

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

MATTHEW WELTON, TASHA VORDERSTRASSE,
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The last quarter of the 2022–23 year covered by this annual report saw a restructuring in administration at ISAC. Matthew Welton, previously the manager of member programming, was promoted to associate director of communications, programming, and marketing, a position that oversees the new Programming and Communications department. With the creation of this new position, public programming and outreach have been centralized into one unit at ISAC. Adult Education, the Youth and Family program, the ISAC travel program, and Community Engagement with its volunteer and docent core are now united in a department that is designed to work with ISAC at large, so that all units can be adequately represented as we bring the work, research, and history of our institute to the greater public.

This restructuring coincided with the renaming of the Oriental Institute as the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures—West Asia & North Africa. For the short time this department has been in operation, much of the focus has been on coordinating all aspects of the renaming process and communicating this monumental change. Though the name has successfully been changed and our name-change reception is now in the history books, the work on public education surrounding our decision to transition from OI to ISAC remains ongoing.

While public reaction to our name change was positive overall, we believe it is our duty to continue to integrate topics pertaining to the change and to our history in a growing discourse that extends the walls of ISAC. To accomplish this goal, we will continue to grow and expand the community conversations that were started by our previous community engagement and docent/volunteer manager, Stanford Carpenter. Through in-person and online conversations, we seek to deepen our institutional engagement with both University of Chicago students and the general public—not only on issues surrounding our name change but on a variety of topics that will allow us to discuss our collective present by using lessons learned during more than a century of research studying the cultures of ancient West Asia and North Africa.

The restructuring and creation of the Programming and Communications department is as new as our name. While reports from the managers of Adult Education, the Youth and Family program, and the volunteer and docent program are shared here, other public programming that occurred at ISAC during the 2022–23 year may be found scattered throughout other sections of this annual report.

With the restructuring, we also experienced change in ISAC personnel. We said farewell to Stanford Carpenter, our former community engagement manager, and welcomed Catie Witt as manager of the docent and volunteer program. We entered the new year anticipating that a search for our next community engagement manager would soon be underway.

ADULT EDUCATION

Youth Internship Program

From June 30 to August 4, 2022, ISAC had an opportunity to take part in the University of Chicago's Youth Internship Program, coordinated through the Office of Civic Engagement. The youth interns were

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all high school students from institutions on Chicago's South Side, and the program gave them the opportunity to participate in activities in different departments of the university. The two students who took part in the program with ISAC were Samia Chatman, of Perspectives/IIT Math & Science Academy, and Morgan Eggleston, of Kenwood Academy.

For six weeks, the students learned how to help document the collections housed in the Education Office, and they met with youth and family program manager Kate Hodge for an hour each week to hear about archaeology and archaeological methodologies. While learning how to document and describe pottery, stones, and other materials, including modern replicas, they also gained skills in organizing their time and developing a research plan, so that at the end of the internship they could give a presentation on their work to a small audience. Samia presented to a group that included ISAC interim director Theo van den Hout; her work as an ISAC intern is featured at <https://collegiatescholars.uchicago.edu/participants/samia-chatman>.

Classes

ISAC continued to offer online classes this year, including, in the summer quarter, "Cracking Codes: Champollion's Decipherment of Hieroglyphs in Its Historical Context." This eight-week class was taught jointly by ISAC Research Archives head Foy Scalf, continuing education manager Tasha Vorderstrasse, and two instructors from the University of Chicago's Graham School, Fred Beuttler and Zoë Eisenman. The class was very well attended, with 74 registrants. In fall 2022, "Community Archaeology" was jointly taught by Vorderstrasse and Rachel George, a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology. The winter quarter focused on art and archaeology from Ethiopia and Eritrea, starting with a free class, "Garima Gospels: Late Antique Manuscripts from Ethiopia," taught by Vorderstrasse. It attracted 281 registrants and was followed by Vorderstrasse's three-week class "The Aksumite Empire: Ethiopia and Eritrea in the 1st Millennium CE." In the spring quarter, Vorderstrasse taught "Building/Imagining Baghdad: From Art Deco to Rifat Chadirji to Frank Lloyd Wright." In summer 2023, the free class on author Drusilla Dunjee Houston's history *Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire* celebrated Juneteenth, and Brendan Hainline started teaching "Reading the Pyramid Texts: Introduction to Old Egyptian," which continued into August.

