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المركز الأمريكي للأبحاث

AMERICAN CENTER OF RESEARCH

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

AMMAN, JORDAN

أخبار أكور NEWSLETTER

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for January–June 2025

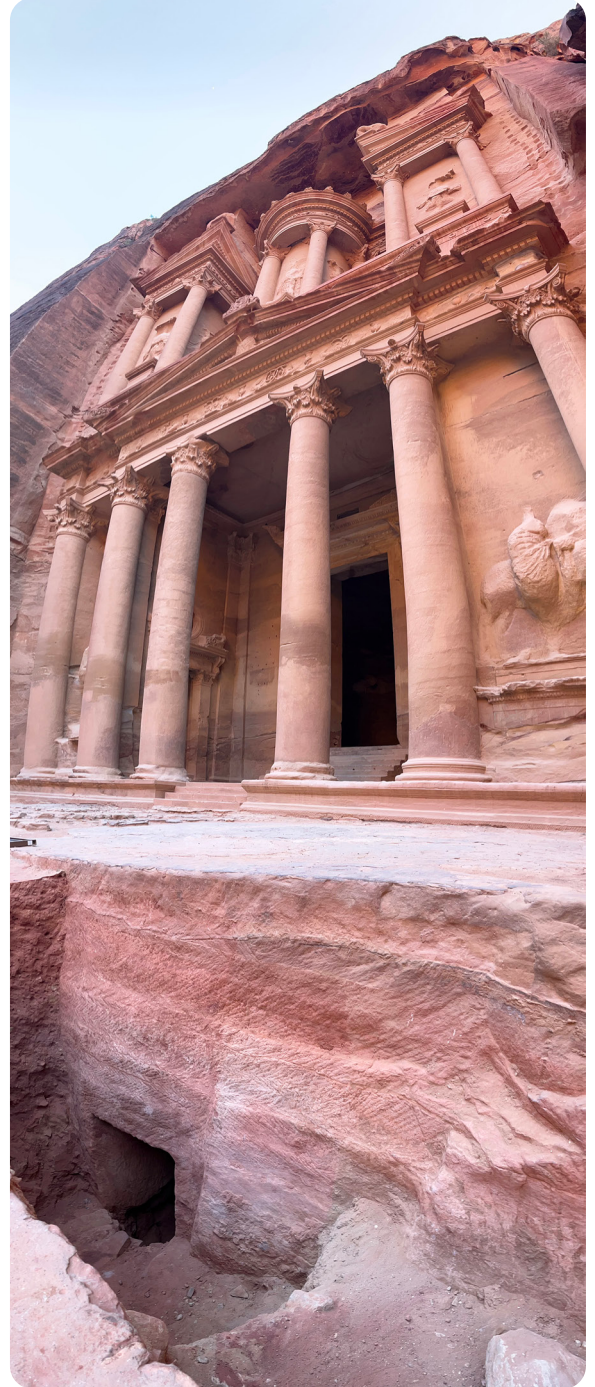
Shining New Light on Petra's Treasury

Pearce Paul Creasman

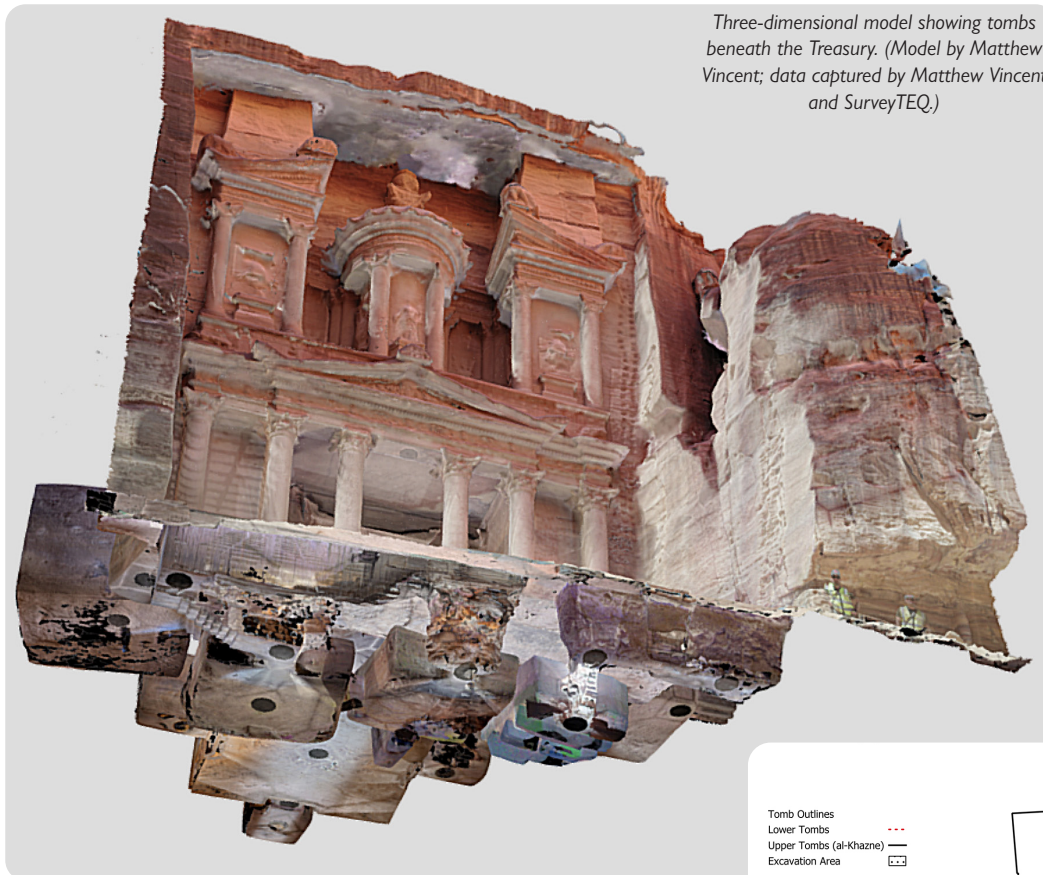
As featured in the *ACOR Newsletter* 36.1 (Bala'awi et al. 2024), our special collaboration with the Department of Antiquities (DoA) and Petra Development & Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA) last year at the Treasury revealed new insights about the site. Of greatest excitement is the potential for a third row of features, in the courtyard and under the Treasury. Started at the request of the Jordanian government with a remote-sensing survey and analysis in February 2024, this joint effort turned to excavation in July and August that same year. In front of and below the Treasury, a total of thirty-eight excavators, archaeologists, and other specialists (nearly all Jordanian) worked for more than a month at tomb 62c and around it. The tomb had been discovered in 2003 by the DoA in a project led by Suleiman Farajat and Sami Nawafleh (Farajat and Nawafleh 2005) and was partially excavated in 2005 (Farajat and Nawafleh 2025); their work inspired our efforts in 2024.

