

# Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon

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The Mesopotamians, faced with the extinction of Sumerian, the prestigious language of administration, cultic activities, and the traditional oral literature handed down through the centuries, compiled long lists of Sumerian words, often provided with an Akkadian translation, as well as paradigms and lists of grammatical elements, in order to preserve a language that had disappeared from everyday use. In a long-range project, the Oriental Institute some forty-five years ago decided to publish all preserved vocabularies and grammatical texts, as a subproject within the larger Assyrian Dictionary Project. (Information from the *MSL* is included throughout the *Assyrian Dictionary* and will form the basis of the contemplated Chicago Sumerian Dictionary, still far in the future.)

The late Benno Landsberger was asked to prepare the reconstruction and edition of these lexical materials, and to this task he devoted many years of his life. By the time of his death nine large volumes, of the projected total of eighteen, had appeared. The continuation of the project was entrusted to Erica Reiner and me, and up to this year three more have been published.

This year's progress on the *MSL* can be described in the numerical order of the volumes, even though that is not the same as the sequence in which they have been appearing. The eleventh volume was finally distributed in January, so the series is now complete up to Volume XIII. A short stay at the British Museum last December enabled me to collate once more some of the tablets published in Volume XIV, which, despite some technical and not-so-technical problems of the Italian printers, is still scheduled to appear in 1975. Preliminary work on Volume XV, the lexical series Proto-Diri and Diri, has begun. Dr. Antoine Cavigneaux, who is replacing Gene Gragg during his stay in Ethiopia, is working on part of the seventeenth volume, the series *Erimḫuš*. Only Volumes XVI and XVIII remain after that, so the end is in sight.