

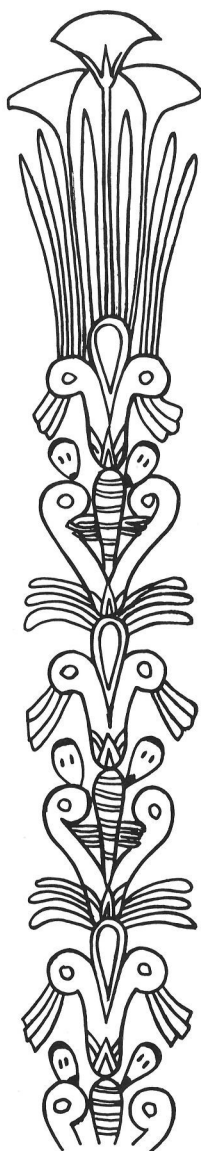
# INTRODUCTION

*William M. Sumner*

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INTRODUCTION

The various chapters of this report describe activities at the Institute during the past year. These include a number of improvements in the facilities, additions to the staff, new initiatives, and significant progress towards completion of established projects. I am taking the opportunity in this introduction to comment on three topics: research funding, the plans for climate control and a new wing, and the recent retirement of a distinguished member of the faculty. ▼ **Research Funding** ▼ The mission of The Oriental Institute is to conduct research on the archaeology, history, and languages of the Near East. This year important discoveries were made by Oriental Institute archaeologists in the field, and the dictionary projects have continued to publish a steady stream of fundamental research tools. I am happy to report that three projects received grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities: for excavations at



Yaqush in Israel (three years), the Assyrian Dictionary (two years), and the Hittite Dictionary (two years). The Members' Dinner provided a significant proportion of the matching funds for the Yaqush Project, and we are vigorously seeking additional matching funds for all three projects. The Epigraphic Survey received a U.S. Government endowment in Egyptian pounds to cover local expenses at Luxor, and a major grant from the Getty Foundation for conservation work on the invaluable photographic archives at Chicago House. Other smaller grants and generous gifts provided essential support for the field projects, the museum, and other Institute activities. Readers of this report will find recent research activities described in greater detail in the individual chapters, including the wide-ranging research of individual scholars.



## Climate Control and Additional Space

The highest priority on The Oriental Institute agenda at this time is climate control and additional space for the museum and archaeological research. The Institute is now engaged in an architectural program study to address this priority. This project is of great importance to the future of the Institute and, because we will need the advice and support of members and friends to bring the project to fruition, it is discussed in some detail here.

The Oriental Institute Museum collection is among the finest collections in the world of excavated objects from the Near East. The history of the collection began with the founding of the Haskell Oriental Museum, which was also the headquarters of The Oriental Institute until the present building was dedicated in 1931. The collection grew rapidly during the second and third decades of this century when the great expeditions fielded by James Henry Breasted in every region of the Near East brought to Chicago hundreds of magnificent examples of ancient art and artifacts of daily life. The growth of the collection resumed after World War II, as expeditions returned to the field, and has continued until the present day. The Institute's computer database register now contains over 70,000 objects and there are perhaps 100,000 or more additional objects still in the custody

of field directors for analysis and publication.

The curatorial responsibility for this splendid collection has been a matter of deep concern since the Institute was founded. The scope of this responsibility is indicated by the meaning of the word *curator* — the person who cares for something, protects it from harm. For centuries, in some cases millennia, the objects in our collection were curated by Mother Earth



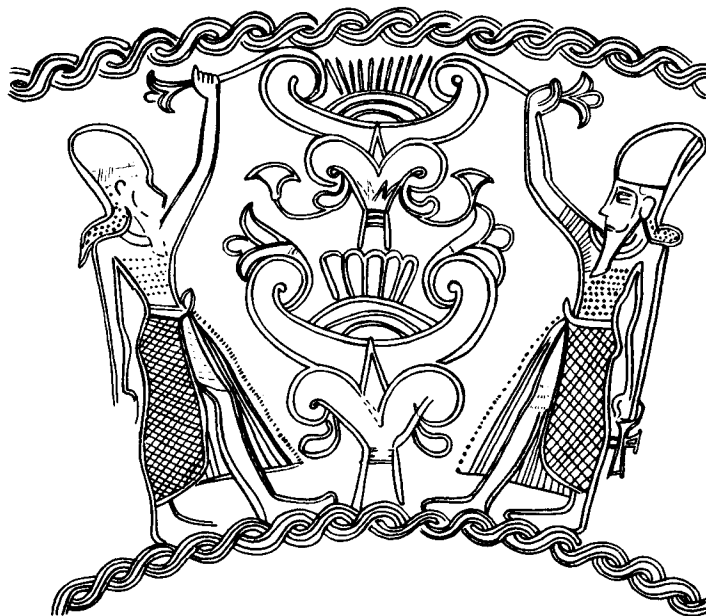
herself. Deeply buried in the relatively stable soil of the Near East and further protected by the generally arid climate of the region, some of our objects were in pristine condition when they were excavated. Then they were brought here, to suffer the rude shocks of the Chicago climate. Having excavated these priceless objects, we now have an imperative ethical duty to guard them from all hazards.

