

TABLET COLLECTION

Andrew Dix

As usual, the Tablet Collection and its study space, the Tablet Room, were very busy during the 2013–2014 academic year. In July, Noga Ayali-Darshan, a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Chicago at the time, but currently a faculty member at Bar-Ilan University, visited us to study a lexical text from the Oriental Institute's excavations at Nippur. Also in July, Massimo Maiocchi, a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow and instructor in Assyriology at the Oriental Institute and in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, made hand copies of several fragmentary exemplars from Nippur of the Sumerian literary text Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld for Alhena Gadotti, of Towson University, for inclusion in her new edition of the text. At the end of the summer, Grant Frame, of the University of Pennsylvania, returned to continue collating the royal inscriptions of Sargon II excavated by the Oriental Institute. His careful study of all our exemplars of these texts will be integrated into a complete edition of Sargon II's royal inscriptions in the series *Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period*.

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Michael Heinle, a graduate student researcher for the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI), based at the University of California, Los Angeles, made the CDLI's annual trip to the Oriental Institute in January to scan published tablets in the Tablet Collection. The project's members have now scanned most of the published tablets in the Oriental Institute's collection. The images that they create with flatbed scanners may be seen on the project's website (<http://cdli.ucla.edu>).

In February and March, Armando Bramanti, a doctoral student at the Sapienza University of Rome, worked in the Tablet Room studying Early Dynastic tablets in our collection. In April, we had three more visitors: Nathan Wasserman of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem prepared an edition of an Old Babylonian literary text dealing with love. Cale Johnson and Ulrike Steinert, both of the BabMed project at the Free University of Berlin, prepared editions of an exemplar from Nippur of the Sumerian literary text *Two Scribes* and of a Neo-Assyrian medical text, respectively. In addition to the scholars named above, Andrew Dix, the assistant curator of the Tablet Collection, provided digital photographs and collations of dozens of objects in the Tablet Collection for numerous scholars around the world who were unable to visit the Oriental Institute in person.

Throughout the year, professor of Sumerology Chris Woods examined early Mesopotamian tablets in the Tablet Collection as part of his *Writing in Early Mesopotamia* project. He also used tablets from the collection in his classes on the Sumerian language. Professor emeritus of Assyriology Robert Biggs studied three Ur III tablets and will publish them in a forthcoming journal article.

Several objects from the Tablet Collection were shown in temporary exhibits in the Oriental Institute Museum. A Neo-Babylonian cylinder containing a royal inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II was displayed alongside a cast of the "Cyrus Cylinder" donated by the Zoroastrian Association in a short-term exhibit on Persian expressions of kingship organized by Jack Green and Matthew Stolper. The special exhibit *Our Work: Modern Jobs — Ancient Origins*, organized by Jack Green and Emily Teeter, also featured multiple objects from the Tablet Collection, all of which may be found in the exhibit's catalog (OIMP 36).

With the creation of the Oriental Institute Integrated Database, the assistant curator of the Tablet Collection has closely collaborated with Registration to include categories of information in the database to accommodate the relevant data of our cuneiform tablets. Registration has also kindly assigned several of their interns to complete a regular inventory of the Tablet Collection and to the registration of some of the thousands of casts of tablets from other museum collections throughout the world owned by us.

Finally, with the assistance of the Research Archives and its volunteers, we have started to enter information on our tablets from recent Oriental Institute publications into the integrated database. Paul Gauthier, PhD candidate in Assyriology, is checking these entries for accuracy, to approve them for publication on the Oriental Institute's public website. If appropriate funding can be secured, this is meant to be the first step of a project to check, update, and enter all the catalog information of the Tablet Collection, currently only contained on old paper file cards, into the integrated database. Ultimately this project aims at the creation of a full online catalog of the Tablet Collection. The lack of such a catalog has in the past severely hampered efforts by staff and outside scholars to identify and locate tablets of certain types, and its availability should not only increase the general interest in our holdings, but also the number and quality of publications of Oriental Institute cuneiform tablets.