The 2024 excavation focused on evaluating the veracity of the February remote-sensing data ("ground truthing" the possibilities), saw the collection of scientific samples for analyses that were not generally possible in 2005, added new remote-sensing data, and created new three-dimensional reconstructions for the features in the area. The project's fundamental goal was to learn more about the features and the people who built them and to help understand the chronology of this spectacular monument. While analyses are ongoing, some materials are already available to the public, such as the Global Digital Heritage/ACOR/PDTRA collaboration in May 2025 to three-dimensionally scan the Siq and Treasury (see link, below; see also p. 6). While scans have been made of both before, new technologies provide improved resolution, so updates are helpful from time to time.

Samples were collected from the area in front of and inside tomb 62c for optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) dating, potential DNA analyses, and radiocarbon dating, among other methods. Results from each will be published in the future with associated analyses, but the OSL dating, collected by experts from the School of



Tomb 62c before the Treasury in Petra during the recent excavations. (Photo by P. P. Creasman.)



Three-dimensional model showing tombs beneath the Treasury. (Model by Matthew Vincent; data captured by Matthew Vincent and SurveyTEQ.)

Petra.” *ACOR Newsletter* 36 (1): 1–3.

Farajat, S. and S. Nawafleh. 2005. “Report on the al-Khazna Courtyard Excavation at Petra (2003 Season).” *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 49: 373–393. publication.doa.gov.jo/Publications/ViewChapterPublic/1127.

Farajat, S. A. and S. M. Nawafleh. 2025. “The Excavations of the Al-Khazna Courtyard in Petra, Jordan Second Season 2005.” *Jordan Journal for History and Archeology* 19(1). doi.org/10.35516/jjha.v19i1.3835.

Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of St. Andrews, is particularly exciting. The resolution provided by OSL dating is helping to more clearly establish the multiple periods of use and multiple instances of reuse of the site.

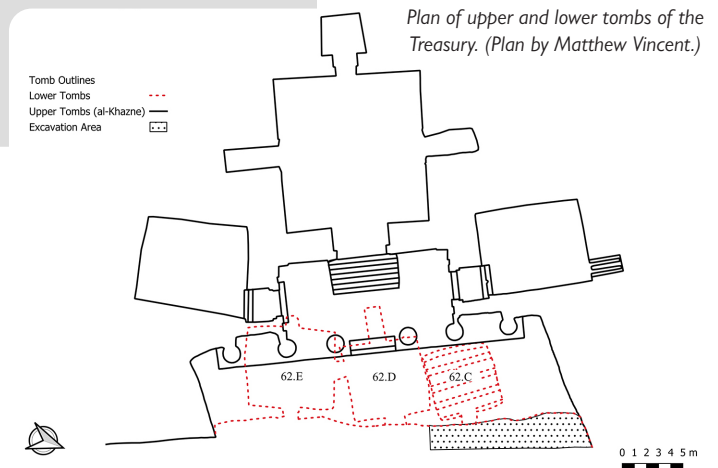
With the permission and support of the Jordanian government, an American adventure television series—*Expedition Unknown*—filmed some of the excavation at tomb 62c in August. They aired a two-part episode in October, telling a story about the Nabataeans and exploring some of the wonderful sites Jordan has to offer. As entertainment media often does, some aspects of the scholarly story were left out or overlooked, so we supplemented their effort to help keep a more holistic record accessible to all (see link, below, for an example). All in all, the immense and positive attention Petra and Jordan received as a result of the show has, we hope, helped highlight the country as a shining example of stability and shepherd of our collective history that we know it to be and renewed focus on some of the many mysteries of the Nabataeans themselves.

Online

Siq scan flythrough: urls.acorjordan.org/siqflythrough
 Petra “Expedition Unknown” Episodes—Learn More: acorjordan.org/exu-learn-more

References

Bala’awi, F., C. R. Bates, F. Braizat, M. Vincent, and P. P. Creasman. 2024. “Remote Sensing at the Treasury in



The work area. (Photo courtesy of Sagar Drones.)

Trustees Announce the Jennifer C. Groot II Memorial Fellowship

In April 2025, the trustees of the American Center of Research were honored to establish a new award: the Jennifer C. Groot II Memorial Fellowship. The endowed “Groot II” fellowship seeks to enhance access for students, just as its namesake, the original Groot fellowship, does for fieldwork. It provides financial support to help improve the preparation and qualifications of Jordanians, or residents of Jordan, for future graduate-level study in Europe or the Americas. The fellowship must conclude with the submission of a qualified application for graduate study beyond Jordan or an application to a funding program that supports the same (e.g., a Fulbright scholarship).

The fellowship will provide support for taking English-language courses and/or preparations for and taking required standardized tests (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS, GRE), as well as support from ACOR’s staff. Preference is given to those studying archaeology, history, or fields related to the cultural heritage of Jordan. In years when no viable candidate applies or is selected, funds may be used in support of the Jennifer C. Groot Memorial Fellowship.



