

Education Coordinator

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With the appointment of a full-time Education Coordinator in September 1980, the Oriental Institute Museum joined the small but growing circle of museums in the Chicago area that have education personnel whose primary focus is working with school students and teachers. This appointment was a natural extension of the educational efforts of the Volunteer Guide Program, and the work of the two programs is closely cooperative.

The main goal of the Education Coordinator is to make the resources of the museum available to students and teachers. The means of doing this are several, and initial steps have been taken in several directions, including the most basic one—that of making

the museum known on a wider basis. This has meant reaching out to school and education groups, inviting teachers and Board of Education personnel to functions at the Museum, and representing the Museum in city-wide organizations, such as the Chicago Area Museum Educators Roundtable and the newly formed Chicago Coalition for Education in the Arts.

A strong focus has been developing materials for students and teachers to use in conjunction with a visit to the Oriental Institute—the Teacher's Kit for elementary grades, developed with the help of a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, has been widely used this past year and is now in its second production. A similar set of materials is currently being written specifically for high-school-age students, again with the aid of an Illinois Arts Council grant.

Workshops for teachers have afforded exciting and rewarding opportunities to reach students *through* their teachers. Five workshops given this year included two on Uses of the Teacher's Kit, one on Egyptian Hieroglyphs, one on Books in the Ancient World in conjunction with the Islamic Bindings and Bookmaking Exhibit, and one on Alexander in the Ancient World, given for the Art Institute in connection with the Search for Alexander exhibit there. Similar workshops for the docents attempted to encourage and help docents focus their tours in appropriate ways for audiences with various interests.

Multiple-visit programs have been developed in cooperation with several school groups involved in on-going class study. This means consulting with teachers, recommending and lending materials, and developing suitable gallery activities and materials. Multiple visits represent a highly desirable use of the museum and we welcome them.

With the help of Volunteers Kitty Picken, Jackie Bagley, and Beth Mandelbaum, a series of four Saturday morning children's workshops were offered in January, giving us opportunities to work with children in a setting other than the usual tour. Further services in the pilot stage include the Outreach Program, in which speakers travel to the schools to show slides and offer discussion on some aspect of the Oriental Institute's work.

It has been a year of many tentative beginnings and we look forward, with the continuing support of Oriental Institute administration, staff, and volunteers, to enlarging and refining our activities in the coming year.