

# RESEARCH SUPPORT

## COMPUTER LABORATORY

John C. Sanders

### Projects

#### *Integrated Database*

It always takes longer than one initially thinks! Twenty years after proposing a merger of all the Oriental Institute's records, documents, photographs, and field records into a single integrated computer database (IDB), and after months of our people talking to their people, dotting all the I's and crossing all the T's, we signed the contract with KE Software on July 13, 2010, for the purchase and installation of their EMu (Electronic Museum) database system! Yes, technically, this date is two weeks into this new fiscal year, but I could not wait until next year's *Annual Report* to announce the good news.

Many people within the Institute and in the university's Information Technology Services (ITS) unit worked hard over the past few years to help us reach this point. And, of course, now the work really begins anew for many of the same cast of characters as the integrated database system is installed and starts to operate for the faculty, staff, and general public. While not meaning to leave anyone's participation out, which I am sure I will, let me thank by name the following individuals: former Oriental Institute directors William Sumner and Gene Gragg, and current director Gil Stein; faculty and staff members Steve Camp, Scott Branting, Geoff Embertling, Thomas James, Carole Krucoff, Wendy Ennes, Helen McDonald, Susan Allison, Ray Tindel, John Larson, Laura D'Alessandro, Alison Whyte, Thomas Urban, Foy Scalf, and Charles Jones; and from ITS, Edward Jakubas, Kaylea Champion, Robert Griffith, and John Gronke. And special recognition is due our database volunteer over the past decade, George Sundell. Thank you all; it wouldn't have happened without your over-the-top efforts!

Software installation and training will start in November 2010, with data migration to follow over the winter, and we should be up and running the new integrated database in the spring of 2011. I will report on all these stages in next year's *Annual Report*.

Although we will start this year with only our Museum Registration database and our Research Archives (Library) Catalog moved to the new IDB system, if I might be permitted to gaze into a crystal ball for future predictions, the IDB in perhaps five to ten years will contain the following Institute records and data:

- Museum Registration: paper records and various computer database files; 180,000 registered objects, 150,000 unregistered objects. Annual expansion is uneven, but 5,000 to 10,000 unregistered objects are registered.
- Museum Conservation: paper records and various computer database files; 75,000 analysis and treatment records, and images. Annual expansion circa 2,000–8,000 records and images.
- Museum Archives: paper documents, field records, and photographic negatives and prints. 10,000,000 paper documents, 200,000 images and prints. Annual expansion circa 20,000 records, images, and prints.

- Research Archives (Library): paper records and online catalog; 250,000 records in our current online library catalog, 400,000 cards from the Institute's former library card catalog, 40,000 additional records to finish retrospective cataloging. Annual expansion circa 10,000 records.
- Research Archives (Library): ancient Near Eastern map collections; 4,000 paper maps. Annual expansion circa 50 maps.
- Satellite and aerial photographic imagery (both rectified and non-rectified images); 7,500 image files at present. Annual expansion circa 10,000 images per year for the next three years.
- Oriental Institute publications; 500 publications in Adobe PDF files. Annual expansion circa 10 Adobe PDF files.

### ***Electronic Publications Initiative***

Once again, this past year saw major progress with the Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative. Fifty-two electronic versions of current or past Institute publications, in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF), were made available for free download on the Institute's Web site. The vast majority of these new downloadable publications pertain to ancient Egypt, and now all of the Institute's Egyptian-related publications are available electronically. As in previous years, the costs for their electronic preparation were offset by a most generous gift from Misty and Lewis Gruber. Their support of our Egyptological research is greatly appreciated.

Additionally, three new letter volumes (H, W, and Š) for the Chicago Demotic Dictionary project were finished this past year, converted to PDF, and were made available for free download 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 can 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, which 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*.

Currently, 273 Oriental Institute publications are available as PDFs. When fully implemented, our Electronic Publications Initiative will make accessible all 400+ titles in our Publications Office catalog.

### ***The Oriental Institute Web Site***

A major, and important, backlog of electronic publications on our Web site was eliminated this year with the addition of all Institute *News & Notes* newsletters from the current Spring 2010 issue back through 2002, now available as PDFs. Select lead articles in *News & Notes* published between 1990 and 2001 remain available on the Web site, but in HTML format. As time permits over the next year or two, these editions will be converted to the Adobe PDF format, along with as many pre-1990 *News & Notes* publications as we can find in our archives.

## COMPUTER LABORATORY

Dr. Seth Richardson's "Late Old Babylonian Personal Names Index" was added to the Philology Research Projects component of the Web site. This searchable file of personal names derives from cuneiform texts chiefly dating to the reigns of the last three kings of the First Dynasty of Babylon, 1683–1595 B.C. Version 1 indexes 13,573 unique attestations of personal names from almost 3,000 texts, including 4,678 entries from around 700 unpublished texts.

Audio tours of the Oriental Institute Museum galleries were made available for free download from the Web site this past year, so that you can use your own iPod or other MP3 player to take any or all of our special tours. Current tours are "Highlights of the Collection of the Oriental Institute," a tour of "The Ancient Near East in the Time of Tutankhamun," and a special "Ancient Egypt for Kids" tour.

A new photographic exhibit, "Breasted's 1919–1920 Expedition to the Near East," was added to the Museum component of the Web site in May. These 1,875 photographs chronicle Illinois native James Henry Breasted's daring travels through Egypt and Mesopotamia in the unstable aftermath of World War I. Breasted, a leading Egyptologist, was the founder of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, and this journey was the first Oriental Institute project. The goals of his ambitious expedition were to acquire artifacts for the new Institute and to select sites for later excavation.

### ***Persepolis Fortification Archive***

The Computer Lab continued to assist the ongoing collaboration of scholars, support staff in the university's Humanities Computing Department and Regenstein Library, and a small army of graduate students from the University of Chicago who are imaging and recording the Persepolis Fortification Archive (PFA) tablets. Two additional computers for image capture and processing were set up in the project's third-floor facilities, and I stayed abreast of the scanning operations as they progressed throughout the year.

For additional information regarding this project, please read the Persepolis Fortification Archive section of this *Annual Report*, where project director Matthew Stolper outlines in detail the current progress of the scanning and cataloging of these most important ancient texts. Also, up-to-date information about the project's work is available in the Persepolis Fortification Archive component on the Oriental Institute Web site.

\* \* \* \* \*

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.

---