Fellowship Awardees

BERT AND SALLY DE VRIES FELLOWSHIP: **Nicola Lanzaro** (Graduate Student, Sapienza Università di Roma, Scienze dell’Antichità), Archaeological Expedition to Khirbat Iskandar. BURTON MACDONALD AND ROSEMARIE SAMPSON FELLOWSHIP: **Kaelyn Van Sluys** (Undergraduate Student, University of Alberta, Department of History, Classics, and Religious Studies), Humayma Archaeological Field School. CENTER FOR ARABIC STUDY ABROAD II/ACOR FELLOWSHIP: **Evan Kirkland Grennon** (Graduate Student, University of California, Berkeley, Islamic Studies); **Bechara Robert Karam** (Graduate Student, Georgetown University, Foreign Service, Global Politics, and Security); **Leena Azhar Khan** (Graduate Student, Harvard University, Law); **Fatima Razvi** (Graduate Student, University of Texas, Austin, Middle Eastern Studies); **Mary Caroline Rhodes** (Graduate Student, University of Iowa, Occupational and Environmental Health). CENTER FOR ARABIC STUDY ABROAD III/ACOR FELLOWSHIP: **Fatima Khan** (Associate Professor of Instruction, Northwestern University, Arabic); **Manuela Ceballos** (Assistant Professor, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Religious Studies); **Lauren Osborne** (Associate Professor, Whitman College, Religion). FREDERICK-WENGER JORDANIAN EDUCATIONAL FELLOWSHIP: **Sara Aljaber** (Undergraduate Student, The Hashemite University, Heritage Resources Management and Museums), University Study; **Ahmad Al Qaise** (Graduate Student, Yarmouk University, History), The Role of the Crown Prince Foundation in Promoting the Empowerment of Jordanian Youth during the Reign of King Abdullah II (1999–2021). HARRELL FAMILY FELLOWSHIP: **Sophia De Schiffart** (Graduate Student, University of Connecticut, Anthropology), Investigating Environmental Variability Across the Badia Region of Jordan. DONALD O. HENRY FELLOWSHIP: **Natalia Handziuk** (Postdoctoral Scholar, University of Notre Dame, Anthropology), HAP: Tall al-Handaqq South Archaeological Project. LAWRENCE T. GERATY TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP: **Carolina Cioffi** (Graduate Student, Sapienza Università di Roma, Archaeology of the Ancient Near East), Archaeological Expedition to Khirbat Iskandar. JAMES A. SAUER FELLOWSHIP: **Mohammad Rababah** (Graduate Student, Technische Universität, Art History and Historical Urban Studies), Development of a Systematic Approach for the Detection of Ancient Coin Counterfeiting. JENNIFER C. GROOT MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP: **Cody Beasley** (Graduate Student, The Ohio State University, Near Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures), Badia Epigraphic Survey; **Rachel Carroll** (Undergraduate Student, University of Alberta, History), Humayma Archaeological Field School. JORDANIAN GRADUATE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP: **Leen Hasan Al Wahsh** (Graduate Student, The Hashemite University, Queen Rania Institute for Tourism and Heritage), Research Proposal: Integrating Artificial Intelligence to Enhance Tourism Experiences in Jordan. KENNETH W. RUSSELL MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP: **Salama Kassem** (Graduate Student, University of Bonn, Islamic Archaeology Research Unit), Tall Hisban 2025 Project. PIERRE AND PATRICIA BIKAI FELLOWSHIP: **Kareem Rosshandler** (Graduate Student, Emory University, Islamic Civilization Studies), Developing the Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis in Light of the Qur’anic Account of Midian. S. THOMAS PARKER MEMORIAL FUND: **Osama Samawi** (Graduate Student, University of Algarve, Interdisciplinary Center for Archaeology and Evolution of Human Behavior (ICArEHB), STORM—Stone Tool Optimization and Recycling Mechanisms in Tell Abu Sawwan.

Iraqi participants and week 1
trainers on the center's terrace.
(Photo courtesy of the
Smithsonian Institution.)



Iraqi Heritage Professionals Advance Museum Skills in Amman Training

Brian Michael Lione

Earlier this year, twenty Iraqi Museum professionals completed an intensive three-week training program at ACOR focused on strengthening institutional capacity for cultural heritage preservation and museum management. The Fundamentals of Museums course, led by the Smithsonian Institution and hosted by ACOR, ran from February 2 to 20 and involved professionals from across Iraq working for the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage. Nine Smithsonian subject-matter experts from the Office of Global Affairs, the National Museum of Asian Art, and the Museum Conservation Institute delivered the course, with several lectures and tours led by ACOR leadership and staff. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad funded the course as part of a larger, multi-year capacity-building and exchange effort.

The curriculum emphasized practical applications of global museum standard practices, focusing on collections care, exhibition development, emergency preparedness, and public programming. Participants engaged in hands-on workshops (see p. 12), developed pilot projects for their home institutions, and visited key Jordanian sites such as the Jordan Museum and the Department of Antiquities (DoA) warehouse in Tabarbour.

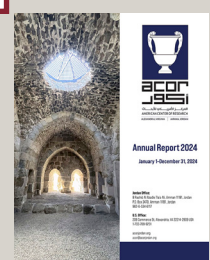
Week one focused on curatorial practices and exhibition design, including artifact labeling and interpretive strategies. Week two addressed legal frameworks, collections management, and risk mitigation, while the final week covered administrative competencies such as budgeting, fundraising, and educational outreach. The program culminated in project presentations from all twenty participants and a closing ceremony recognizing the group's achievements.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. All respondents agreed the training was relevant to

their work in managing and presenting Iraqi cultural heritage. Field visits were especially valued for contextualizing theoretical content, and the participatory format fostered peer exchange and collaboration.

Beyond skill-building, the course furthered the professional network among participants, encouraged future cooperation across institutions, and fostered continued international engagement. This training represents a strategic investment in Iraq's museum sector, equipping professionals with tools to safeguard heritage and engage the public through more resilient and responsive institutions.

