

MUSEUM

KAREN L. WILSON

The year was a very exciting one for the museum. It began with the opening of the second of our permanent exhibition galleries, the Persian Gallery, followed closely by the traveling exhibit *Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur*. And, as it drew to a close, it found museum staff deeply immersed in planning the reopening of the rest of the museum galleries, which will take place late in 2002.

The Persian Gallery opened on 9 September, thanks to the combined efforts of Institute faculty and staff members too numerous to name individually, as well as everyone on the museum staff. It was truly a group effort — and a group triumph — and I wish to thank all of them for their generous and willing participation. The opening of the Persian Gallery was followed closely by the Ur exhibition, which opened its doors to the public on 21 October 2000 and graced us with its presence through 21 January 2001. The space in the north gallery, expertly configured by Installation Coordinator Joseph Scott, showed off these spectacular ancient masterpieces to their best, while the graphics, also designed by Joe, provided the necessary contextualization for the “treasures.” We all delighted in having these ancient Mesopotamian masterpieces here with us and were sorry to see them move on to Detroit.

While these obvious milestones were occurring in the galleries, what was going on behind the scenes that had made them possible, and will ultimately make possible the opening of the remaining galleries, was mostly invisible to those not working for the museum. At the end of the summer, Eleanor Barbanes joined us as Project Manager for Reinstallation and hit the deck running. While everyone else was busily putting the finishing touches on the Persian Gallery, Eleanor jumped into the tasks involved in project management for the Ur exhibition. Eleanor has a master’s degree in architecture from the State University of New York, Buffalo, previous experience in project management, including a stint at the Art Institute, and a Ph.D. in ancient Near Eastern studies from University of California, Berkeley. If you haven’t done so, please consider reading her lead article in this past spring’s issue of *News & Notes*, which gives a more detailed description of our reinstallation activities than is possible here.

Also behind the scenes, in the Institute basement, Registrar and Senior Curator Raymond D. Tindel and his staff, interns, and volunteers performed many tasks that are essential to the functioning of the museum. In the course of the past year, they handled more than 22,700 objects. At the time of this writing, Ray was holding more than 3,500 artifacts in the transit area of Registration to be considered for the new galleries. Other tasks undertaken in preparation for reinstallation of the Mesopotamian and Syro-Anatolian halls have included registering material from prehistoric sites like Jarmo, Karim Shahr, M’lefaat, Barda Balka, Matarrah, Banahilk, and Sarab, as well as from Tayinat, Nippur, Bismaya, and the Diyala region.

Ray also continued the ongoing chore of unpacking the material that had been boxed up for safe handling and storage during the construction and renovation project. Since 30 June 2000, he and his crew have emptied at least 351 temporary storage boxes (known to museum staff as TSBs) weighing some 8,452 pounds. There are now fewer than 2,461 (out of an original total of 4,569) TSBs left to unpack.

Thanks to a series of successful grant applications to the Institute for Museum and Library Services, spearheaded by Head of the Conservation Lab, Laura D’Alessandro, we have been

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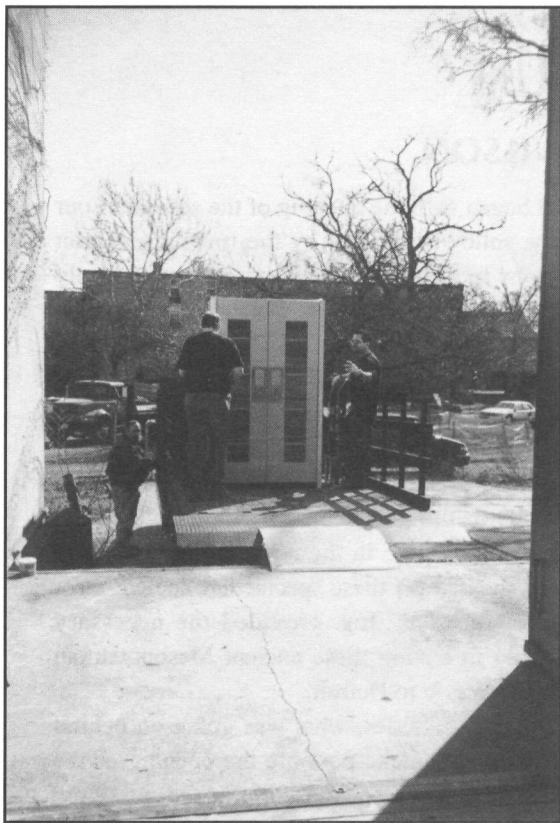