Teacher Workshops

Teacher workshops took place in fall 2022 and spring 2023. Three of the fall workshops were conducted by Vorderstrasse alone—"Axumite Empire and Trade," "Napatan Queens," and "Arabic Alchemy and the Philosopher's Stone"—while the fourth was taught by Vorderstrasse in cooperation with Kate Hodge: "Worshipping the Conquerors," in which Vorderstrasse focused on ruler worship of the Ptolemies and Hodge presented a study of Columbus Day. Two teacher workshops took place in spring 2023 and were inspired by the ISAC Museum's *Artifacts Also Die* exhibition: "Depicting Excavations" and "Depicting the World's Columbian Exposition." The addition of Hodge's expertise on indigenous peoples in the Americas has brought a new aspect to the teacher workshop and has begun to draw connections between West Asia/North Africa and other parts of the world where people might not normally see connections.

University and Other Tours

University tours continued to be popular throughout the year, particularly in the fall. Vorderstrasse gave a total of thirty-nine tours to 247 University of Chicago students, 140 Laboratory School students, and staff. The tours included Vorderstrasse's postcolonial tour as well as specialized tours on Abbasid Baghdad. Vorderstrasse also offered a specialized tour on ancient Kush for the public in June.

Explorers Lecture

Vorderstrasse organized the lecture “Creating Nubia: How Colonialism, Tourism, and Archaeology Made a Region, a Past, and a People,” given in December 2022 by Will Carruthers of the University of East Anglia.

Social Media

Adult Education maintained a strong presence across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, thanks to Kate Hodge’s continued assistance with writing social media posts on most Fridays as well as assuming the task on some Wednesdays. Ryan Winters, a postdoctoral scholar at ISAC, also helped by writing posts about ancient tablets. His work included helping translate a tablet that proved to be the most popular Facebook post ever, on Ur III female workers. The year saw strong engagement with ISAC’s social media posts, particularly during the hundred-year anniversary of the discovery of King Tutankhamun’s tomb, when we featured the work of Johannes Weninger, stonemason at Chicago House in Luxor, Egypt.

YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAM

This year, the goal of the Youth and Family program was to reestablish postpandemic consistency. We worked to increase attendance numbers and to cultivate an audience from around Chicago.

Field Trip Highlights

From July 2022 to June 2023, 2,038 people came to the ISAC Museum for sixty-eight educational field trips. These programs were led and taught by a team of six education facilitators—Chloe Brettman (lead facilitator), Samantha Suppes, Adrianna Layne, Nat Larsen, Madeleine Roberts-Ganim, and Catherine Witt—in addition to Youth and Family program manager Kate Hodge.

Five educational programs were offered, all of them standards aligned, engaging, and inquiry based. Three were standard field trips, one for each age group: Time Travelers (grades K–4), Artifact Analysis (grades 5–12), and Ancient Innovators (grades 5–12). Newly added were two limited-time field trips based on this year’s special exhibitions: Making Sense of Artifacts and Artifacts Also Die. Of the sixty-eight educational programs hosted by the ISAC Museum, eleven were Time Travelers, twenty-five were Artifact Analysis, thirteen were Ancient Innovators, four were Making Sense of Artifacts, five were a guided tour and film, and ten were guided tours led by facilitators.

For the first time, the Youth and Family program had a pro bono budget to work with in 2023. Thanks to this budget, as well as to partnerships with Communities in Schools, Amplify, Neighborhood School Partnership, Project Exploration, and educators across campus, approximately 250 people in fourteen groups came for a Youth and Family educational program or experience. We look forward to continuing to increase these numbers in the coming year.

In addition to educational field-trip programs, the ISAC Museum also continued offering the option of self-guided tours. We hosted 111 self-guided tour groups with a total of 2,657 individuals.

Program Highlights

Programming with weekend workshops and weekend events has been an effective and important component of Youth and Family education. In 2022–23, we taught more than 1,250 people during these events. We focused on reestablishing our three annual events—Haunted Halloween (formerly known as Mummies Night), Nowruz, and Ancient Game Day—as well as on creating a consistent weekend programming schedule that allowed for instruction on more specific topics. This year, we discovered that maintaining a consistent weekend workshop schedule while also hosting larger, open-house-type events was the format that

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catered to the largest and most diverse audience. The weekend workshops allowed for new programs to be piloted to a dedicated and local audience, while open-house programs promoted widespread learning to a larger audience from around the city.

Haunted Halloween hosted 560 people and a further 40 at a screening of the movie *Hocus Pocus*, shown later that evening (fig. 1). We offered new craft options that were very popular and a free “spooky” tour. In addition to updating the event’s name, the previously used mummy simulation was refreshed to be a formal lesson that turned out to be very popular. All four classes offered sold out more than a week in advance, and during the event attendance at the lessons exceeded capacity.

Nowruz had around 250 attendees, and we were able to bring back the tea-and-snack-sampling experience. Guests enjoyed sampling as well as gallery scavenger hunts. In 2023–24 we hope to resume the performance component of the event.

