

INTRODUCTION

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If 2020–21 was an *annus horribilis* (as I put it in my introduction to last year’s annual report), 2021–22 had a distinctly more positive outlook. We started to fill many gaps in both faculty and staff positions. On July 1, 2022, we welcomed Mehrnoush Soroush, our new assistant professor for landscape archaeology, and by the time this year’s annual report went to press, Augusta McMahon had taken up permanent residence as our professor of Mesopotamian archaeology. In January 2023 they will be joined by Jana Matuszak, who will succeed Christopher Woods as our new assistant professor of Sumerology. On the staff side, Kate Hodge now heads the OI’s Youth and Family Program, Drew Baumann became our managing editor of publications, Bill Cospser took over as director of development, Logan Conley now takes care of all things IT, and Stanford Carpenter is our new manager of community engagement and volunteer programs. At the end of the summer we also hired a new chief curator for the OI Museum, Marc Maillot, who will start in January 2023. With all these new appointments during the past year, we enter an exciting period of rejuvenation.

The hiring processes that brought (or will soon bring) all these new faces were conducted by ever so many committees. The heaviest burden was carried by the faculty: literally every faculty member was called on to serve. In fact, many sat on multiple committees. But staff likewise shared in this work, as did a number of members of the OI’s Advisory Council. Less visible perhaps, but just as important, was the assistance of Brendan Bulger, associate director of administration and finance, and his staff; Mariana Perlinac, executive assistant to the director; Amanda Young, former NELC department administrator; and Annie Diamond, NELC/OI academic affairs coordinator—all of whom made it happen as smoothly as possible. I want to take this opportunity to express my endless gratitude to all in getting us to where we are now. It has been a truly communal effort!

Meanwhile, new searches are underway for an Egyptian philologist and an archaeologist of the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf States, the latter chair expanding our traditional reach thanks to the generosity of OI Advisory Council member Howard Hallengren. Hopefully, this time next year, I can introduce you to some more new faces.

Of course, there were also losses to bear. Professor emeritus Walter Kaegi and two important and long-time volunteers, Stephen Ritzel and Norma van der Meulen, passed away. For decades Walter was affiliated as an OI voting member from the University of Chicago’s Department of History, and we will miss his vast institutional knowledge. You will find brief portraits of Walter, Stephen, and Norma in this annual report.

On August 2, 2022, Ray Johnson retired as the director of Chicago House and the Epigraphic Survey in Luxor, after an unprecedented run of twenty-five years in that role and a career of more than forty years there in total. We thank him for his many achievements. We are also grateful to Brett McClain, who will serve as interim director of the Epigraphic Survey while the search for a new permanent director is launched.

All this activity took place as post-pandemic life at the OI resumed and research and teaching went on as before. Philologists analyzed their texts, and archaeologists again went into the field. Together they produced thirty articles and four books. The special exhibition *Joseph Lindon Smith: The Persepolis Paintings* opened; a new special exhibition, featuring Roman sculpture excavated by

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the OI at Ptolemais, was prepared; and loans from the OI collections went out to the Louvre in Paris, the Getty in Los Angeles, and the Morgan in New York. Volunteers returned, groups toured the Museum, lectures and events for all ages were held, and books rolled off the presses. Finally, the rejuvenation (as I described it earlier) was reflected this past summer in a very concrete way in the courtyard renovation carried out by Berglund under the watchful eye of assistant project manager Elise Cone. The courtyard looks like new again, and great care was taken to shield the courtyard garden (and its ducks!) from any harm.

In my introduction last year, I expressed the hope for a “less singular” year than the one that had brought us so many challenges—a year in which we could “live and work again as a real community.” We may not be there yet a full hundred percent, but we definitely have come close to normal—thanks to the efforts of the entire OI community.