Figure 1. Delivery of new state-of-the-art storage cabinets for portion of Egyptian pottery collection. Photograph by Laura D'Alessandro

able gradually to purchase state-of-the-art storage cabinets for artifacts as we unpack them. This past year, an IMLS Conservation Project Support Grant allowed us to obtain twenty-one cabinets for some 3,000 pieces of Egyptian pottery dating to the predynastic and archaic periods, Old and Middle Kingdoms, and First and Second Intermediate Periods (see fig. 1). And, thanks to another IMLS CPS grant awarded this past April, we will be able to order cabinets for our New Kingdom ceramics. Those in Registration also unpacked more than 6,000 Iranian pieces — primarily beautifully painted sherds brought back from the Oriental Institute's excavations at Chogha Mish.

In addition, Ray and his crew supplied objects of various sorts (including pottery, tablets, and manuscripts) for use in teaching by John A. Brinkman, Walter Farber, McGuire Gibson, Janet H. Johnson, Wadad Kadi, Robert K. Ritner, Donald Whitcomb, and Karen L. Wilson. Students and visiting scholars using the collections for research have included graduate students Tracy Alsberg Hoffman, Tim Collins, Colleen Coyle, and Clemens Reichel and visiting scholars from Michigan, New York, and Rome.

The wonderful corps of volunteers who have made all this work in Registration possible include Debbie Aliber, Pearl Bell, Leila Foster, Mary Grimshaw, Janet Helman, Georgie Maynard, Ila Patlogan, Jim Sopranos, Tamara Siuda, Richard Watson, Peggy Wick, and Anne Yanaway. And a special thanks to registration assistant Sabrina Sholts, who left us after a year to attend Cambridge University.

Our collection grew this year in a very exciting way. This spring, we received a major donation from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, of material from its excavations at the site of Mendes in the Nile Delta. These 342 pieces, which include pottery, figurines, and metal vessels, provide a valuable addition to our Egyptian collection. We thank Donald P. Hansen of the Institute of Fine Arts and Christine Lilyquist of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for thinking of the Oriental Institute Museum as the home for these artifacts.

And just so everyone will know that work in the basement is not all fun-with-artifacts, we record that in the fall museum staff supervised the replacement of all the sprinkler heads (there were over 130) in the fire suppression system in the basement storage areas. The original heads, installed during the construction and renovation project, were found to be defective and were recalled by the manufacturer. And Ray turned even this project into a successful public relations vehicle: the man who did the replacement later brought his Boy Scout troop in for a behind-the-scenes tour!

Also laboring mostly behind-the-scenes in the museum basement were Museum Archivist John A. Larson and his staff of volunteers. For several years now, most of John and his volun-

teers' time has been spent unpacking the collections and making selected record groups more accessible for research. Priority continues to be given to material that will support the reinstallation of the galleries and to the needs of visiting scholars and researchers within the Oriental Institute's own community of scholars.

In the fall, several graduate students who had enrolled in an archaeology course taught by K. Aslihan Yener made appointments with John to investigate the field data pertaining to objects found in the 1930s in the Amuq by the Syrian Expedition. Luke P. Wilson, Executive Director of the Institute for Religious Research, came from Grand Rapids, Michigan, to look at some correspondence in the Papers of Klaus Baer relating to Baer's 1968 article, "The Breathing Permit of Hor: A Translation of the Apparent Source of the Book of Abraham." In addition, Professor David Stronach stopped by to select an Aerial Survey of Iran photograph for a forthcoming book on more recent aerial photography of Iran. In early December, Marina Pucci from Italy made a preliminary visit to examine Tell Tayinat field records; she plans to return for a longer stay at the end of this summer. A local author, Rick Cahan, came to talk with John about the possibilities for an illustrated book about the Oriental Institute, and Charles Kolb, a college student from Indiana, began research for a computer-generated reconstruction of a part of Karnak temple. In June, graduate student Harold Hays began working on a project to publish the ancient Egyptian pyramid texts that were omitted from the original publication program of the Coffin Texts Project.