It should be emphasized that the collections are not being held for some vague unspecified future purpose. On the contrary, the collections are a vital resource for current research activities undertaken by Oriental Institute scholars and visiting scholars from all over the world. Recent scientific and technological advances make it possible to address a host of provocative new questions and to open novel avenues of inquiry that were unheard of when the collections were first excavated. Furthermore, the rapid growth and the sustained interest in the public educational programs of the museum constitute an invaluable bridge between The University of Chicago and the public. It is the policy of the Institute to develop and enhance these outreach programs at every opportunity, and the collections are an essential element in this effort.

Mindful of the responsibility to preserve the collections, and aware of scientific advances in solving the problems of museum storage, the Institute commissioned a conservation study in 1969. The report of that study plainly showed that many objects in the collection had suffered deterioration and that the entire collection, both in the galleries and in storage, was at risk. Although storage facilities were far too crowded, with the attendant danger of mechanical damage, the principle source of risk was the local climate. Daily and seasonal fluctuations in temperature, and particularly relative humidity, and the presence of gaseous and particulate contaminants in the air, continue to create conditions that lead to unacceptable deterioration. Although organic and metallic materials suffer the greatest risk, other materials, including ceramics and stone, which may contain soluble salts, are also at risk.

Interim steps have been taken to preserve the most endangered objects. In 1974, the urgent need for a full time professional conservator on the staff was fulfilled at last. In addition, a generous grant from the Women's Board of the University enabled us to establish and equip the present conservation laboratory. A metals storage room, designed to maintain temperature at 65° Fahrenheit and relative humidity at 30% ( $\pm 3\%$ ) was constructed in 1979, using funds provided by the National Endowment for the Arts. An organics storage room, designed to maintain temperature at 68° Fahrenheit and relative humidity at 48% ( $\pm 3\%$ ), was completed in 1988. This project was funded by the Institute of Museum Services.

However, despite these commendable temporary measures, we must provide for the permanent long term security and preservation of the entire collection as quickly as possible. This project requires a state-of-the-art climate control system that will maintain temperature, relative humidity,

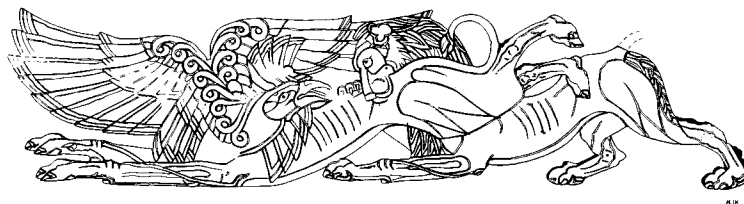


and pollutant levels within the optimal range for each type of material in the collections. The high priority of climate control, underscored by the fact that conservation proposals are not usually funded unless the objects to be conserved can then be stored under proper conditions, has been recognized for decades. An environmental control feasibility study was conducted by an engineering consulting firm in 1973. The recommendation of this study, to expand the basement and first floor into the museum courtyard in order to accommodate the required mechanicals and additional storage space, was deemed unacceptable. A more comprehensive engineering study in 1988 resulted in recommendations that were also unacceptable due to the high cost, the reduction in object storage space, and the unsatisfactory design of duct-work to the galleries.

Early in 1990 a contract was awarded to Skidmore Owings & Merrill for a planning study of the climate control and space needs of the Institute. The faculty and staff responded wholeheartedly to requests for information and thoughtful evaluation of the space needs and other requirements to facilitate research and museum activities. Karen Wilson and the museum staff devoted a great deal of time and energy to the planning process, and the highest priority requirements are now clearly identified. The program study will be completed in the autumn of 1990. Once the program is approved we will seek bids for the architectural design. With the appointment of Margaret Sears as Assistant Director for Development, we are formulating plans for The Oriental Institute's participation in The University of Chicago Centennial Campaign. We must raise not only capital improvement funds for construction of the new wing, but also endowments to support operations in the expanded space and to augment

the facilities for scientific analysis and conservation of archaeological and archival materials. As this process evolves, we will keep the membership informed through *News & Notes* and special mailings.

