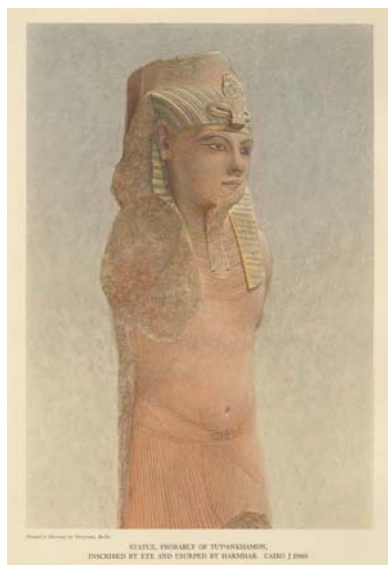
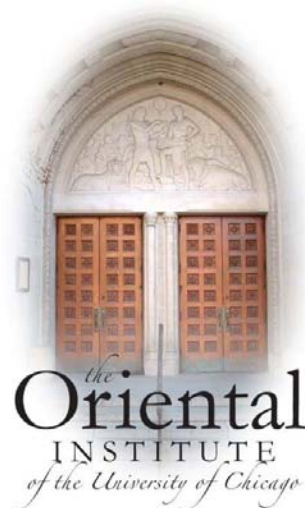


# Preserving Near East History: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago



From *The Excavation of Medinet Habu, Vol. IV*

**T**he Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago is a research organization and museum focused on the study of the ancient Near East. The Institute is internationally recognized for its work in archaeology, philology, and history of early Near Eastern civilizations.

**T**o support that work, the Oriental Institute has been publishing works on the Near East since the 1920's. In 2004, the faculty of the Oriental Institute voted to establish the Electronic Publications Initiative (EPI) whose mission would be to insure that all publications of the Institute would be published simultaneously in print and electronically on the Internet. The distribution of the digital copies would be complimentary and older titles published by the Institute would be scanned and published to the Internet as funding and time permitted.

**T**o determine how best to digitize the older books, Thomas Urban, Managing Editor of the Oriental Institute Publications Office, and his editorial assistants inventoried these books using a basic but effective template. Each book was checked for number of pages, colors, sizes, and types of scans. In sum, the Institute had published 351 older books for which no electronic files were available. These books varied in size from 5 x 8 to 19 x 24 inches. Additionally, there were

- 520 oversize, folded pages, ranging in size from 8 x 10 to 64 x 16 inches
- 71,506 black and white pages
- 746 color pages
- 10,693 pages with photographs

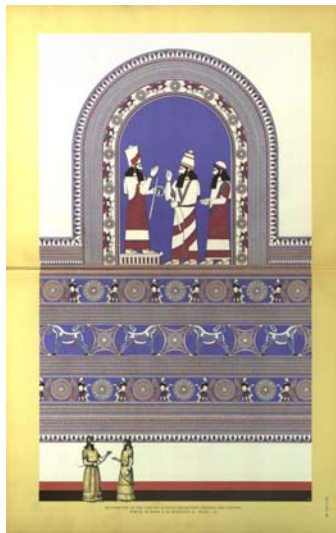
**A**fter recognizing that in-house scanning would not be appropriate for the depth and range of this source material, the Oriental Institute searched for a digitizing vendor who could scan these books without disbinding and only one company was identified: Northern Micrographics (NM). After a pilot project to assess the various scanning possibilities, NM was chosen to scan the complete collection of material.

## Long Term Project

**R**ather than send all 351 books at once to NM's La Crosse, Wisconsin headquarters, the committee overseeing the digitizing project began the project by sending, at the request of the Institute's director Gil Stein, several Mesopotamian archaeological reports. By the end of the first phase of the project, 48 Mesopotamian books and thirteen Iranian books were scanned to archival TIFFs and searchable PDFs. The PDFs were published to the Institute's web site (<http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/catalog/>).



From *The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications Volume XLIV Sculpture of the Third Millennium B.C. from Tell Asmar and Khafajah*



From *The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications Volume XL Khorsabad Part II The Citadel and the Town*

Another twenty-eight books were scanned in partnership with the editors of the Chicago Assyrian and Hittite Dictionaries, who provided the additional funding for the digitizing of these very useful research titles.

To facilitate the project, the Oriental Institute decided to group the remaining 262 books into seven regional or field specific categories. With funding assistance from outside partners, the Institute next sent the 125 Egyptology books to NM for scanning. Again, the books were scanned bound, to archival TIFFS. Searchable PDFs were created and these books are now available online to students, researchers, and others who are interested in ancient Near East studies.

## Project Challenges

The Oriental Institute collection contained a variety of source materials, ranging in size, color, and type—text and photos and some pages with both text and photos. To achieve the requisite quality of images and prints, specific processes and strategies were developed and followed. For example, a process for composite imaging was created so that the digital images of source material with photos and text maintained the quality of the photo without sacrificing the text or the ability to capture the text through OCR processes.

When working with oversized images, NM technicians used traditional oversized scanning practices as well as implemented several new in-house strategies. “The Oriental Institute project was a great project for us to develop more and better ways to digitize relatively non-standard source materials. The processes that were developed for this project generalize to other customers as well,” said Tom Ringdahl, VP of Sales and Marketing.

## The Next Steps

The Oriental Institute and Northern Micrographics will continue to work together, digitizing the remainder of these early publications. Additionally, the Oriental Institute is now exploring the possibility of utilizing Northern Micrographics’ publishing services to create reprints of the original titles. Both organizations look forward to continuing this partnership and to providing researchers and students with important Near East scholarship.



Northern Micrographics

*What do you know worth saving?*