). He also registered and photographed Alishar human skulls and used the Artec spider (borrowed from the Department of Art History on campus) to scan two of the skulls in 3-D. We wish him all the best with his PhD at Johns Hopkins University.

We will greatly miss the assistance of Kate Cescon, as her GEP contract has come to an end, and would like to thank her for all her help. The registrars would also like to thank Knut Boehmer and Foy Scalf for assistance and advice with Zoom, VPNs, and virtual desktops, all of which have made it possible for us to work from home productively. Thank you both.

MUSEUM

EXHIBITION DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

The 2019–20 season was certainly noteworthy for the Department of Exhibition Design and Production, formerly the Preparation Shop. The OI Museum redesign was completed. This was a multi-year project that saw the reinstallation of nearly every object in the entire museum into brand new display cases and completely redesigned graphics, labels, and didactics. The redesign coincided with the installation of the newly returned large Persepolis relief depicting a lion attacking a bull, which had been on loan to the Museum of Fine Arts

in Boston for eighty years. We also designed and installed the OI Centennial Exhibition “Discovery, Collection, Memory: The Oriental Institute at 100.” Both projects culminated with the museum grand reopening and the Centennial Gala at the end of September.

This was followed immediately by the Exhibition Design and Production staff working closely with both the Oriental Institute and the Court Theater to arrange the Court’s amazing production of the play *An Iliad* by Lisa Peterson and Denis O’Hare. The work involved developing a plan to have the actor present the play as he and the audience moved through the museum to the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery, which had to have much of its newly installed contents removed again to accommodate the play and its set and production equipment.

This production, like so much else, was sadly cut short as the campus shut down in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Exhibition Design and Production staff, comprising manager Josh Tulisiak and Robert Bain, continued to work remotely on the design and production of upcoming exhibitions and regular inspections of the museum building during the COVID lockdown—a task brightened by the discovery of a nesting mallard duck in our courtyard whose ducklings, once hatched, were saved by a rescue organization.



Work-study student John Shannon working on the scans of a human skull from Alishar Höyük (Turkey).

MUSEUM ARCHIVES

There was no lack of activity for the Archives team over this past year. The archives, with its extensive collection of photographs and correspondence, played an active role in preparations for the OI’s centennial, and it was wonderful to see the celebrations finally kick off in September 2019. Not only was the centennial volume brimming with archival photographs, but head of Museum Archives, Anne Flannery, designed an exhibit with the Special Collection Research Center at the University of Chicago Library, which opened at the Regenstein on September 16, 2019. *Discovery, Collection, Memory: The Oriental Institute at 100* depicted the origins of the OI alongside the founding of the present-day University of Chicago. It gave an overview of the institute as it went from idea to established research institute and museum. Using not only archival documents, photographs, and ephemera, the exhibit also employed artifacts usually left in storage, as well as creative graphics created by the SCRC team to depict the space and mission of the OI across campus. In support of the exhibit and the centennial, Flannery gave tours for Humanities Day and the Chicago Archives Association, as well as

delivering presentations to the University of Chicago Service League and the Provenance Research and Exchange Program at the Smithsonian.

Additionally, another successful launch of the Cultural Heritage Experiment (CHE) took place in October of 2019 with fifty archival items being loaned out to University of Chicago undergraduates. This program is popular not just at the University of Chicago: over the course of 2019–20, Anne Flannery started working with staff and faculty at the Johns Hopkins University’s Sheridan Library to pilot this program and more extensively study its beneficial effects on undergraduate populations as part of an Academic Research Library (ARL) Pilot Project.

On November 1, 2019, a significant change took place in the Museum Archives. Anne Flannery went on a seven-month leave to Germany, during which time Jeff Cumonow, MA, took over as interim archivist. Jeff did a fantastic job facilitating research requests, working with volunteers, and organizing archival programming and tours, as well as cataloging the collections. He also assisted with the preparation of photographs and contributed to the catalog for the OI’s next special exhibit, which centers around nineteenth-century photographer Antoin Sevruguin.