## The Retirement of Professor Helene J. Kantor



Professor Helene J. Kantor retired from the faculty of The Oriental Institute and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations on the first of October, 1989. Miss Kantor's long association with The University of Chicago began in 1938, when she enrolled as one of the youngest graduate students ever admitted to the University. Her dissertation was written under the supervision of H. Frankfort and she received her Ph.D. in 1945. That year she accepted an appointment as Research Assistant in The Oriental Institute to continue her research and to assist P. P. Delougaz, then Curator of The Oriental Institute Museum. Over the years she continued to work in the museum, conducting research, planning exhibits, and rearranging the storage areas. She produced scholarly labels for exhibits and wrote museum notes on important objects in the collection, illustrated with lively drawings. A number of Miss Kantor's drawings are reproduced throughout this report.

Miss Kantor's first major publication, *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium B.C.*, appeared in 1947 and established the high standard that has characterized her research and scholarship throughout her career. The theme of this work, interregional stylistic connections in the art of the ancient Near East, appears frequently in her later work and in her teaching. Miss Kantor's artistic eye and stylistic acuity are matched by few other archaeologists or art historians. Recently I visited her office and she enthusiastically showed me a sealing she was studying. I could barely see that the clay lump had been impressed at all, but by shifting the light source and turning the sealing she quickly demonstrated that it bore repeated impressions of the same cylinder seal. She showed me details that were obliterated on some parts of the object and preserved on other parts, all the while describing the meticulous process of reconstructing the entire scene, shown in the lovely drawing reproduced here. When I asked permission to reproduce the drawing, Miss Kantor characteristically pointed out that she was just "doing the final checking"; credit for the initial drawing belonged to two of her students.

In 1951 Miss Kantor accepted an appointment as Assistant Professor in The Oriental Institute and the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures, as it was then called. At that time she assumed the duty of teaching courses in archaeology, including "Principles of Near Eastern Archaeology", formerly taught by Frankfort. As a student she had felt the lack of opportunities to study in detail the stylistic variations in ceramics that form the backbone of archaeological chronologies in the Near East. Consequently she introduced the study of ceramics in the "Principles" course and, by the end of term, tables in the basement classroom would be covered with nearly the entire ceramic chronology of the Near East. Lest this be taken as a myth perpetuated by generations of students, we publish here photographic documentation. Miss Kantor is noted for her deep concern for the welfare and progress of students; her door was open at all hours, every day, for whatever help they needed. She was mentor to numerous students, including students from overseas, who found in her a teacher eager to help them overcome the difficulties of adapting to an unfamiliar academic system in an alien culture.

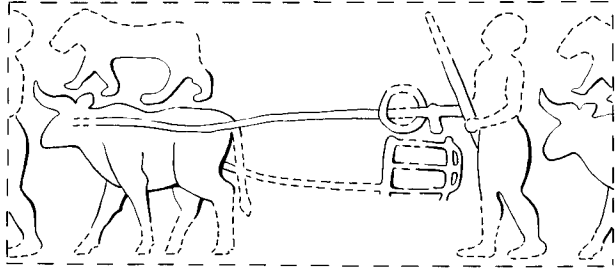
Miss Kantor was promoted to Associate Professor in 1958 and to Professor in 1963. In 1961 she began excavations at Chogha Mish, in Khuzistan, Iran. She and P.P. Delougaz were co-directors of the project from 1969 to 1975; she has continued as director of the project since Delougaz' death. The excavations at Chogha Mish, familiar to members of the Institute through many articles in *News & Notes* and *The Annual Report*, have made notable contributions to our understanding of the life and art of the inhabitants of ancient Susiana and we all look forward eagerly to the detailed publication now in preparation.

No one deserves the title "Emeritus Professor" more than Helene Kantor. Her retirement leaves a great gap for those of us who teach



Array of pottery from Miss Kantor's "Principles" course.

Drawing of  
cylinder seal  
impression  
from Chogha  
Mish.



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archaeology to attempt to fill. Happily, she is still pursuing her scholarly interests as vigorously as ever and the door to room 224 is still open every day to colleagues and students alike.

In summary, I cannot improve on Janet Johnson's tribute published in the festschrift presented to Miss Kantor in 1989:

*With limitless patience and unswerving devotion to humane learning, she has contributed works that will remain examples of the best scholarship can achieve. Surely the astonishing erudition and profound insight of her work would be an adequate accomplishment, but whole generations of scholars also have been enriched by her teaching.*

To conclude on a personal note, my first year as Director of The Oriental Institute has been challenging and most satisfying. I look forward to new challenges in the coming year, confident in the knowledge that, as in the past, I can count on the support of faculty, staff, volunteers, and members of the Institute.

William M. Sumner  
Director

January 1991