

THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE

2011-2012 ANNUAL REPORT



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The pages that divide the sections of this year's report feature images from the year's special exhibit *Picturing the Past: Imaging and Imagining the Ancient Middle East*.

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Overleaf: View of Babylon. Maurice Bardin, 1936, after "View of the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way" by Herbert Anger, 1927. Oil on canvas. 122.0 x 91.5 cm. Collections of the Oriental Institute. Oriental Institute digital image D. 17475. Picturing the Past Catalog No. 16. Photo by Anna Ressman

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION. <i>Gil J. Stein</i>	7
IN MEMORIAM	9

RESEARCH

PROJECT REPORTS

ÇADIR HÖYÜK. <i>Gregory McMahon</i>	15
CENTER FOR ANCIENT MIDDLE EASTERN LANDSCAPES (CAMEL). <i>Scott Branting</i>	20
CHICAGO DEMOTIC DICTIONARY (CDD). <i>François Gaudard and Janet H. Johnson</i>	25
CHICAGO HITTITE AND ELECTRONIC HITTITE DICTIONARY (CHD and eCHD). <i>Theo van den Hout</i>	31
DIYALA PROJECT. <i>Clemens Reichel</i>	33
EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY. <i>W. Raymond Johnson</i>	38
THE GIZA PLATEAU MAPPING PROJECT. <i>Mark Lehner</i>	50
HAMOUKAR. <i>Clemens Reichel</i>	69
HEAVEN ON EARTH. <i>Deena Ragavan</i>	77
ISLAMIC ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE. <i>Tasha Vorderstrasse and Donald Whitcomb</i>	81
JERICHO MAFJAR PROJECT. <i>Donald Whitcomb</i>	83
KERKENES DAĞ PROJECT. <i>Scott Branting</i>	91
MARJ RABBA. <i>Yorke M. Rowan</i>	101
MUMMY LABEL DATABASE (MLD). <i>François Gaudard, Raquel Martín Hernández, and Sofía Torallas Tovar</i>	114
NIPPUR. <i>McGuire Gibson</i>	116
ORIENTAL INSTITUTE-NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFGHANISTAN PARTNERSHIP. <i>Gil J. Stein</i>	123
ORIENTAL INSTITUTE NUBIAN EXPEDITION (OINE). <i>Bruce Williams</i>	131
PATHWAYS TO POWER. <i>Gil J. Stein</i>	142
PERSEPOLIS FORTIFICATION ARCHIVE PROJECT. <i>Matthew W. Stolper</i>	145
TELL EDFU. <i>Nadine Moeller</i>	153
INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH	164

RESEARCH SUPPORT

COMPUTER LABORATORY. <i>John C. Sanders</i>	189
ELECTRONIC RESOURCES. <i>John C. Sanders</i>	191
INTEGRATED DATABASE PROJECT. <i>Scott Branting, John Sanders, Wendy Ennes, Angela Spinazze, Helen McDonald, Susan Allison, Foy Scalf, and Jack Green</i>	197
OCHRE DATA SERVICE. <i>Sandra R. Schloen</i>	201
PUBLICATIONS OFFICE. <i>Thomas G. Urban</i>	203
RESEARCH ARCHIVES. <i>Foy Scalf</i>	207
TABLET COLLECTION. <i>Andrew Dix</i>	212

MUSEUM

MUSEUM. <i>Jack Green</i>	217
SPECIAL EXHIBITS. <i>Emily Teeter</i>	225
PUBLICITY AND MARKETING. <i>Emily Teeter</i>	231
TRADITIONAL MEDIA. <i>Emily Teeter</i>	231
NEW MEDIA. <i>Amy Weber and Mónica Vélez</i>	233
REGISTRATION. <i>Helen McDonald and Susan Allison</i>	234
ARCHIVES. <i>John A. Larson</i>	238