About 150 people attended Ancient Game Day, and thanks to the fine weather many people enjoyed games outside.

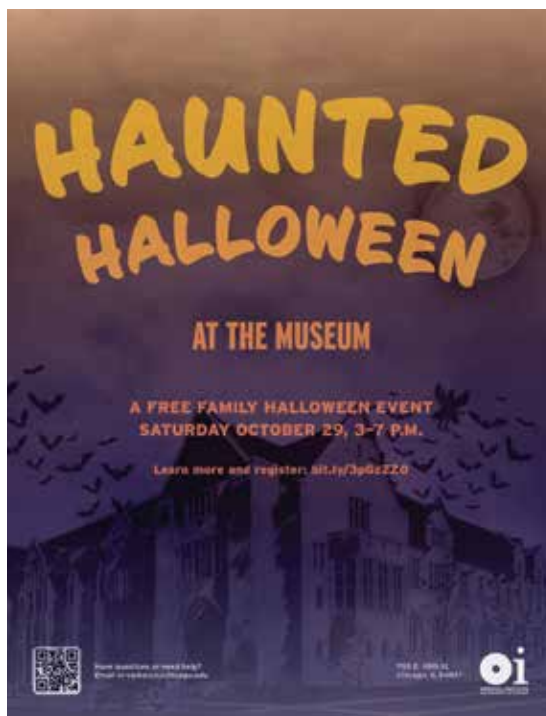


Figure 1. Haunted Halloween poster, created by Josh Tulisiak.



Figure 2. aDNA workshop participant showing off her candy double helix.



Figure 3. Lead facilitator Chloe Brettman demonstrating headrest use for students.

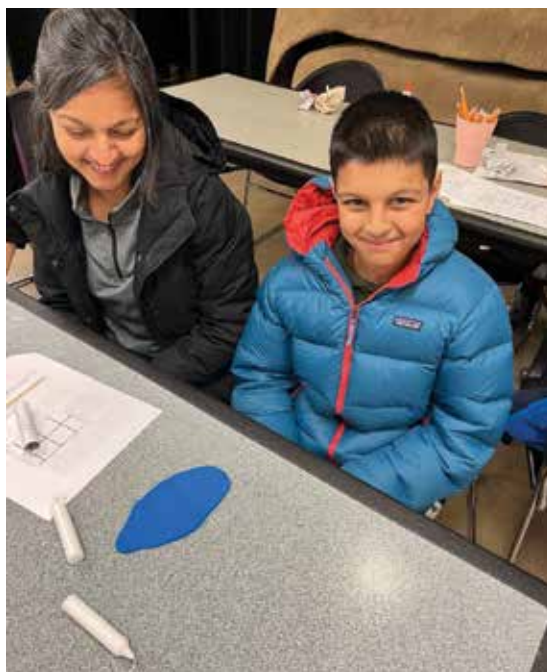


Figure 4. Young workshop participant showing off his cylinder seal design.



Figure 5. Education facilitator Adrianna Layne educating young students about artifact replicas.

In addition to the three annual events, the Youth and Family program organized six other weekend events (figs. 2–5). Two of them were brand-new lessons created in 2023: aDNA and Junior Archaeologist. In partnership with the Pritzker School, aDNA welcomed approximately twenty-five students, who learned how to extract DNA while hearing about the aDNA research of University of Chicago postdoctoral research fellow Hannah Moots. Junior Archaeologist used the Project Archaeology investigation model to allow twenty students to investigate the Jarmo House. The King Tut Day, Nubia: Land of the Bow, and Stamp Seals events were all refreshed and updated and attracted around seventy students.

Ancient Earth Day was another program that was refreshed, updated, and modified this year. In this program, approximately 150 guests did sustainability-themed crafts and learned about examples of recycling and reuse in the ancient world through facilitator-led gallery talks.

Data Collection

The Youth and Family program has been committed to increasing the collection of data both about its own activities and for the ISAC Museum. We created a standardized data collection model for Visitor Services that was implemented in April 2022. Since its implementation, attendance data—about variables such as age, time of entry, visitor status, and more—has been collected in a standardized and shareable manner. Its continued collection during the Museum’s opening hours has resulted in a great deal of information that has already proven enormously useful. In the future, it can be used to make data-driven decisions for the Museum.

Guests fill out an evaluation form for the Youth and Family programs they attend, from field trips to weekend events. For field trips, evaluations are filled out by each chaperone and each teacher; in 2022–23, these evaluations totaled 112. More than 90 percent of the evaluators rated both the tour and the program itself a 5 out of 5, demonstrating the quality of the programming offered. The Youth and Family program plans to use these evaluations to make data-driven decisions in the future.

