



# THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE 2012-2013 ANNUAL REPORT

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The pages that divide the sections of this year’s report feature images from last year’s special exhibit *Between Heaven & Earth: Birds in Ancient Egypt*.

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# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

Gil J. Stein

My colleagues and I are honored to present you with this year's *Oriental Institute Annual Report 2012-2013*. Over the past year our faculty and staff have been extremely active in our mission of exploring the civilizations of the ancient Near East and communicating our discoveries to both scholars and the broader community through our museum, our public programs, Oriental Institute membership, and our internationally recognized publications.

Although our archaeological fieldwork in Syria has been suspended indefinitely due to the uprising and horrific civil war in that country, our Hamoukar and Zeidan projects continue in the analysis and publication of their excavation results from the seasons up through 2010. Our ongoing excavations in Egypt (Edfu, Giza), Israel (Marj Rabba), Jordan (Maitland's Mesa), the Palestinian Territories (Khirbat al-Mafjar/Jericho), and Turkey (Kerkenes, Zincirli) continue to make important discoveries that are reshaping our understanding of ancient developments in the Near East. The success of our excavations depends on the combined efforts of trained professionals working closely with students and volunteers. In that respect, I am especially happy that Yorke Rowan and Morag Kersel's excavations at Marj Rabba in Northern Israel brought along five intrepid high-school students from the Rowe-Clark Math & Science Academy in Chicago to give them a rare opportunity — first-hand exposure to the excitement (and hard work) of exploring the Chalcolithic civilization of this region in the fifth millennium BC.

Ray Johnson and his team continue the important research of the Epigraphic Survey at Chicago House, recording and restoring the unique monuments of Medinet Habu and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Luxor.

The Chicago Hittite Dictionary (CHD), edited by Theo van den Hout and Harry Hoffner, published the third fascicle of the letter Š volume in print form, while the digital version was readied for the web as part of the eCHD. At the same time it should come as no surprise that our premier Egyptian Lexicography Project — the Chicago Demotic Dictionary (CHD) — is entering the (electronic) afterlife as editor Jan Johnson works with Brian Muhs, François Gaudard, and an international team of advisors to begin converting the PDF version of this dictionary into a highly flexible and more accessible digital form. The Persepolis Fortification Archive Project under Matt Stolper's leadership continues to make major strides in analyzing and documenting the thousands of texts and seal impressions that comprise this unique 2,500-year-old administrative archive of King Darius the Great and the Persian empire. We are nearing completion of this innovative project, and our plan is to make these priceless records accessible in digital form to researchers worldwide.

We continue to move forward in implementing our ambitious Integrated Database (IDB) project, which seeks to unite all the main data archives within the Oriental Institute into a single searchable structure that will be accessible to scholars and the public through the Internet. We crossed a major threshold this past year in linking the nearly half a million records in our Research Archives (library) with the 300,000 objects in our museum, and in making this trove of searchable data available to the public through the Oriental Institute's

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website. This is the culmination of years of effort by IT Department head John Sanders, whose retirement this past year marks another major change for the Oriental Institute. Happily, John's successor, Paul Ruffin, has leaped into the breach and is working closely with Angela Spinozzi, Foy Scalf, Scott Branting, Jack Green, and Helen McDonald to continue expanding and improving the IDB.

The Oriental Institute has increased the scope of its long-standing commitment to the preservation of cultural heritage. We have now completed the first year of our partnership with the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul. This program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, is a three-year effort to develop a database and complete digital inventory of the holdings of the National Museum. The project is proceeding rapidly, and our Kabul team, led by field director Michael Fisher, has now inventoried more than 17,000 of the Museum's estimated 60,000 objects.

Within the Oriental Institute's museum, our special exhibit *Between Heaven & Earth: Birds in Ancient Egypt*, developed and curated by Rozenn Bailleul-LeSuer, delighted and educated thousands of visitors by showing the ways that birds bridged the natural and cultural worlds to permeate virtually every aspect of Egyptian society, from economy to art to religion, and even played a key role in the hieroglyphic writing system.

Our Public Education and Outreach Section is embarking on an ambitious set of improvements under its new department head, Catherine Kenyon, and new staff members such as Carol Ng-He. Working with volunteer coordinator Terry Friedman and other key staff members such as Sue Geshwender and Moriah Grooms-Garcia, we are reinventing our Docent Program, developing online public education courses, implementing joint programs with the University of Chicago Lab School, and expanding our programming for children, families, and K-12 educators.

The above is just a thumbnail sketch of the numerous exciting developments across the board in our research and public communication programs over the past year. This work is only possible due to the dedicated efforts of our faculty and staff, and through the support of the thousands of members, donors, our Visiting Committee, and numerous other supporters of the Oriental Institute. To all of you I extend my deepest thanks.

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