The course leaders wish to thank the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, including leadership and staff of the DoA and of the Jordan Museum, for their support, the U.S. Embassy Baghdad for funding and support of this exchange, and their gratitude to everyone at ACOR for their expert facilitation and unending hospitality.



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Official Visit by the NEH

The deputy director of the National Endowment of Humanities' Division of Research Programs, Daniel Sack, was welcomed for a site visit on March 1–4, 2025. He met, either in person or remotely, with the executive director, the assistant director (U.S.), NEH Fellows in residence, and other staff involved with NEH Fellows and management of the award. Staff gave a tour of the library, archives, and the study and residential quarters provided to the fellows.

in memoriam

Nancy L. Lapp (1930–2025) and ACOR

Nancy L. Lapp (1930–2025) was steadfast in her dedication to her family, her scholarship, and to the people and places of Jordan. She was a highly respected archaeologist and biblical scholar who made significant contributions to Near Eastern archaeology, particularly through her extensive fieldwork and publication efforts in Jordan. Alongside her husband, Paul Lapp, and Jordanian colleagues, Nancy participated in excavations at numerous sites in Jordan beginning in the late 1950s. She was part of the early investigations at the Early Bronze Age site of Bâb adh-Dhrâ', where she analyzed pottery and other artifacts; Iraq al-Amir, where she contributed substantially to our understanding of Hellenistic and later occupations; and at Tell er-Rumeith, where she played a central role in managing and ultimately publishing the final excavation reports greatly valued for their comprehensive documentation of Iron Age occupation in northern Jordan. Nancy's ethical commitment to publishing and preserving the results of archaeological fieldwork was legendary. She stated repeatedly that the publication of excavation data was an obligation not just to academia but also to the host country and local communities.

Nancy was a longtime member of the ACOR family, playing a significant role in supporting and shaping the American Center of Research in Amman. Her many contributions included governance, mentoring, and scholarly support. She served as an ACOR trustee from 1988 until 2006, after which she became a trustee emerita in a valued advisory capacity until 2024. One of Nancy's most enduring contributions to ACOR and to the field of archaeology in Jordan was her donation of the Paul and Nancy Lapp photographic collection, comprised of thousands of slides and photographs taken by Nancy and Paul between 1957 and 2002. The digitized images documenting archaeological sites, artifacts, excavations, and daily life in Jordan and neighboring areas are now accessible through the ACOR Photo Archive. Through her role at ACOR and at the Kelso Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, where she served as director from 1970 to 2000, she mentored younger generations of archaeologists and advocated for ethical and methodological rigor in Near Eastern archaeology. We on the Follow the Pots and Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain projects were privileged to work with and learn from her. Nancy Lapp's contributions to ACOR broadened the scope and depth of its research resources, advanced standards of archaeological publication and stewardship, and fostered stronger scholarly connection between North American and Jordanian archaeologists.



Nancy Lapp reconstructing a pot at Tall as Sa'idiyeh, May 1987.
(Photo from the Paul and Nancy Lapp collection.)

—Morag M. Kersel and Meredith S. Chesson



Archive Update

Ibrahim Rantissi

Digital Archive staff, led by Ibrahim Rantissi, focused on creating and launching a new platform for the digital archive (archives.acorjordan.org) with the support of Matthew Vincent. The new website is based on Omeka S open-source software. Migration of data for more than 60,000 items has been finalized, and the team is undertaking final revisions. A grant from the U.S. Department of Education continued to help fund this work.

Also, the digital archive acquired a new collection—photographs by Pearce Paul Creasman. Finally, the Aqaba-Ma'an Archaeological and Epigraphic Survey (AMAES) collection is scheduled to launch in late August 2025.

Publication News

Three new essays appeared on our blog, *Insights*:

- “ACOR Internship Experience: My American Center of Research Internship” by Zain Fanik (archive and library intern).
- “ACOR Internship Experience: Preserving Jordan's Heritage: My Experience with ACOR's National Inventory Project” by Roma Aatifi (National Inventory intern).
- “Terracotta Male Figurines from Iron Age Jordan” by Joel S. Burnett (ACOR-CAORC Postdoctoral Fellow, 2024–2025).

Online
publications.acorjordan.org/insights

Expanding the National Inventory: A New Focus on 3D Digitization through Partnership with Global Digital Heritage

Matthew Vincent

The National Cultural Heritage Property Database of The Kingdom of Jordan continues to evolve in exciting new directions. Over the past year, the project has embraced 3D digitization as a key tool for documentation and preservation—thanks to a growing collaboration between the American Center of Research (ACOR) and Global Digital Heritage (GDH).

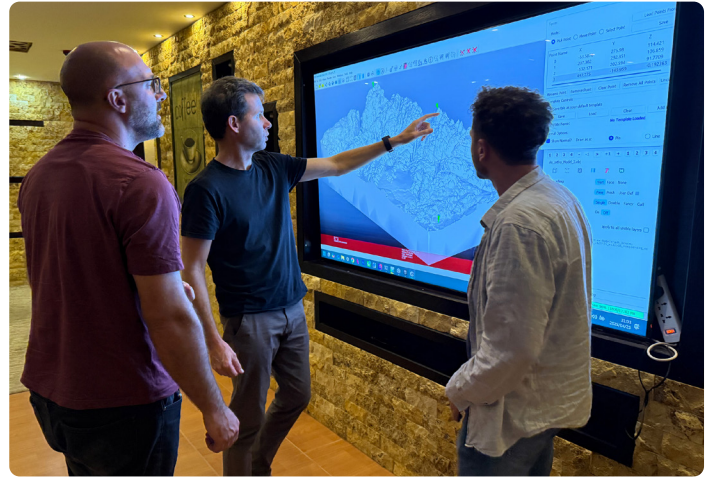
In November 2024, staff from ACOR and GDH carried out a coordinated scanning campaign that brought advanced 3D imaging technologies to several museums and archaeological sites across Jordan. Working in Petra, the Petra Museum, the Amman Citadel and Jordan Archaeological Museum (Citadel Museum), and the Tafileh Museum, they scanned hundreds of cultural heritage objects. These high-resolution 3D models now serve as detailed digital records that enhance the National Inventory's ability to support conservation, research, and public access.