John is pleased to report that we have received two new acquisitions for the Oriental Institute Archives. In January, Mrs. Dorothea Phipps of Chicago presented us with a copy of *Egypt Through the Stereoscope: A Journey Through the Land of the Pharaohs, Conducted by James Henry Breasted, Ph.D.* (New York and London: Underwood & Underwood, 1905), which had belonged to her late father. The set is complete and includes the boxed set of 100 stereographs, Breasted's 360-page book, and the booklet of maps and plans. The set has been gently used and carefully stored for nearly a century, and it is in unusually good condition. We are also grateful to Mrs. Phipps for her gift of a stereoscope and three additional stereographs from the "Eastern Series" of the Union View Co., Publishers, of Rochester, New York: "Egypt — Step Pyramid," "Egypt — Philae," and "Athens — The Propylaea." On 27 June, John welcomed Mrs. Phipps and her husband for a special tour of the museum. In mid-February, through the good offices of Joan Curry, the Archives received from Dr. Carl E. DeVries, a former Research Associate (Associate Professor) of the Oriental Institute, a box of materials relating to his years of work on the Nubian Publication Project.



Figure 2. Getty Intern Vicki Parry sealing gap between Khorsabad relief and its steel frame. Photograph by Laura D'Alessandro

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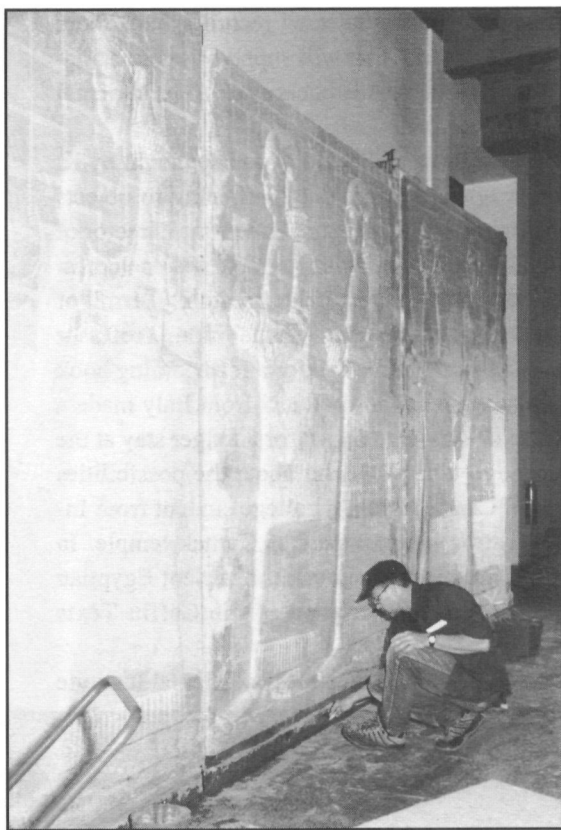


Figure 3. Mike Hill of Methods & Materials putting mortar between Khorsabad relief and its steel frame. Photograph by Jean Grant

All of the volunteers who had worked regularly with John Larson in the Archives during the previous fiscal year continued to give generously of their time. This year, Hazel Cramer has worked primarily on sorting and filing the pre- and post-publication materials from the Publications Office for recent (and some not-so-recent) Oriental Institute publications that were turned over to the Archives last summer. Working part of the year at her summer home in New Hampshire, Peggy Grant has transcribed (from photocopies) letters and related documents from James Henry Breasted's 1905–1907 epigraphic expedition to Egypt and Nubia, and she is currently working on home-letters from the Breasteds' 1894–1895 honeymoon trip to Egypt. Patricia Hume is nearing completion of a long-term project based on the Papers of Helene Kantor. Sandra Jacobsohn has proofread scores of transcription printouts generated by several Archives volunteers. Lillian Schwartz has recataloged our collections of nineteenth century photographs and has been working on a catalog of the photography of Bismaya objects. Helaine Staver has transcribed three seasons of correspondence of P. L. O. Guy from Megiddo. Carole Yoshida continues with the task of reor-

ganizing our Slide Library and has begun recruiting volunteers of her own to complete this enormous task. And in the fall, "retired" volunteer Lilian Cropsy resumed work on her biographical study of Edgar James Banks, field director of the University's expedition to Bismaya in 1903/1904. It is our happy obligation to acknowledge the many and varied contributions of these Archives volunteers with our grateful thanks and warm affection for their many years of dedication and support.

