

RESEARCH ARCHIVES

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The Research Archives library had another exciting, productive, and busy year serving the University of Chicago and ISAC communities. As the information in past reports has reflected over the years, data mining and analysis has become an increasingly important aspect of assessing what we do. On the one hand, this type of analysis is so prevalent exactly because much of this information was not available in decades past, and the data is often helpful for quantifying metrics around our services and meeting our goals. From this vantage point, the data often seems an easy and “objective” measure. On the other hand, such data is often full of blind spots, inconsistencies, false leads, and even errors. To that end, it is important that we continually review our quantitative data and subject it to scrutiny while simultaneously balancing it with qualitative data about our patrons and the services we offer.

In the coming years, we will pursue a host of data-mining methodologies to determine what conclusions might be drawn from the data about our collections. As a first foray, we have begun a comparative analysis of word frequencies found in the Research Archives library catalog (fig. 1). For this analysis, we can export the data from our EMu database and pass it through a Python program to tokenize the words, remove common stop words, and count the word frequencies. The resulting data can be visualized through tools such as PowerBI to create an interactive word cloud and a table that allow users to explore further what these frequencies imply about how information on ancient West Asia and North Africa is presented in our

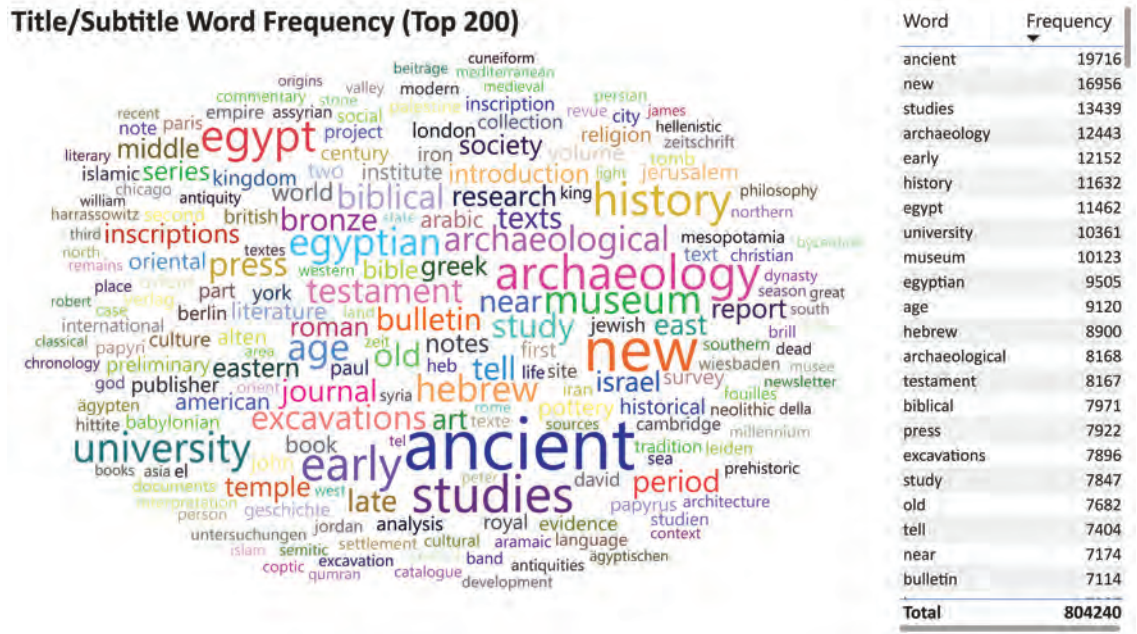


Figure 1. Word cloud and table showing a frequency analysis of the top 200 terms in titles and subtitles of Research Archives library records (PowerBI).

scholarly research. Initial results have proven interesting (the data dashboard may be viewed at <https://isac.uchicago.edu/research/IDB/data-dashboard>), and our team will be working to pursue these and similar lines of research within our collections of Digital Humanities big data. Results and collaborations will be detailed in future reports, conference papers, and publications.

PATRONS AND USAGE

In 2023–24, the library ID card reader recorded 36,148 transactions—4,000 transactions more than last year; 2,665 unique patrons visited the library in person and swiped an ID card to enter. The vast majority of these patrons are students at the University of Chicago; the faculty, students, and staff of ISAC, along with visiting researchers, remain the most engaged users of the library and its collections. Over the course of the academic year, 250 volumes (27 journal volumes, 68 monographs, and 155 series volumes) circulated to offices throughout the ISAC building for the research needs of students, faculty, staff, and visiting scholars. These publications ranged in date from 1897 to 2024, reflecting the importance of access to reference data both new and old, although 106 of the volumes were published after 2010. The most common publishers represented among checked-out books include Peeters, Brill, Harrassowitz, and Oxford University Press, while the book most frequently checked out was *Judicial Decisions in the Ancient Near East*, by Sophie Démare-Lafon and Daniel E. Fleming (Writings from the Ancient World 43) (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2023).

