# John C. Sanders

## PROJECTS

### The Oriental Institute Web Site

This past February 7th marked our new Web site's first birthday. It came and went without too much fanfare, though I'll admit to a couple of corks being popped on campus to celebrate the occasion. As I noted in last year's *Annual Report*, our new "look and feel," as well as the Web site's improved structure and query capabilities, has met with widespread approval and praise by faculty, staff, students, and the general public. I continue to work with research projects and faculty to update their project Web site pages and find new uses for the Web site among the Institute's projects. Like computer desktop support, this is one of my daily endeavors, working to keep faculty and current Institute projects as efficient with computer technology as possible as they pursue their research goals.

### Integrated Database

Throughout the year, I continued to work on the Integrated Database (IDB) initiative as our Request For Information (RFI) documents were returned and evaluated. Several software vendors were invited to give on-site demonstrations of their solutions for our IDB between December 2007 and early 2008.

Although taking longer than originally anticipated, the IDB evaluation process went well throughout the year. Vendors gave their presentations, followed by lively discussions of particular software features, or lack thereof, and how each product could be either integrated into the Institute's current operations and/or alter our operations and workflow procedures. Subsequent communications with each company's representatives indicated both the vendors and our IDB committee members thought the process was informative and valuable. The IDB subcommittee met after the demonstrations were completed, and these post-presentation discussions continued throughout the spring and summer of 2008. Work on this initiative will continue in earnest during 2008–2009, as financial underwriting moves to the top of the list to issues remaining to resolve.

In a related topic, I worked with Geoff Emberling, John Larson, Tom James, and other Museum staff members to investigate software solutions for the Museum's large collection of photographic images, both prints and negatives, for both in-house archiving and their distribution to the public. In late summer 2007, the IDB committee was given a demonstration of the Art History Department's Luna Image database, a full-featured image database program. The university has obtained a site license for this product, and we are in the process of evaluating its applicability for managing the imaging component of the Institute's IDB initiative. As so often happens, this meeting produced as many new questions about Luna's applicability in our case as it answered. Some of these issues still remain unresolved, in part because the particular solution we choose for the main IDB program will have a definite impact on our need for and/or use of any external image database program such as Luna. These issues and others remain to be resolved in 2008–2009, and I'll report further progress in next year's *Annual Report*.

### Oriental Institute Terabyte Storage Initiative

Over the past year, I have continued to set up and monitor off-site computer storage space for the faculty, staff, and units on the Institute's terabyte storage system, the Oriental Institute Archive (OIA). As I write this, our OIA storage space is 13 terabytes (13,000,000,000,000 bytes) and growing. For comparison purposes, a typed, double-spaced, 8 1/2 × 11″ piece of paper is roughly 2,000 bytes! More than ninety faculty and staff currently have access to the OIA. All the major Institute units are using the OIA for archival storage of computer files and images, while most faculty and staff use the OIA for daily computer backup. As more of the Institute's historical records, cards, documents, photographs, and publications are converted to digital format the size of our terabyte storage system will continue to expand.

### Persepolis Fortification Archive

In 1933, Oriental Institute archaeologists working at Persepolis, clearing the ruined palaces of Kings Darius, Xerxes, and their Achaemenid Persian successors, found clay tablets in two small rooms of a bastion in the fortification wall at the edge of the great stone terrace. There were tens of thousands of tablets and fragments. These were records produced by the operations of a single administrative organization in the years around 500 B.C., all strands of a single information system. Most of the so-called Persepolis Fortification tablets came to the Oriental Institute in 1936, on loan for study and analysis.

During this past year, the Computer Lab played a minor role in the ongoing collaboration between Matthew Stolper, the project's director; the Humanities Computing department of the University of Chicago; and a group of language scholars and technicians from the University of Southern California (USC) on the imaging of the Fortification tablets. My participation focused on contributing thoughts and suggestions regarding scanning standards to follow, workflow procedures, and other technical and computer-related matters. I helped set up several computer scanning and image-capture stations located around the Institute for use by project staff, and I stayed abreast of the scanning operations as they progressed throughout the year. With Stolper's contribution of text and images, I also worked with Jack Auses of the University's Networking Services and Information Technologies department (NSIT) to create the Persepolis Fortification Archive component on the Oriental Institute Web site.

For additional information regarding this project, please read the Persepolis Fortification Archive Project section of this *Annual Report*, where Professor Stolper outlines in detail the current progress of the scanning and cataloging of these most important ancient texts.