In addition to answering the phones, handling museum accounts, and keeping the building in functioning order, Museum Office Manager Carla Hosein has been entering the data from our photographic catalog cards into a photographic image database. This database, when completed, will enable us to do keyword searches and sorts of various kinds — an obvious boon to photographic research in the collections. Having the information accessible in a word-processed format will also facilitate the production of labels, captions, and data for permission forms for Photographic Services. To date, the information from just over 17,000 cards has been entered! Carla also prepares the necessary paperwork and handles all the other details that are involved in processing the requests that we receive for photographic image materials and reproduction permissions — a total of 186 transactions during fiscal year 2000/2001. Here, we cite three of the more interesting uses for Oriental Institute images that have been requested during the past twelve months: the cover illustration for the English-language translation of Jean Bottéro's *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*, published by the University of Chicago Press; the cover illustrations for each of the five volumes of James Henry Breasted's *Ancient Records of Egypt*, with a

preface by Peter A. Piccione, to be reprinted in a paperback edition by the University of Illinois Press (the text of the original University of Chicago Press edition is now in the public domain); and a Persepolis image used as a photographic mural in the Cincinnati Museum of Art to mark the approach to a new gallery featuring a collection of Persepolis relief fragments.

There were several changes in personnel in the Conservation Lab over the past twelve months. At the end of September, Eric Nordgren completed his twelve-month advanced Getty internship and left to join a private conservator's practice in Florida. Also in the fall, Vanessa Muros joined the museum staff as Assistant Conservator and Vicki Parry came on board as the third Getty intern. Both Vanessa and Vicki are recent graduates of the master's program in archaeological conservation at University College, London. The project that has loomed large for all three conservators has been the framing and installation of the Assyrian reliefs (figs. 2–4). As of this writing the sixth and last of the Assyrian reliefs that will be exhibited in the north gallery was being put into its steel frame and readied to be moved into place.

Thanks to the Getty Grant Program and the Women's Board of the University of Chicago, the conservators have had access to the scanning electron microscope (SEM) located in the Department of Geophysics to help them with scientific research. They have been using the SEM to identify a variety of materials over the past year: metal alloy compositions on artifacts undergoing treatment, corrosion products on metal and stone, and glaze compositions on the bricks from a temple facade at Khorsabad, Iraq. Vicki's Getty project this year involves the identification of unusual corrosion products on archaeological bronzes in the collection. These bronzes come from sites in Egypt, Israel, and Iraq and exhibit a visually identical and highly unusual cobalt-green surface corrosion.



Figure 4. Head of Conservation Lab Laura D'Alessandro discussing Khorsabad reliefs with Roger Machin and Dean Langworthy of Methods & Materials. Photograph by Jean Grant

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Our activities garnered extensive media coverage during the year, thanks to our indefatigable colleague and friend William Harms of the University News Office, who is always willing and eager to make us sound exciting and newsworthy to the media. Thanks to Bill, the opening of both the Persian Gallery and *Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur* received coverage in both the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, as well as in the *Chronicle* and the *Alumni Magazine*. In addition, the Persian Gallery was featured in spots on WGN Television's morning show "Around Town" and in *Museumgoer* (with a picture of Professor Matthew Stolper trying to stare down the Persepolis bull). And the Khorsabad Court project is being covered in the next edition of *The Assyrian Star*.

Our activities throughout the year were, as usual, visually documented by photographer Jean Grant — when she wasn't busy taking photographs of objects or producing prints for photograph orders. Jean notes that Irene Glasner remains a regular Photo Lab volunteer and that, on special occasions, Carole Yoshida, Madelyn Sprangel, and Maria Ahlstrom have given generously of their time. We wish to thank them all.

All these activities occurred under the watchful eye of Head of Security Margaret Schröder who, for another year, watched over the safety of the building, its inhabitants, and its collections. She also had no respite from supervising members of the construction industry, as the University completed the second half of its project to reroof the building.

While all that was happening, the reinstallation design team — consisting of Eleanor Barbanes, Joe Scott, Head of Museum Education and Public programs Carole Krucoff, Assistant Preparator Elliott Weiss, and Karen Wilson — has been deeply involved in designing and planning the remaining museum galleries. Regular meetings of this team and faculty members with the appropriate fields of expertise have been taking place and will continue to take place throughout the coming year. As of the end of July, the north gallery — which includes a Visitor Orientation Center, Robert and Linda Braidwood Prehistory Exhibit, Mesopotamian Gallery, and the Yelda Khorsabad Court — is well underway. The new display cases (which will match those in the Persian Gallery) are being ordered, and electrical work and construction of walls is about to commence. Plans for the east gallery — which will feature our Syrian, Anatolian, and Megiddo collections — are being formulated, and preliminary object lists for the new Nubian Gallery (to be housed in the west gallery along with the Doris and Marshall Holleb Family Temporary Exhibition Gallery) are being drawn up. The upcoming year promises to be a busy and exciting one for the museum staff, as we continue to give form to the newly reconfigured museum.