At the end of February 2025, the U.S. Department of State suspended, then terminated, the grant funding the National Inventory, along with many other international programs. Awarded in 2022, it was intended to run into 2027. Having concluded that the project is too important to pause, the board of trustees committed additional resources to maintain its activities with ACOR's own funds. Plans are underway to include more museum collections, archaeological landscapes, and historic architecture in the 3D record. At the same time, the project remains grounded in its original purpose: to build a comprehensive, centralized resource that helps safeguard Jordan's heritage for future generations.

Collaboration with GDH continued in April with a return to Petra—this time launching drone-based LiDAR flights to document the site's broader archaeological landscape. The focus then shifted east to document three of Jordan's desert castles: Qasr Tuba, Qasr al-Amra, and Qasr Kharraneh. These remote sites, often difficult to access or monitor regularly, now benefit from detailed digital twins that can aid in their protection and future study.

A partnership has now been formalized through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed between ACOR and GDH, establishing a shared commitment to advancing digital documentation across Jordan. It also sets the stage for future joint initiatives that bring international expertise and cutting-edge technology to Jordan's cultural heritage sector.

Further cementing the relationship, Matthew Vincent—project director for the National Inventory at ACOR—now also serves as scientific director for the Middle East at GDH. This dual role reflects the alignment between both organizations and ensures closer coordination as 3D documentation becomes a more prominent



Global Digital Heritage team members Bruce McDonald (center) and Giuseppe Cirigliano (right) discuss drone plans with Sager pilot Senan Al Khatib (left) during the recent digitization work in Petra. (Photo by Matthew Vincent.)

part of the Inventory's ongoing development.

The integration of 3D technologies into the National Inventory marks a major milestone in the project's growth. Where the project once focused primarily on cataloging objects through written descriptions and photographs, it now incorporates a new layer of spatial precision and visual fidelity. These models can be used for detailed condition assessments, virtual exhibitions, immersive educational experiences, and long-term preservation planning.

This shift is not just technical—it is strategic. As heritage sites and museums face growing threats from environmental degradation, conflict, and limited resources, accurate digital records become more critical than ever. Three-dimensional models and the next iteration of the project also allow for broader engagement with the public, offering opportunities to explore Jordan's heritage online or in virtual reality.

The ACOR-GDH partnership reflects a broader recognition that preserving cultural heritage today requires innovation, collaboration, and the willingness to adopt new tools. By combining ACOR's deep local knowledge and longstanding relationships with Jordanian institutions with GDH's global experience and technological capabilities, this partnership is setting new standards for how heritage can be documented and shared.

Looking ahead, the National Inventory will continue to expand its scope and impact. With new technologies, new partnerships, and a shared vision, the National Inventory is evolving into a powerful platform for heritage preservation—and an important example of how international cooperation can lead to meaningful and lasting impact.

To learn more about Global Digital Heritage, visit: globaldigitalheritage.org.

The project was made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Department of State. The content of this article is the responsibility of the American Center of Research and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of State or the United States Government.



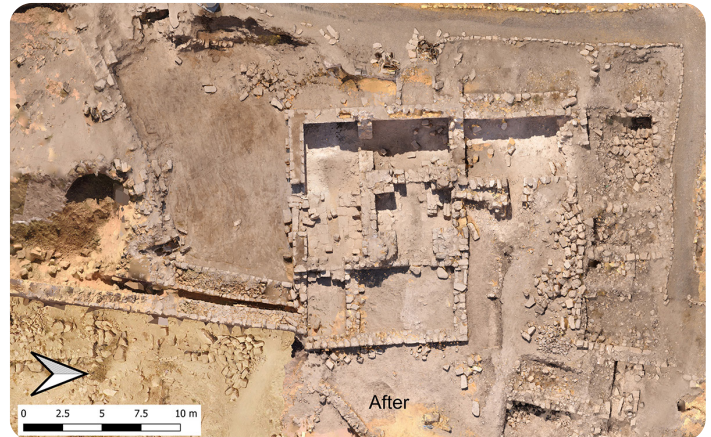
Tall Dhiban: A New Contract with the Department of Antiquities

Hanadi Al Taher & John Shearman

Situated 70 km south of Amman, near the Dead Sea, Tall Dhiban stands as part of Jordan's rich historical tapestry. Once the capital of the Moabite Kingdom under King Mesha, and positioned along the historic King's Highway, Dhiban boasts layers of history from the Early Bronze Age to the Late Islamic period. It is surrounded by deep valleys and sits adjacent to the ecological wonder of Wadi Al Mujib.

Through a new contract with the Department of Antiquities, the American Center of Research aims to restore, document, and present the site's major archaeological features, enhancing its tourism potential along the King's Highway. Key goals include reinforcing the historical narrative of Mesha, improving site accessibility, and rediscovering and restoring major structures such as the Byzantine church, the Roman bath, and a special focus on Mesha's palace. The project also engages the local community in preservation efforts.

The project emphasizes accessibility, community engagement, and tourism development. Efforts include detailed documentation and surveys, interpretive signage, and plans to upgrade the visitor experience. These combined efforts will help turn Tall Dhiban into an active and attractive cultural tourism site, forming a historical "golden triangle" with the nearby sites of Umm ar-Rasas and Al Lahun.



The Roman bath area before and after clearance operations.
(Photos by Matthew Vincent.)

