

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC LABORATORY

Jean Grant

You can't always see what's happening in the Photo Lab darkroom even with the lights on, but things have happened during the last year.

The sink in the small darkroom is one example. The one we had was large, lead-lined, and leaky. What we needed was a new or repaired one which we could re-lead, or re-line with stainless steel or epoxy-coated wood, or replace entirely with a fiberglass or stainless steel sink the same size or smaller. We evaluated and estimated all these options and finally had the original, solid, wood-based, big sink lined with stainless steel. Soon after the sink was finished a fellow photographer, Martin Brady, mentioned a used basic temperature control unit available at a reasonable price. Though he wanted it for himself, he let us buy it (that kind of thoughtfulness is a great help). After it was installed, we found it both a pleasure and a problem because we had reduced water pressure and couldn't run hot water without re-adjusting the unit each time with a screwdriver. So we were forced to install a much-needed regular mixing faucet. Now I won't be really

satisfied until we get the water in our darkroom filtered—this old building kicks up a lot of debris on occasion. If you're one of those donors who like to see what they've donated, a filtration unit would look beautiful on either of our darkrooms' walls (as would a slide duplicator and a spot meter in our studio). The new sink also necessitated new "duckboards" (bottom racks), but we were able to save some money on these by making them ourselves with redwood. The non-rusting brass screws were the most expensive duckboard item.

All of this, I'm sure, upset Nancy Schneider's work, but we hope in the final analysis it made it smoother, for she has been working on the huge project of duplicating those negatives in our Photo Archives which are deteriorating or are on unstable film bases like glass or nitrate. Like the Assyrian Dictionary, the Hittite Dictionary, the Research Archives, et cetera, our Photo Archives contain much information, though seen rather than read. Much of it is from places, site levels, and so on which can never be photographed the same again. The small grant we received this year from the National Endowment for the Arts for this project will soon be running out and additional funds will be needed if we are to continue saving these irreplaceable items. Many of our negatives are already in such poor condition that they cannot be duplicated, but if a print (good or poor) is found in our files it can be copied; unfortunately the quality is not so good as in the duplicating process. The copying will somehow have to be done in addition to the regular photo work.

Other upcoming tasks which will put a stress on our time and equipment will be the Museum Catalogue and the Babylonian Hall re-installation. Our curators feel it would be a good idea for every object to be photographed before it is put in its case in the new Babylonian Hall. That in itself is a large project photographically. Fortunately we have talented, though underfunded, people here at the Oriental Institute: Paul Zimansky and Ursula Schneider, our "retired" photographer who has been volunteering in the Museum Office, will help out. Paul has already found a corner in the storage area to set up our old view camera and is starting on the Babylonian objects. I hope it's a labor of love for this archeologist who has also dug and photographed at Nippur. David Nasgowitz and Judi Franke, our Assistant Curators, have been looking for such corners and for times when these people can get into the studio and darkrooms. With space at a premium we're looking for another corner to put a darkroom (if you have a sink, you'd better lock your door). If and when we do, we then have to get it equipped. We'd appreciate bright ideas, but don't turn the lights on!

Our open house on Members' Day may have seemed dark and dreary to those who did or didn't make it here, but our day and year were brightened noticeably by some thoughtful Institute members. Gloria and Franklin Orwin get the Photo Lab's "Member of the Year" award for donating a much-needed piece of equipment, a macro (close-up) lens for one of our 35 mm. cameras. (Maybe one of these days we'll have a 35 mm. camera good enough to match the lens's quality.) It will be used both in the photo studio and by Barbara Hall, our Conservator. Thank you again, Mr. and Mrs. Orwin.