This year we had the pleasure of hosting many visiting researchers, including Sherif AbdelMoniem, Laura Alvarez, Traci Andrews, Ashley Arico, Judy Baxter, Gabrielle Choimet, Cameron Cross, Peter Dorman, Judson Faulconer, Bryan Ghalioungui, Francissca Kang, Bryan Kraemer, Megaera Lorenz, Maha Mansour, Eric McCann, Adam Miglio, Elaine Page and Jennifer Paliatka along with their Chicago's Great Libraries class, Cecilia Palombo and her Islamic history class, Amber Mear, John Nielsen, Vincent Oeters, Ashok Rai, Camilla Raymond, Natalie Rudin, Stephen Smith, Dean Snyder, Ian Stevens, Oya Topcuoglu, and Shigeo Yamada. Additionally, the library provides space for researchers using materials from the Museum Archives, arranged in collaboration with archivist Anne Flannery. The Research Archives library offered orientation tours to new and prospective students, as well as workshops on Zotero and the ISAC collections. We participated in the Campus Digital Collections meet-up at ISAC in the fall. The library also hosted several filming requests from the University of Chicago president's and provost's offices, as well as from UChicago Creative and other media companies.

ACQUISITIONS

The Research Archives library realized an extremely productive acquisition effort in 2023–24 (table 1). A total of 1,315 volumes were acquired in 366 accession lots—on average, more than one accession lot every day of the year; 270 accession lots arrived through purchases, 72 through gifts, and 24 through exchanges of the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* with other publishers and institutions. For the 270 accession-lot purchases, the Research Archives library expended more than \$55,000, plus shipping costs of more than \$5,200, or an average of approximately \$5,000 per month in direct acquisitions costs. The steadfast support of the Research Archive library by ISAC director Tim Harrison and director of finance and administration Sheheryar Hasnain has allowed us to continue this expansion and growth. Sales of duplicate books through the library and the ISAC Museum Shop with the help of Denise Browning supplemented the budget by more than \$2,000.

Table 1. Research Archives acquisitions, July 2023–June 2024.

Month	Number of accession lots	Volumes		
		Monographs, series, pamphlets	Journals	Total
July 2023	37	93	15	108
August 2023	43	59	55	114
September 2023	14	66	170	236
October 2023	35	139	52	191
November 2023	37	64	50	114
December 2023	28	79	39	118
January 2024	46	119	30	149
February 2024	28	38	25	63
March 2024	37	78	41	119
April 2024	15	64	28	92
May 2024	19	66	40	106
June 2024	27	84	13	97
Totals	366	824	491	1,315

ONLINE CATALOG

Research Archives staff added approximately 10,000 new records to the library's catalog in the EMu collection management system this year (table 2; numbers are rounded up to the nearest hundred). Thanks and gratitude for entering this data into the institutional digital repository through Axiell's EMu software are due almost entirely to the staff and volunteers of the Research Archives library (see Acknowledgments below). Records are available online for searching, sorting, and downloading in a variety of formats (<https://isac-idb.uchicago.edu>).

By the end of next year, the Research Archives library will reach 75,000 total volumes (table 3), nearly double the collection of 40,000 volumes that were transferred to the University of Chicago's Regenstein

Table 2. Catalog records added.

Year	No. of catalog records added	Total no. of catalog records
2023–24	10,000	600,000
2022–23	12,500	590,000
2021–22	7,500	577,500
2020–21	5,000	570,000
2019–20	10,000	565,000
2018–19	10,000	555,000

Table 3. Research Archives analytics.

Type	Total no. of records
Total volumes	73,484
Monographs	18,108
Monograph sections	78,352
Series	2,086
Series volumes	23,670
Series volume sections	109,494
Journals	1,076
Journal volumes	30,622
Journal volume articles	335,133
Theses	1,084
Pamphlets	3,253
Reviews	125,124
Festschriften (volumes)	813
Digital invoice records	3,064
Digital cover-art records	20,296
Adobe PDFs	42,583

Library during consolidation in 1970. We have also now exceeded 600,000 records in our library catalog, adding 50 percent to the 400,000 catalog cards in 1970. In addition to our print materials, 137,068 records include a link to digital content—nearly 23 percent of the entire database. To that number can be added 42,583 records with directly linked PDF files. We have only just begun the long and tedious process of incorporating links to other general online resources, such as online dictionaries, grammars, text editions, websites, blogs, and other relevant media.

