

Report from the Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago

The current special exhibit, “A Cosmopolitan City: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Old Cairo” coincided with the 50th anniversary of George Scanlon’s excavations at Fustat for the American Research Center in Egypt. The show was the result of a recent survey of the early Islamic holdings of the museum that revealed a great number of forgotten or unrecognized manuscripts, textiles, and small objects. The show ran through September 13, 2015. The next special exhibit (October 13, 2015–September 11, 2016) is “Persepolis: Images of an Empire” that features photographs of the Oriental Institute expedition in the 1920s and 1930s.

In response to the destruction of sites in the Middle East, we designed a series of panels for our galleries that address threats to cultural heritage, each with the tag line “What you can do” with suggestions such as not buying antiquities, supporting conservation etc. The panel for Egypt focused on the looting at El-Hiba and the Nubian one on the effect of the planned dams.

The special exhibit program will slow down to allow the staff to start a series of changes in the permanent galleries made possible by a recent gift. The work consists of redesigning the gallery lighting, updating the graphics, and replacing most of the free-standing cases, many of which are more than a half century old and are becoming increasingly difficult to open.

The integrated database project continues to move forward with new components for the Museum Archive, and soon conservation. Please make sure to consult the database for queries about the collection before contacting our staff with requests.

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