



Charge
ASOR Ad Hoc Archives Committee, Chair Susan Ackerman
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The vast majority of the ASOR archives consists of records, photographs, publications, and diaries amassed between ASOR's founding in 1900 and the closing of its office at 656 Beacon St in Boston in 2018. At that time most, with the exception of publications now stored at the Strange Center in Alexandria, were moved to the Harvard Semitic Museum (now the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East—HMANE) and remain there today. Some few others are stored elsewhere—Glueck materials owned by Harvard, AIAR records at the AIA, and the Leo Boer collection (see attached Ackerman document, pp 6,7). The HMANE is no longer able to house the materials transferred in 2018 collection,¹ and ASOR must determine how best to curate them. The decision involves four interlocking issues for the ad hoc committee to consider: location; organization, maintenance, and accessibility.

The first decision, on which the rest hinge, is location. Should we move the papers to the Strange Center or a library or other archival facility? We have the space on the third floor of the Strange Center for the roughly 125 archive boxes (1.5 cu. ft.), 73 boxes of glass plates (8" x 5" x 5.5"), plus tubes (two 26"x24" and two 30"x34"), flat portfolios, and rolled up large format sheets transferred to Harvard in 2018. The climate conditions at the Strange Center are as good as the Boston offices, but not up to top archival standards. Housing the archives at the Strange Center would put the maintenance and organization of them in the hands of the ASOR staff, which has plusses (expertise and interest) and minuses (time commitment).

Turning to accessibility. The archives are stored in archival boxes, and there is a detailed finding aid. In an ideal world they would be fully digitized and accessible to researchers. This is not the case. Some material has been digitized, and at one point this digitized material was available at <https://www.asor.org/resources/archives>. Unfortunately, in Fall 2015, the BU server housing our archives database failed. Today, we have available a partial outline of ASOR's holdings at <https://www.asor.org/resources/archives>, and a "zombie database" that is used in-house. Digital materials can only be accessed on this "zombie database" by a staff member through a fairly cumbersome request process (see attached Ackerman document, pp 5-6). A key question for the committee is how to improve that process. Non-digitized materials are for all intents and purposes currently inaccessible, given their current location at Harvard.

¹ Harvard might want to keep some of our Glueck materials (see attached Ackerman document pp 7-8).



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The attached Ackerman document also poses some issues regarding organization and maintenance that the committee will need to address: for example, work that might be done "in house" to reorganize the information we do have available on the web and to reorganize the "zombie database"; also, issues regarding our archiving policy and ambitions regarding collection augmentation going forward.