Celebrating 75 Years of U.S.-Jordanian Relations through Cultural Heritage

Noreen Doyle

In May 2024, the United States Department of State awarded ACOR a grant for the Cultural Heritage Collaborations at the 75th Anniversary of U.S.-Jordanian Bilateral Relations project. This was to promote the understanding of the people of the United States and Jordan through a selection of 75 examples of joint projects in Jordanian cultural heritage and related activities over the past three-quarters of a century. Developed by ACOR staff with contributions from the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, Jordan Tourism Board, U.S. Embassy in Amman, and other organizations and individuals, the resulting bilingual exhibit, *Together for Past and Present*, debuted in the ACOR Library on February 26. ACOR provided one copy of the exhibit panels and 130 printed copies of the accompanying hundred-page book to the U.S. Embassy in Amman. After the grant's early termination by the U.S. Government, ACOR has continued to display the exhibit in our library so that all may share in the long history of Jordanian and American cultural heritage collaborations.

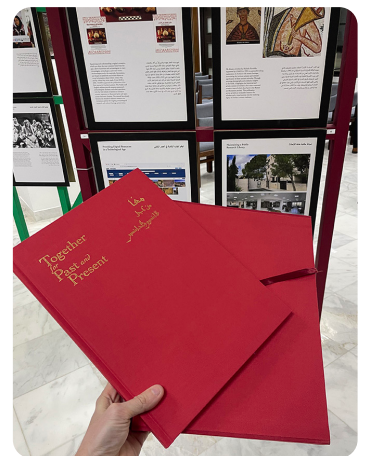
The pages and panels of *Together for Past and Present* offer photographs and descriptive text for 75 prominent collaborations in Jordanian cultural heritage that received

funding from a department or agency of the United States government. Intended to benefit American and Jordanian decisionmakers and educators, as well as the general public, they showcase productive, positive impacts that American funding has had over the decades, strengthening the two nations' friendly relationship and demonstrating their shared values and interests.

Staff arranged for the exhibit to appear at five venues throughout Jordan, but, with the termination of the grant, these showings have been cancelled.

A copy of the book is available at the ACOR Library.

The project was made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Department of State. The content of this article is the responsibility of the American Center of Research and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of State or the United States Government.



A copy of the book (and its case) and the exhibit on display in the library.
(Photo by P. P. Creasman.)





The night before the full board meeting, members enjoy dinner at P.J. Clarke's Restaurant. (Photo by P. P. Creasman.)

ACOR's Trustees Meet in Washington, D.C.

Lina Shara'an

The American Center of Research's trustees traveled from both within the United States and Europe to meet in Washington, D.C. on April 26, 2025; others attended remotely via Zoom. Ambassador Edward "Skip" Gnehm informed the board of his visit to Jordan in early March, during which he met with several key officials, including representatives from the Department of Antiquities and the Ministry of Tourism. The meetings were productive and left a positive impression of ACOR's work. During Ambassador Gnehm's visit, executive director Pearce Paul Creasman coordinated visits to two sites that ACOR has worked on recently in coordination with the Department of Antiquities, including the Aqaba Church, a remarkable location now impressively conserved and with new resources for display to tourists, and Bayt Ras, where restoration work on the theater has been carried out. The Ministry of Tourism expressed satisfaction with the progress and results of the work at Bayt Ras. Ambassador Gnehm also briefed the board on the termination of several U.S. federal grants, which had an impact on staff employed in fully grant-funded positions (see p. 11).

ACOR at the Workshop on Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Yemeni Cultural Property Law Enforcement Training

John Shearman

The presentation sessions for the Workshop on Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Yemeni Cultural Property Law Enforcement Training were undertaken February 9–10, 2025, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Amman. Speakers included individuals from Jordan, the U.S., Yemen, Morocco, and Qatar. Matthew Vincent provided a presentation on ACOR's National Inventory Project and how it can assist in the reduction of illicit trafficking (see p. 10). The workshop was supported by a Cultural Property Agreement Im-

Library Updates

Samya Khalaf Kafafi

The ACOR Library received a substantial reference collection from the Fulbright Library under long-term loan from the Bilateral Fulbright Commission in Jordan program. The 2,668-item collection includes books and periodicals in English and Arabic, covering history, archaeology, health, languages, religion, dictionaries, novels, and more. We have already begun organizing and cataloging it.

We are always eager to receive recommendations of important titles to add to our shelves. Among the many new books are *The Iron Age Town of Mudayna, Thamud, Jordan: Excavations of the Fortifications and Northern Sector* (1995–2012) by Robert Chadwick et al.; *Rock Art and Stone Monuments in the Negev: Symbolism of Life and Death in the Desert* by Uzi Avner; and *The Routledge Handbook on Tourism in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by Dallen Timothy. You can search the library catalog to find out more about these volumes and other new books.

Library staff are keen to attend events that help us to engage with the local community and strengthen our connections with other libraries. Associate librarian Samya Khalaf Kafafi participated in the World Heritage Day celebration on April 18. Held at the University of Jordan, it was attended by researchers, professors, and cultural heritage specialists. She also participated in the National Library's first conference, marking its 50th anniversary. This was sponsored by the Minister of Culture; many international and local library-science specialists took part.



Some of the World Heritage Day participants (from left to right): Falah Sharaiaah, Dr. Mahmoud Arinat, Dr. Hasan Zyoud, Basem Mahamid, Dr. Lutfi Khalil, Moayad Jerwan, Tariq al-Mhairat, Tammam Khasawneh, Khawla Goussous, and Samya Khalaf Kafafi.

(Photo courtesy of the University of Jordan.)

plementation Grant under the patronage of HRH Princess Dana Firas and implemented by the American Foundation for Cultural Research (AFCR). Roundtable discussions and final recommendations were successful in focusing on the needs and strategies of illicit trafficking in Yemen. ACOR attendees included Matthew Vincent, John Shearman, and Faris Saadeh.

Lecture Highlights

A robust and diverse lecture season marked the first half of 2025: we hosted seven of our own, with an eighth presented in partnership with the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Amman.

