

RESEARCH SUPPORT

COMPUTER LABORATORY

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As I enter my second year as the new IT support specialist, I must say I am happy with the progress that has been made to enhancing various technologies for the Oriental Institute. This past year consisted of three main projects: (1) improving hardware and software management solutions; (2) managing the Oriental Institute's website re-design; (3) working with staff and KE on finishing Phase Two of the Integrated Database.

Projects

The Oriental Institute Website

We are proud to announce our new website redesign for the Oriental Institute. For the past year, we have worked with University of Chicago Web Services in creating a brand new re-design for our website, which you will notice now is more dynamic and easier to navigate. The new website has a program called Drupal, which allows us to update the web pages ourselves without the assistance of Web Services. Because of this new program, you will notice the website will be updated more often than before. Special thanks to Michael Girgis, Bill Mulcahy, Sarah Schmidt, Brenda Janish, and all those on the Web Services team who helped make this possible.

Drupal Content Management System

Drupal is the new software that is used to create the content for our new website re-design. This content management system is a free, open-source web-development platform for online content and user communities. Because Drupal is open-sourced, the platform can be adapted to virtually any visual design as long as programmers work on editing. Drupal has been used for millions of websites, such as whitehouse.gov and the University of Chicago's uchicago.edu. The power of Drupal lies within its ability for the user to add content to the website without web coding/programming knowledge. The interface is user-friendly and you can reach out beyond your site to give a presence on social media and other venues. Drupal's built-in features also give search engines improved web impact.

Freshdesk Software

The Oriental Institute has migrated to a new and improved ticketing system called Freshdesk. This program is the second installment of ticketing systems for the Oriental Institute. Freshdesk is an IT support and content management solution that provides management for users' requests throughout the Oriental Institute. The system allows for increased response times and productivity for IT Support. I will be able to keep records of previous incidents

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and problems that Oriental Institute faculty and staff have had with their computers. This is important information because it allows me to track an ongoing problem and see if another solution, such as hardware replacement, will be required to fix the issue.

Integrated Database

For the past year, I have been working with Foy Scalf and Austin Kramer on adding more photo records to our database. This year we focused on training more users in the Oriental Institute on how to use the KE EMu Integrated Database (IDB). Our goal is to provide public access to information about our research and object-based collections that are managed by the Oriental Institute. So far I have added new users to the registry, provided access to new assistants, and have worked extensively on learning how to manage permissions for users and new assistants. We are working on the multistage project implementing an image archive into the IDB. I will be working with the web development of the Integrated Database, checking the web statistics to see what can be done to increase the efficiency of IDB online. We are working on re-designing the theme of our current database to match our new website. We have agreed that Phase Two will involve working with both IT Services and KE staff to gain knowledge of a transfer session. We worked on implementing over 80,000 records from the Oriental Institute Photo Archives (45,000+ image files) and records for Museum Conservation. Museum Conservation records will not be going online at this time. Photo Archives records, along with their image files, will be included in web services development for Phases 2.2–2.3. Phase 2.4 will be addressed manually by Institute staff. We would like to return to the features of Phase 2.5 for further development at a later date.

Computer Hardware | Software Updates

This year our main focus was on managing our servers in a more efficient way. A new Dell Server computer has been purchased that will run all of our old servers simultaneously. This is possible due to new technology known as virtualization. Virtualization enables today's X86 computers to run multiple operating systems and applications, making the infrastructure simpler and more efficient. Applications get deployed faster, performance and availability increase, and operations become automated, resulting in IT that's easier to implement and less costly to own and manage. Virtualization is the most effective way to reduce IT expenses while boosting efficiency and agility for small and midsize environments.

For further information concerning the above-mentioned research projects and other electronic resources in general, refer to the News page on the Oriental Institute's website, at <http://oi.uchicago.edu/news>.