### Research Archives Map Collections

Very preliminary discussions were started between the Institute's Research Archives, the CAMEL Laboratory, and Jack Auses concerning the future digital delivery of the Research Archives's Map Collections via our Web site. Discussions centered on the end users' interaction with the maps database and their experiences as they view large-format versions of the maps. Because the scanning process was going to take at least a year or two, Jack and I eventually decided to put these talks on hold until we get closer to the end of the data acquisition phase. We both believe the underlying software to deliver these maps could change significantly before we are ready to make a decision on a specific software program. We will visit this topic again in next year's *Annual Report*.

### Building-wide Electrical Re-wiring

During the summer of 2007 the entire Oriental Institute's electrical wiring was inspected and upgraded or replaced if necessary. My participation in this endeavor was to stay on top of the re-wiring process and make sure that the Institute's computer servers, desktop computers, printers, and other miscellaneous computer hardware either remained online by being temporarily moved, or was properly shut down while repairs took place in each office throughout the building. This work, although disruptive to building operations for certain time periods and room groupings, was not the possible disaster I thought it might devolve into. No real problems developed as the work progressed throughout the summer and into the fall; just glad its over.

### Building-wide Document Printing and Scanning

The third Xerox machine with network scanning operations was installed on the Institute's third floor at the end of 2007. Several faculty and staff were enrolled to test document printing to these Xerox machines over the winter. Only minor setup or procedural problems developed during the testing phase. In early 2008 we discussed with representatives from Xerox the issue of student printing in the Research Archives via account code vs. purchased "cash cards." We believe we have identified a workable solution, which I hope will be set up on the Archives copier in fall 2008. Once complete, we will turn on the Xerox Network Accounting system on each copier so that all building printing, scanning, and copying can be tracked, thereby hopefully eliminating the redundant or errant printing that has plagued the stand-alone Hewlett-Packard laser printers in Room 228, the third floor, and in the Research Archives. Additionally, I began adding printer drivers for these Xerox machines on faculty and staff computers throughout the building in spring 2008 and will continue to do so through the summer until everyone has been converted to printing to our Xerox machines.

### Macintosh Computer Upgrades

If you remember from last year's *Annual Report*, the vast majority of the Institute's Macintosh System 9 computer users had their desktop or laptop computers replaced with brand-new Intel-based Apple computers purchased in summer 2006. During this past year the remaining System 9 users were moved completely to Mac System X. Janet Johnson's font and scanning issues under System X and the new Intel-based Macintosh computer's of the Chicago Demotic Dictionary project were effectively solved by hiring a student programmer to work out the remaining font issues (Jan is keeping a single Mac System 9 computer in the Demotic Dictionary office to deal with older Word documents that still pose font problems for System X). Robert Ritner moved to System X as soon as Janet Johnson's font issues were solved, as he uses the same fonts she does. And the Volunteer Office computer was swapped out for an older, re-useable machine that could run System X. Additionally, Miguel Civil's very old Windows computer was replaced with a newer machine that became available from the CAMEL Lab, so he is now operating with Windows XP at a reasonable processing speed.

### Electronic Publications Initiative

The Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative progressed nicely throughout the year, with Tom Urban, Leslie Schramer, and the Publications Office staff staying on top of the book scanning process by Northern Micrographics. As the mostly out-of-print volumes previously published by our Publications Office were shipped off and then returned to us in digital format, I worked with

**COMPUTER LABORATORY**

Jack Auses to add these Adobe Portable Document Format (.pdf) files to the Publications Office Catalog on the Institute's Web site.

The Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative dictates that current and future print publications produced by the Oriental Institute Publications Office are also made available electronically through the Institute's Web site. I encourage everyone to read that portion of the Publications Office section of this *Annual Report* regarding the status of the Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative, then visit the Catalog of Publications page on our Web site, where you will be able to download these past and current titles of our publications in electronic form:

http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/catalog/

A list of the volume titles that were processed into digital format and made available to the public on the Institute's Web site during this past year can be found in the Electronic Resources section of this *Annual Report*.

This Electronic Publications Initiative, when fully implemented through the electronic publication of all 400+ titles in our Publications Office Catalog, promises to be a great benefit to scholarly research in the various fields of ancient Near Eastern studies.

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For further information concerning the above-mentioned research projects and other electronic resources in general, refer to the What's New page on the Oriental Institute's Web site, at

http://oi.uchicago.edu/news/

See the "Electronic Resources" section of this *Annual Report* for the complete URL to each of the Web site resources mentioned in this article.

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