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In the coming year, we look forward to writing new lessons, including a formalized Mummification field-trip option and a lesson based on the special ISAC Museum exhibition *Back to School in Babylonia*. We will work to standardize lesson plans aligned with Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. Finally, we look forward to continuing and strengthening partnerships with the Shedd Aquarium, NPS, CIS, Amplify, and other organizations in Chicago and on campus.

The projects and programming accomplished this year would not have been possible without the expertise and time of the education facilitators, Tasha Vorderstrasse, or the docents who kindly volunteered to help with programs.

VOLUNTEER AND DOCENT PROGRAM

In 2022–23 we continued to bring docents slowly back into the ISAC Museum galleries after resuming docent-led tours in March 2022 and in-person programming for all volunteers following the hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic. School groups started to return, but our overall visitor and tour numbers in 2022–23 were low compared to 2019 and early 2020.

Prior to the suspension of docent-guided tours in mid-March 2020, K–12 groups comprised an important part of these tours. In 2018–19, docents gave sixty-eight guided tours for K–12 groups, of which fourteen (21 percent) were guided tours done with the K–12 field-trip programs Artifact Analysis and Ancient Innovators, with a total of fifteen docents participating. In 2019 until March 2020, docents gave thirty-six guided K–12 tours, of which eight (22 percent) were guided tours done with K–12 field-trip programs, with a total of twenty docents participating. These statistics show a considerable stability in the types of guided tours offered by docents between 2018 and 2020.

Whereas field trips continued in a virtual form over the course of the pandemic, the guided tours did not, so the numbers of guided tours of all types were at a low when tours resumed in March 2022. Prior to July 1, 2022, thirteen docent-led tours took place, including for three K–12 school groups. A total of eleven docents participated in the guided tours. After July 1, 2022, docents gave a total of thirty-one tours, of which five were for K–12 groups. A total of fifteen docents gave guided tours. These totals indicate that the number of tours given in person was down prior to the pandemic.

Docents and volunteers also participated in the large ISAC events this year by helping with public programs, giving Ask Me/ad hoc tours, and generally assisting Kate Hodge and Matt Welton with events, such as Haunted Halloween and the *Black Panther* film screening in 2022, and Nowruz, Akitu, ISAC's name-change celebration, and Ancient Earth Day in 2023.

Our volunteer managers, Stanford Carpenter and subsequently Catherine Witt, reengaged with volunteers in person through our Volunteer Days, refresher tours, and Book Club meetings. As community engagement and docent and volunteer manager from July 1, 2022, to May 2, 2023, Carpenter, together with Membership, organized “Champollion and Champagne: 200 Years of Decipherment of Hieroglyphs.” The purpose of this event was to bring community members together for a gallery talk by Brian Muhs, associate professor of Egyptology, and short gallery engagements with Tanya Olson, PhD student in Egyptology, and Rolland Long, PhD student at the University of Pennsylvania and employee of the Chicago Demotic Dictionary.

Following this event was one in November to celebrate the release of the new *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* movie. A screening of the original *Black Panther* film was followed by a roundtable discussion with Morag Kersel and Ytasha Womack. In addition, a November Book Club meeting with James Osborne discussed *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, by David Graeber and David Wengrow. December featured a Volunteer Day with August McMahon, February a Volunteer Day with Marc Maillot, and March a Volunteer Day with Kiersten Neumann. March saw a Volunteer Book Club with Stanford Carpenter discussing Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and April a Volunteer Book Club with Ytasha Womack

discussing her book *Afrofuturism*, as well as a Volunteer Day with Mehrnoush Soroush. Catherine Witt was brought on as docent and volunteer manager in May 2023; she organized the May Volunteer Day with Theo van den Hout, led the June Book Club discussing *Cleopatra: Her History, Her Myth*, by Francine Prose, and organized the July Volunteer Day with J. Brett McClain (figs. 6–7).

The year was also marked by the sad passing of several supporters and important members of our volunteer community, including Doug Baldwin, Gabriele DaSilva, John DeWard, Erl Dordal, Margaret Foorman, Kitty Picken, and George Thomson. We are forever grateful for their devotion and service to ISAC.

While the 2022–23 year was one of transition for ISAC’s docent and volunteer program and education department, we look forward to revitalizing the volunteer program in 2023–24 by offering additional volunteer opportunities, programs, and updated training for docents, and we thank everyone for their continued support and resilience.



Figure 6. May 2023 Volunteer Day tour of the galleries with Theo van den Hout. Photo by Catherine Witt.



Figure 7. July 2023 Volunteer Day with J. Brett McClain. Photo by Catherine Witt.