The online ISAC collections search (<https://isac-idb.uchicago.edu>), which includes the catalog of the Research Archives library, had over 16,500 users conducting more than 31,500 sessions. These users were from all over the world, the top countries represented being the United States, Canada, Turkey, Egypt, Australia, Iran, China, Brazil, and Japan; 71.7 percent of users accessed the site through a desktop computer, 26.9 percent used a mobile device, and 1.4 percent used a tablet (fig. 2). The most common browser was Chrome (60 percent), followed by Safari (27 percent), Edge (6 percent), and Firefox (6 percent).

Analytics recorded 325,551 total events, with an average of 20 events per active user, and 198,809

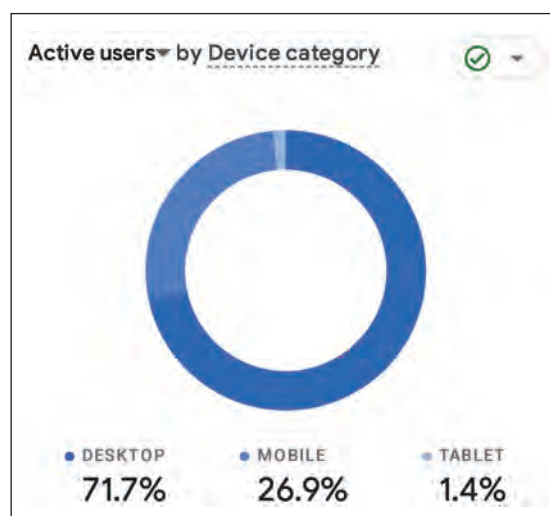


Figure 2. Users by device category (Google Analytics).

individual page views (fig. 3). Nearly 22,000 sessions by more than 11,500 users came from direct traffic, more than 7,000 sessions by 3,500 users came from online searches, and approximately 2,000 sessions by 850 users came from referral links. The record for the iconic *lammasu* (ISACM A7369) was viewed in 1,897 of the events, while 884 events showed users searching for objects on display in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery. During 371 events, the record for the sealing ISACM A917 was viewed; 338 events were used to find and view the Faiyum portrait (ISACM E2053). Like last year, the most popular record from the library was that for volume 1 of James P. Allen's *A New Concordance of the Pyramid Texts*. Users visited the “saved records” page 2,137 times to export records from the database for their research.

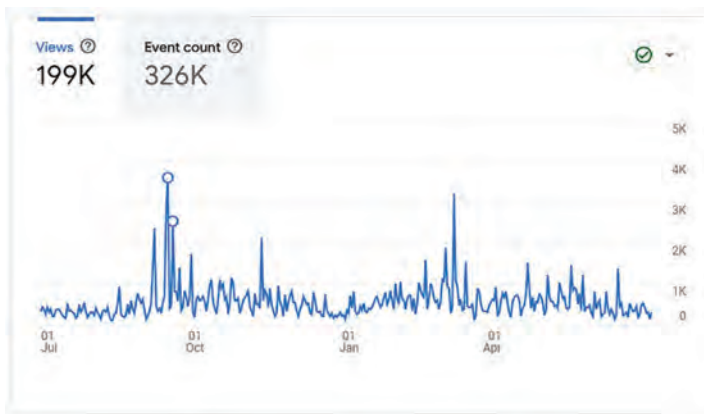


Figure 3. Page views for the Search Our Collections website from July 2023 to June 2024 (Google Analytics).

DONATIONS

The Research Archives continued to benefit greatly from generous donations of both funds and books. We thank the following for their thoughtful gifts (in alphabetical order): Susan Allison, Clarence Anderson, Alex and Tigran Areshian, Andrew Baumann and ISAC Publications, Bob Biggs, Denise Browning, the estate of Miguel Civil, Bill Cospser, Stuart Creason, Peggy Day, Margaret Donlan, Gregory Drake, Andrea Dudek, Anne Flannery, McGuire Gibson, the estate of Donald Hoffman, James Holland, the ISAC Museum image permissions staff, the ISAC Museum Shop, the ISAC volunteers' library, Cray Kennedy, Herbert Köhler, Marc Maillot, Brett McClain, Franklin Nussbaum, the estate of Miriam Reitz, Seth Richardson and the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Arnold Spinka, Stephen Szumowski, Emily Teeter, Linda Wheatley-Irving, Bruce Williams, the estate of Carol Yoshida, and Diane Yurco.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Research Archives library runs on teamwork. Our talented and steadfast staff help make the research and impact of ISAC possible. I sincerely thank, for all their efforts, Christian Borgen, Marta Díaz-Herrera, Courtney Doner, Tanya Olson, Catie Witt, and Amy Zillman. Likewise, I owe a debt of gratitude to our volunteers: Betty Bush, Kym Crawford, Claire Mokrauer-Madden, Hilarie Pozesky, Jeremy Walker, and Eric Whitacre. We also had the pleasure of hosting Naomi Blumberg for a University of Illinois practicum in the library over the spring and summer. Many thanks to all of you for your help!