New Acquisitions

In addition to making great progress cataloging the Directors Correspondence, new materials were acquired by the Museum Archives this year. Some of these materials came from external sources and are important pieces of the research collections of Professor Tony Wilkinson and former director Bob Adams, while others came from within the OI from the still-active collections of Professors Janet Johnson and Mac Gibson.

Researchers

The Museum Archives hosted a variety of researchers from around the globe during 2019–20 from institutions including, but not limited to, the University of Dayton, University College London, the Louvre, the University of Nebraska, the University of Toronto, and Wesleyan University. These researchers delved into popular collections such as Diyala, Khafajeh, Faculty Papers, Directors Correspondence, and the James Henry Breasted Papers.

The Pandemic

Like all archives, we were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic when the OI, along with the rest of Illinois, went into lockdown in March 2020. In addition to inhibiting its ability to facilitate in-person research, the archives ended the CHE program early and put a series of programming, including a workshop by OI artist-in-residence Mohammad Hafez, on hold. June 2020 has brought a return to activity with the cataloging of the pandemic-related documentation that the archives collected from OI and University of Chicago communities. The archives also created a mail-in form on the archives website in order to record COVID-19 stories. Additionally, this time is proving valuable for beginning to catalog the extensive digital museum archive that exists and to tackle larger issues like born-digital materials as we move forward with a more robust digital presence and service model.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Jeff Cumonow for his work as interim archivist from November 2019 through May 2020. Special thanks to Susan Allison, Jean Evans, Fan Ge, Helen MacDonald, Noelle Norona, Mike Ramberg, Foy Scalf, and Josh Tulisak for keeping the archives running smoothly this year. Thank you to the Special Collections Research Center Exhibit Staff at the University Library—Dan Meyer, Patti Gibbons, and Chelsea Kaufman—for everything that they did to realize the special exhibit, and

MUSEUM

to Stephanie Black for making sure the museum objects were installed and de-installed with care. And a general thank you to the staff of the OI for making sure the building, including the archives, remained safe and secure during the pandemic.

The 2018–19 year was filled with a variety of projects, researchers, and events for the Museum Archives. Great strides were made in the way of access and research, as well as contributions to the OI centennial. The Museum Archives contributed images to variety of projects, curated an exhibit for the Special Collections and Research Center at the Regenstein Library, and continued to catalog the archive in order to make it more accessible to researchers at home and abroad.

Thank you to Jean Evans for her support of archival projects at home and abroad. And last, but never least, thank you to students and volunteers who do so much on a daily basis, especially Jeff Cumonow, Fan Ge, Olivia Perozo, and Mike Ramberg.

SUQ

This year was a very busy year for the Suq until COVID-19 shut us down March 15, the last day the Suq was open to the public.

We started the year off with a book signing of Jode Magness's new book, *Masada: From Jewish Revolt to Modern Myth*.

September began with the opening of the newly designed galleries and all of the celebrations of the Oriental Institute's centennial. As part of the celebration, we received a newly designed visitor's service desk, part of the Lobby Redesign Project, plus merchandise with the new OI logo designed and developed for the Suq by UChicago Creative, assisted by Kiersten Neumann and Jean Evans. It was a diverse selection of merchandise, from magnets to postcards, bookmarks, pens, pencils, spiral notebooks, mugs, T-shirts, tote bags, and Christmas ornaments.

Unfortunately, we had to say goodbye to one of our special docents, Louise DesPres, as she and her husband retired to Virginia. We will greatly miss her charm and intelligence. Great conversations!

A big thank you to our unbelievable docents. They continue to educate and give impeccable service to our customers. Thank you, Ray Broms, Alice Mulberry, Ann Schumacher, Merle Cherney, and Amber Patania. Plus, thank you to the amazing Norma van der Meulen, who creates such beautiful jewelry for us.

A special thank you to Jennifer Castellanos, who kept the Suq looking beautiful and stocked. She is known for her patience and charm with our customers.