



INTRODUCTION

Overleaf. Mike Hill of Methods & Materials working on Khorsabad reliefs during reinstallation. Photograph by Jean Grant

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GENE GRAGG

As the cover of this year's annual report reminds us, the Oriental Institute building is itself an artifact. We tend to take for granted this magnificent artifact, created and handed down to us by Breasted. But it is only by constant and careful maintenance and renovation that this building can remain a worthy housing for the unique institution Breasted created. Much of this goes on continuously and imperceptibly, but every once in a while a major piece of renewal is necessary, and for the whole year covered by this report all of us at the Oriental Institute — faculty, staff, and students — have been working surrounded by scaffolding that steadily crept around the building as a part of roof repairs, which periodically kept us out of offices and work spaces while heavy concrete roof slabs were removed and then distracted us as the new roof tiles were nailed into place. An extraordinary effort was made by the University to reproduce faithfully the copper flashing, embossed gutters, and special tiles of the originally designed roof — a successful effort, as anyone will testify who looks at it now from any angle with the sun shining on the tiles and sparkling off the copper.

Renovation is going on within the building also. The Museum opened the Persian Gallery, and after an unforgettable interlude of hosting the *Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur* exhibit, swung into a reinstallation end game. A particularly gratifying piece of internal renovation was the rewiring of the Research Archives reading room, bringing Internet and electrical connections to the desks, plus restorations of floor and lighting to their elegant original state.

Of course what the Institute is all about is the work that is done within it — the creation and dissemination of new knowledge about the ancient Near East. In the pages that follow, you find descriptions of the currently developing nodes in this growing network of knowledge, development of which is the mission of the Oriental Institute. Various paths could be traced through it — here is one quick tour:

In archaeology, consolidation and contextualization is the order of the day. The Amuq Valley Regional Project under Aslihan Yener continues to explore the prehistory beachhead at Kurdu, extending its reach into a site of crucial importance for the historical, especially Bronze Age, period, Atchana-Tayinat. Permission to construct a permanent dig headquarters at this site ensures that the Oriental Institute will remain actively involved in the reconfiguration of our knowledge about that period and the role played by this crucial site.

Far to the east, but around the same latitude, Hamoukar already has a permanent dig house and has already in its first seasons revolutionized our understanding of north/south relations in the development of early urban civilization. McGuire Gibson gives a revealing and amusing account of the travails of starting up a site from scratch. Similarly in Yemen, using a combination of methods ranging from traditional archaeological, to textual, and even to oral history, Tony Wilkinson is beginning to be able to fill in a rich picture of the relation between a city and its countryside. Don Whitcomb is fleshing out the picture of early Islamic port and town develop-

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ment at Aqaba and Qinnasrin, as is Carol Meyer at Bir Umm Fawakhir (with a bonus tutorial on paleo-botany and -zoology!). Giza is here in force this year, with Mark Lehner's report on what is roughly the halfway point of a marathon two-and-a-half year "season." Finally even Iraq is taken up in the movement, through our ability to derive new knowledge from earlier vintage satellite photographs.

The venerable Epigraphic Survey was the original information salvage operation that helped define the Oriental Institute. Ray Johnson's report on the seventy-seventh season shows how, among other things, old-fashioned attention to detail in stone, plus clever use of winch, mallet, and dowel can recover what might be thought to be hopelessly lost information. The other great defining project of the Oriental Institute, the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, is in its final laps, as reported by Martha Roth, while its younger sister, the Chicago Hittite Dictionary, is barely half-way to the goal. The torch ably carried by Harry Hoffner since the beginning of the project has been picked up without a hitch by Theo van den Hout, newly arrived from Amsterdam. Work continues on schedule, while experimentation is launched with a prototype of the dictionary's electronic future. Meanwhile the Chicago Demotic Dictionary project is entering its final stages, as reported by Jan Johnson, with a new kind of electronic pre-publication, under the auspices of the Publications Office website — itself preparing for its electronic future. Of course the Oriental Institute has been in the forefront of electronic dissemination of information about the ancient Near East for several years now, and the latest steps are chronicled here by Charles Jones and John Sanders. And this might be the place to remind the reader that this issue of the *Annual Report* itself, together with issues back to 1996, is available on the Oriental Institute website as an electronic resource.

Finally, under the rubric of change and renovation, there is always a steady rhythm of departures and arrivals in faculty and staff. Many of these for the current year are noted in individual sections, but for the front office this would be the place to note the following: Michele Wong, who kept a steady hand on our finances since 1997, moved to the Benefits Office in October, and was replaced by Simrit Dhesi (who appears elsewhere in these pages, and in earlier reports, as a graduate student in Hittite and archaeology). At the front office desk, Joan Curry retired in May, and her place is now occupied by Nicole Torres. In the Development Office, Ruth Welte replaced Emily Napolitano as Membership Coordinator; Emily has become Assistant to the Director of the Epigraphic Survey.

Here at the Oriental Institute, we are moving into an exciting period of transition. There will be changes and discoveries that you can follow in our quarterly *News & Notes* — and, of course, you will look here for a summary in next year's report!

Shortly before the *Annual Report* proofs were returned to the Institute, the attacks of 11 September 2001 occurred. By the time you are reading this report, much more will be known about the attacks and their consequences than is known as I write this. Our many colleagues in the Middle East have sent heartfelt messages of sympathy and friendship in the days since the attacks, and the Institute joins them in expressing condolences to the family and friends of those lost.