Linda Jacobs inaugurated the lineup on January 14 with “Captivating Strangers: Early Arab Immigrants in the United States.” On February 2, Benjamin Porter followed with “The Iron Age Townscape of Busayra,” and, on the 25th, Darrell Rohl presented “Umm Al-Jimal: Jordan’s Newest UNESCO World Heritage Site.” Less than a week later, on March 3, Paul G. Chandler delivered “Remembering Khalil Gibran: An Unparalleled Guide for Our Times.” “The Nabataeans’ Innovative Techniques: Water System, Pottery, and Quarries” was given by Yazan Safwan Al-Tell on April 8, on May 6 Robert Schick presented “Alois Musil’s Explorations of Southern Jordan in 1896–1902,” and Sahar Al Khasawneh gave the penultimate lecture, “Desert Kites and the Timing of Prehistoric Hunting Landscapes in Jordan,” on May 26.

Closing out the spring 2025 lecture season was a special presentation in partnership with the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Amman: “The Royal Pyramid Necropolis in Abusir (Egypt)” by Jaromír Krejčí, held at the center on June 11.

Many of these, and others, are available for viewing on ACOR’s YouTube channel. Current and past schedules can be found on our website.



Attendees listen to Jaromír Krejčí of the Czech Institute of Egyptology at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague. (Photo by Lina Shara'an.)

Online

acorjordan.org/events.

youtube.com/@ACORJordan1968

Call for Submissions!

ARCHAEOLOGY IN JORDAN 5

The deadline for AIJ 5 (covering work in 2024–2025) is March 31, 2026.

For details, visit:

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Fellows in Residence January–June 2025

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP: **Gary Rollefson** (Professor Emeritus, Whitman College, Anthropology), Final Report on the Excavations at ‘Ain Ghazal, ‘Ain Ghazal, Excavation Reports, Volume 1. ACOR-CAORC POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP: **Joel Burnett** (Professor, Baylor University, Religion), Interpreting Iron Age Religious Evidence from Jordan; **Konstantine Politis** (Chairperson, Hellenic Society for Near Eastern Studies), Kalliroe (‘Ain ez-Zara, Jordan) Documentation and Study Project; **Robert Schick** (Independent Scholar, Near Eastern Studies), Identifying the Sites that Alois Musil Recorded in His Travels in Southern Jordan and the Negev in 1896–1902. ACOR-CAORC PREDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP: **Fadi Kafetty** (Graduate Student, University of Houston, History), A History of the Jordanian Communist Party, 1951–1993; **Eliza Marks** (Graduate Student, CUNY Graduate Center, Anthropology), Experimentation and Betweenness: The Formation and Mobilization of Sound Collectives in/between Amman, Outside, and Online. CENTER FOR ARABIC STUDY ABROAD II/ACOR FELLOWSHIP: **Evan Kirkland Grennon** (Graduate Student, University of California, Berkeley, Islamic Studies); **Bechara Robert Karam** (Graduate Student, Georgetown University, Foreign Service, Global Politics, and Security); **Leena Azhar Khan** (Graduate Student, Harvard University, Law); **Fatima Razvi** (Graduate Student, University of Texas, Austin, Middle Eastern Studies); **Mary Caroline Rhodes** (Graduate Student, University of Iowa, Occupational and Environmental Health). PIERRE AND PATRICIA BIKAI FELLOWSHIP: **Kareem Rosshandler** (Graduate Student, Emory University, Islamic Civilization Studies), Developing the Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis in Light of the Qur’anic Account of Midian.



Engaging Enforcement Agencies in the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property in Jordan

Faris Saadeh & Lina Shara'an

Jordan's cultural heritage faces a range of serious threats: climate change, extreme weather, rapid urbanization, political instability in the region, looting, vandalism, and illicit trade. Among these, looting, vandalism, and illegal trafficking form a connected network that significantly endangers archaeological sites and historical objects. While climate and conflict may act as root causes, it is the illicit trafficking of cultural property—driven by both supply and demand—that this project directly addresses.

Its position at a crossroads of civilizations, along with its proximity to conflict zones and rich archaeological landscapes, makes Jordan vulnerable to being both a source and transit hub for trafficked antiquities. Economic pressures and high international demand further increase the risks. This context underlines the urgent need for action, particularly at the level of border enforcement.

The project was launched following the memorandum of understanding signed between the United States and Jordan in December 2019 (and renewed in March 2025), with funding in the form of a Cultural Property Agreement Implementation Grant (CPAIG) from the U.S. State Department. Since October 2024, the initiative has focused on building the capacity of Jordanian Customs (JC) officers—frontline guardians of cultural heritage—to prevent and respond to smuggling attempts before artifacts exit or enter the country. The U.S. Department of State terminated the CPAIG in early March 2025. The project then continued under ACOR's own funds until May 13, when the U.S. government reinstated the grant.

The main goal of the project is to empower customs officers with the knowledge, tools, and legal understanding needed to detect and stop illicit trafficking. Through this process, we also aim to institutionalize cooperation between the Jordanian Customs Department and the Department of Antiquities (DoA) by formalizing protocols for the existing collaboration between JC officers and the DoA for handling heritage-related cases. A series of meetings have taken place in recent months to enhance coordination between both agencies, with all parties demonstrating a high level of commitment and engagement.



Faris Saadeh of ACOR (left) and Katie Paul of the Antiquities Trafficking and Heritage Anthropology Research (ATHAR) Project (right) deliver presentations to employees of the Department of Antiquities and Jordan Customs about cultural heritage and the ATHAR Project, respectively. (Photos by Ibrahim Rantissi.)

Earlier this year, a large-scale survey was conducted with JC officers to assess their understanding, challenges, and needs related to cultural property protection. Based on the findings, we developed training content that focused on four core areas: legal frameworks, heritage value, detection techniques, and interagency coordination.

