



To the Members and Friends of the Oriental Institute

As you read through the following pages outlining the work of the Oriental Institute during the past year, you will see the great diversity of subject matter and methodological approach which is characteristic of our faculty and staff. Because the Oriental Institute is, and has been since its founding, basically a research institute in a research oriented university, it has been able to encourage its faculty to undertake significant, long-term projects of fundamental importance. It is the depth of the programs which the Institute sponsors (and the interdisciplinary stimulation of philological, archaeological, and epigraphic approaches to the related questions), which makes the Oriental Institute and the University of Chicago recognized around the world as one of the major creative centers of work on the ancient Near East and the early history of man. But it is the same commitment to such projects which can put the program of the Institute in jeopardy in a time of economic crisis, for this commitment to fundamental research beyond the scope of a single individual scholar, even during his whole lifetime, requires the steady infusion of research funds. This has been brought home to all of us very clearly this year as we begin a major campaign to raise funds for the Epigraphic Survey based at Chicago House in Luxor, Egypt (see the discussion in the September-October, 1984, *News and Notes*). However,

despite the everpresent financial limitations on what we would like to do, all the major projects of the Institute (the dictionaries, Epigraphic Survey, archaeological studies) continue to produce basic reference tools for ancient Near Eastern studies. The work of the major projects, involving several faculty and staff members, is complemented by the work of individual faculty, whose interests and research range from detailed studies of minute elements of grammar, painstaking publication of original documents, or careful detailing of the range and distribution of specific archaeological artifacts to much more general questions of historical and cultural development. It is the strength of the Oriental Institute that the interpretive analyses are based on solid fundamental knowledge. By having grouped in one institute people who share a common interest in a geographical area and a period of human history but who use the skills and methodology of many different disciplines (philology, epigraphy, archaeology, art history, economic, political, religious, and cultural history), the study of the Near East becomes not static and descriptive but dynamic and creative. It is the current status of this basic research which is reported in the following pages.

One aspect of the development of research at the Institute which is not covered directly in the reports on various projects or on individual research

is the growing, and increasingly sophisticated, use of computers. We are identifying and taking advantage of ways in which studies in the Humanities may benefit from this new technology. Most frequently these machines are being used for word-processing and for data base management (the handling and sorting of large amounts of data). For example, Miguel Civil has developed a sophisticated software program for storing, searching, and editing cuneiform texts in transcription (a program used by the Chicago Hittite Dictionary in preparing draft manuscript) and Gene Gragg is building an extensive file of words/roots in several African languages which will serve as the core for his study of the Afro-Asiatic language family.

Some of what is being done is fairly original: McGuire Gibson and his archaeological architect, working with the material from the large and complex excavations at Nippur (Iraq), have developed software which allows the preparation by a micro-computer of high quality architectural plans from data either entered by the architect or fed directly by a laser theodolite (while actually working in the field). They are also developing software which allows horizontal and vertical stratigraphic distributional studies. Innovative work in developing non-European fonts (not only the diacritics needed for transliteration of ancient Near Eastern languages but actual Egyptian Coptic and Hebrew/Ugaritic fonts) has been undertaken by the Demotic Dictionary Project and by David Baird (to be used by the Ugaritic Project). It will be some time before we attempt to computerize anything as large as, e.g., the Oriental Institute Museum collections (artifacts, photo archives, etc.), although we are actively studying the problems faced by other museums which have undertaken such work.

As a research institution, the responsibility of the Oriental Institute includes both the dissemination of its work and results through publication of original scholarly monographs and communication to the general, educated and interested public of the results of current work throughout the Near East. The Museum is our most visible attempt to fulfill this responsibility to the general public and to share with them our love for and appreciation of these ancient people and their culture. For the past several years our Museum Education Coordinator has been developing innovative programs, classes and workshops for both children and adults. These programs are drawing attention from other museums and funding from both the Illinois Arts and the Illinois Humanities Councils. Yet the job of the Education Coordinator itself is one we have not yet been able to establish on a permanent basis. In the coming year we hope to find a regular source of funding to ensure that the Education Coordinator becomes a permanent Museum position.

Our scholarly publications this year included the definitive report on the Braidwoods' work at the major prehistoric site of Jarmo and the first in the series of reports on the excavations of the Institute in Nubia during the Nubian salvage campaign. Our new Publications Coordinator has his hands more than full with over ten further volumes in various active stages of editing and printing, including Jay Gelb's long-awaited study of early land tenure systems in the Near East, the Epigraphic Survey's copies of *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I* at Karnak, accompanied by Bill Murnane's historical analysis of the reliefs, and a *Festschrift* in honor of Hans G. Güterbock. To maintain the high quality of our publications takes con-

siderable time and effort and becomes more and more expensive as printing charges continue to rise. However, we shall try to keep financial considerations from impeding the reasonably prompt publication of our work.

Reports on our publications program, the membership courses, lecture series, and tour program aim to convey our concern with the public aspect of the Oriental Institute's work. It is my distinct pleasure to acknowledge here the immense value to the Institute of the almost 100 volunteers who contribute time and energy to the Museum (both guiding visitors and aiding the staff behind the scenes), the Suq, the Membership Office and to the work of individual faculty members and projects.

I would also like to take this chance to honor two people who never met, and neither of whom was ever a paid member of the faculty or staff of the Oriental Institute, but who both contributed directly to the smooth functioning of the Institute—Labib Habachi, a foremost Egyptian Egyptologist who for more than twenty years before his death in February, 1984, had been a consultant with the Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition and later a resident member of the Epigraphic Survey team for most of every season, and Peggy Grant, who served as the extremely able and enthusiastic Chairman of our Volunteer Program from 1978 to 1984.

JANET H. JOHNSON
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