CONTENTS

CONSERVATION. <i>Laura D'Alessandro</i>	240
PREP SHOP. <i>Erik Lindahl</i>	243
SUQ. <i>Denise Browning</i>	245
PHOTOGRAPHY. <i>Anna R. Ressman</i>	246
PUBLIC EDUCATION	
PUBLIC EDUCATION. <i>Carole Krucoff</i>	251
PUBLIC EDUCATION INITIATIVE: DEVELOPING THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM. <i>Wendy Ennes</i>	261
TEACHING IN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM. <i>Kathryn Grossman</i>	263
ARCGIS COMMON CORE EDUCATION FOR SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS PROJECT (ACCESS). <i>Wendy Ennes</i>	265
DEVELOPMENT OF THE FRONT END FOR THE MUSEUM COLLECTIONS AND RESEARCH ARCHIVES DATABASE. <i>Wendy Ennes</i>	267
KIPPER FAMILY ARCHAEOLOGY DISCOVERY CENTER (KADC) AND ARTIFACT ANALYSIS PROGRAMS. <i>Moriah Grooms-Garcia</i>	269
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM. <i>Catherine Dueñas and Terry Friedman</i>	271
DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBERSHIP	
DEVELOPMENT. <i>Tracy Tajbl</i>	295
VISITING COMMITTEE	296
MEMBERSHIP. <i>Amy Weber</i>	297
SPECIAL EVENTS. <i>Meghan A. Winston</i>	300
HONOR ROLL OF DONORS AND MEMBERS	303
FACULTY AND STAFF OF THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE	319
INFORMATION	328



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Gil J. Stein

It is a privilege to present you with the Oriental Institute Annual Report for 2011–2012. This has been a year of significant accomplishments and improvements in our research, programs, and staff.

The momentous political changes that are taking place across the modern Middle East as the part of the “Arab Spring” continued to have major impacts on the work of the Institute. Most notably, the upheaval and ongoing revolution in Syria made it impossible for foreign scholars to conduct research in that country. As a result, Clemens Reichel was forced to close his excavations at Hamoukar in the northeast, while Gil Stein also suspended his excavations at Tell Zeidan in the Euphrates River Valley. We have to accept the strong probability that it will be several years before political and security conditions stabilize to a point where we can resume our excavations and joint research in Syria. These projects continue in the analyses of their excavation results from the seasons up through 2010.

The news is much better for our field projects elsewhere in the Middle East. Our six ongoing excavations span a range of 6,000 years of cultural development across the “cradle of civilization.” In Egypt, Nadine Moeller’s excavations at Edfu and Mark Lehner’s work on the Giza plateau continue to make remarkable discoveries that give new insights into Egyptian urbanism in the third and second millennia BC. In Israel, Yorke Rowan’s dig at Marj Rabba is giving us the first real view of village life and economic organization in the enigmatic Chalcolithic period of the fifth millennium BC. In the Palestinian Authority, Don Whitcomb’s joint Palestinian-American excavations at Khirbet al-Mafjar — Islamic Jericho — are changing the way we understand the early Islamic Umayyad and Abbasid periods. In eastern Turkey, David Schloen’s excavations at Zincirli continue to expose broad areas of the lower town, helping us to better understand the provincial organization of the Neo-Assyrian empire, while Scott Branting’s excavations at Kerkenes in central Turkey are exploring a major urban center of the Phrygian kingdom of King Midas on the Anatolian Plateau.

Ray Johnson and his team continue the important research of the Epigraphic Survey at Chicago House in Luxor, Egypt. The work of recording the reliefs, organizing the blockyard, architectural restoration, and cultural heritage preservation at Luxor and Medinet Habu range from Middle Kingdom temples to the Roman-period Domitian gate.

The Hittite Dictionary under Theo van den Hout and Harry Hoffner has completed the letter šī- — this volume is now in press. As editor of the Demotic Dictionary, Jan Johnson (and all of us in the Oriental Institute community) can take great pride in the completion of this monumental research tool after more than four decades. The Chicago Demotic Dictionary will revolutionize the study of the Hellenistic and Roman periods in Egypt and is a truly great scholarly achievement.

In 2012, the Oriental Institute started a new project of cultural heritage preservation through the Oriental Institute-National Museum of Afghanistan Partnership. This program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, is a three-year effort that will develop a database for the National Museum in Kabul and will conduct the first complete inventory of its estimated 70,000 objects.

INTRODUCTION

Within the Oriental Institute's museum, Chief Curator Jack Green oversaw the development and installation of a new special exhibit *Picturing the Past: Imaging and Imagining the Ancient Middle East*, working with Special Exhibits Coordinator Emily Teeter. We are also delighted to have finally published *Ancient Israel*, a book that highlights the treasures in the Haas and Schwartz Megiddo Gallery.

Our Public Education section saw a major transition with the retirement of its department head, Carole Krucoff, after twenty years of devoted service. Carole has shaped the department and while we wish her well, we will all miss her collegiality and creativity. In 2011 and 2012, the Oriental Institute also welcomed Amy Weber as our new membership director and Tracy Tajbl as our new director of development.

As the academic year 2011–2012 ends, the Oriental Institute is strong in its staff, its projects, and its research.