The training program uses a blended methodology, including lectures, interactive workshops, real-world case studies, and group work. These are delivered with the support of national and international experts from Jordan, the United States, Spain, France, and Italy. The training is organized into four comprehensive modules: The Role of Customs in Heritage Protection; Understanding Cultural Heritage; Legal Frameworks; and Detection and Reporting.

A bilingual training curriculum has been developed and is currently under refinement, with the goal of this becoming a standard reference for future JC training. The curriculum is supported by quick reference materials designed to provide on-the-spot guidance at border crossings and facilitate faster, more accurate decision making.

Our current focus is on scaling this knowledge across all border points. This will be achieved through a series of internal training sessions led by trained JC officers, supported by the reference materials and ongoing collaboration with the DoA. The American Center of Research, Jordanian Customs, and the Department of Antiquities have all committed to sustaining this effort.

Ultimately, this project is a key step toward protecting Jordan's national identity, cultural legacy, and archaeological resources. It also contributes to broader goals, including cultural tourism development and regional stability. The fight against illicit trafficking is not only about safeguarding artifacts—it is about preserving the past for future generations.

The project was made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Department of State. The content of this article is the responsibility of the American Center of Research and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of State or the United States Government.



Donations (January–June 2025)

ANNUAL FUND

Björn P. Anderson; Richard and Carlene Anderson; Jocelyn and Edward Badovinac in honor of the Madaba Plains Project and the work in Jordan to preserve culture; Donald A. Best; Joyce E. Chelberg; Briann Clark; Thomas Davis; Cynthia Finlayson; Global Digital Heritage; Paul E. Fitzpatrick; Debbie Harper in honor of Dr. Phillip Hammond and Jack (John D. M.) Green for bringing Petra and the Temple of the Winged Lions to her; Ray Anita Hemphill; Matthias Henze and Karin Liebster; Anita Herway; Randall L. Hoffman; Paul and Brenda Katerberg; Stephen Lintner and Pamela Johnson in memory of James Sauer; Randolph B. Old; Megan A. Perry; Margaret S. Pickering; Meg Pickering and John Schmidt; Thomas R. Pickering; Barbara A. Porter in memory of Nancy Lapp; Benjamin Jacobs Porter; Robert Risser and Martha Boling-Risser in memory of Bob and Jean Boling; John Shearman; John G. Turner and Jerry G. Fischer; Matthew Vincent; Virginia Wellington Cabot Foundation in memory of Anne Cabot Ogilvy; Bethany J. Walker; Peter and Penelope West in memory of Jennifer Groot; Thomas and Theresa Whetstone in memory of Dr. Donald Wimmer

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Staff and Intern Updates

Lina Shara'an

The contracts for Abed Al Fattah Ghareeb and Daoud Daoud, who worked for the National Inventory Project, ended when that project closed due to termination of its grant by the U.S. Department of State. Saja Adawi's, Fayzeh Darwazeh's, and Shatha Abu Aballi's contracts also ended due to the early closure of grants and projects by the federal government. On March 1, 2025, Hanadi Al Taher joined ACOR to manage the Tell Dhiban contract with the Department of Antiquities to develop and present this site. On the same date, Hisham al Majali was hired as site manager for the project.

Between January and June 2025, ACOR had five interns who assisted with the organization's programming in different capacities. Federico Borghesi and Astrid Bjorlin Han-

sen, both archaeology students from Leiden University, worked for the National Inventory Project in January. They contributed to the architecture section of the thesaurus for the National Inventory Project while working at the DoA's main storehouse, where they mapped the building and helped to create a new organizational system for all rooms by installing shelving and labeling locations to accommodate artifacts and objects from all across Jordan. They also assisted in photographing artifacts and objects related to the National Inventory Project.

In addition, Jawad Al-Azza (high school student from King's Academy), Sarah Nasser (master's student in archaeology from the University of Jordan), and Osama Sarhan (library and information science student from Al-Hussein Bin Talal University in Ma'an) worked as interns in the library and archive. Mr. Sarhan's internship represented the first time that the ACOR Library has opened training to a library science student.



April 2025 Board Meeting

The American Center of Research Board of Trustees meeting took place in person on April 26, 2025, at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, D.C. (with some members attending remotely via Zoom). Edward (“Skip”) Gnehm called the meeting to order, stated that a quorum was present, and recognized the new challenges of government cuts to funding and the intensification of conflict in the region. New member Leah Webb was welcomed to the meeting. Executive director Dr. Pearce Paul Creasman gave his update to the board, recognizing that the current situation is unpredictable and that everyone should be alert for grant and funding opportunities. Jordanian institutions and scholars have been very supportive and shown increased interest in presenting lectures. The center is fully booked over the summer, with many missions and groups coming through. All three of the DoA-ACOR contracts (Aqaba, Bayt Ras, and Karak) were completed, and the contract has been signed for the new project at Tall Dhiban, which is now ongoing. The 16th International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan (ICHAJ) will be held in Athens this fall. We have a new collaboration with the Center for Arabic Study Abroad. The board approved a new endowment for the Jennifer C. Groot II Fellowship, which will help Jordanian students study abroad at the graduate level. Treasurer David Nickols reported on the center’s financial situation, which continues to be strong. The board approved an updated strategic plan. Björn Anderson was elected to the Fellowship Committee. All eight members of the class of 2025 were reelected to the board class of 2028. The next board meeting will take place in Boston, Mass., on November 22, 2025.

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The Fundamentals of Museums course, led by the Smithsonian Institution and hosted by ACOR for Iraqi professionals who work for the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage, made use of Khirbet Salameh, the archaeological site next door to the American Center of Research, as part of their training (see p. 4).

The site was an agricultural settlement that had been established by the 3rd century BCE and was still in use during the Byzantine and early Islamic periods. The building visible here dates to Roman times, specifically the 2nd century CE, and remained in use for hundreds of years thereafter.

For a virtual tour of the site, visit: urls.acorjordan.org/khirbet-salameh-virtual-tour

(Photo courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.)

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