ACOR أكور
المركز الأمريكي للأبحاث
AMERICAN CENTER OF RESEARCH
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA | AMMAN, JORDAN

أخبار أكور
NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 36.2 | March 2025
for July–December 2024

Above: A visitor on the walkway extension above the Aqaba Church, allowing a better view of the ruins, now sheltered from the elements. (Photo by Abraham Farajian.)

Preservation and Rehabilitation of the Aqaba Church

John Shearman

In 1996, the Roman Aqaba Project, directed by the late S. Thomas Parker, brought to light a mud-brick building on a stone foundation. Its eastward orientation and plan, with side aisles flanking a central nave, resembling those of late 4th-century Christian churches known from Egypt, suggested that this, too, was a church. A Bishop of Aila (as Aqaba was known in antiquity) was recorded as attending the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, so a meaningful number of Christians were living in the city by that time. With the latest coins uncovered during the excavation having been minted in the 350s, during the reign of Constantius II, Parker proposed that the

Above: The newly built shelter covering the Aqaba Church, lit for night visitors. (Photo by Abraham Farajian.)

Left: Magnetometer readings were taken of the entire site as part of the remote-sensing portion of the project. (Photo by John Shearman.)

earthquake of May 19, 363, likely destroyed the building. Four years after its discovery, deep probes undertaken adjacent to its walls recovered pottery of late 3rd/early 4th-century date and a poorly preserved coin—possibly one issued by Diocletian in the 290s. These brought Parker firmly to the conclusion that the Aqaba building had been founded as a church in the late 3rd/early 4th century, perhaps before the Diocletianic Persecution of 303. Its remote location, on the outskirts of the Roman Empire, may have spared it from notice.

Since excavation, the building quickly became known as the oldest purpose-built Christian church yet found in the archaeological record, and its discovery and date immediately drew worldwide attention. For example, it is featured in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. It is not surprising then that the Aqaba Church has been a popular destination for tourists. Abandoned following the earthquake after only a few decades of use and never reoccupied, it preserves its original, basilica-like form and walls that still stand as high as an impressive 4 meters, allowing visitors a unique glimpse into a period when most Christian worship took place in private homes.

In August 2023, ACOR signed an agreement under the Department of Antiquities to partner in restoration and preservation works at the site. The Institut français du Proche-Orient (IFPO) also joined the project and performed conservation and restoration work to the church itself.

A central aspect of the project was the design and installation of a shelter over the site, to protect it and make the site accessible. In 2024, the shelter was designed and installed. Remote sensing and sondage ensured that the new structure was placed in ideal locations, avoiding archaeological features. Between late May and August, the protective structure was built, not without difficultly, and the accessibility routes added.

By the end of September, final touches, light repairs, and the display and presentation works were complete. The Aqaba Church is now better protected from the elements, and visitors can contemplate the ruins with less visual impact from modern features. Benches along the walkway provide seating, and the site is lit at night, allowing for evening visitation. New bilingual signage gives visitors an understanding of the church and its spaces, such as the nave (where the congregation gathered), the ambo (from which scriptures were read), the apses (where statuary might have stood), and the pastophorion (treasury and priests' quarters). It is our hope that this international collaboration will help preserve the site for generations to come.

References

Bala'awi, F. and M. Amareen. 2024. "Aqaba Church." *Archaeology in Jordan* 4:164–166.

Guinness World Records. n.d. "First Purpose-Built Church." guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/first-purpose-built-church, accessed 12 March 2025.

Parker, S.T. 1998a. "The Roman 'Aqaba Project: The 1996 Campaign." *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 42: 375–394.

—. 1998b. "An Early Church, Perhaps the Oldest in the World, Found at Aqaba." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 61(4): 254.

—. 2000. "The Roman 'Aqaba Project: The 1997 and 1998 Campaigns." *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 44: 373–394.

—. 2002. "The Roman 'Aqaba Project: 2000 Campaign." *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 46: 409–428.

Rose, M. 1998. "Early Church at Aqaba." *Archaeology Magazine* 51(6), archive.archaeology.org/9811/newsbriefs/aqaba.html.

Bayt Ras Theater Conservation and Development Project

Lina Shara'an

Bayt Ras, ancient Capitolias, located along the *Via Traiana Nova*, was a significant site during the Roman, Byzantine, and Umayyad eras. The city's rich history is embodied in its theater, a remarkable example of Roman engineering that served as a center for social gatherings and performances. Later in its history, the theater was reused and incorporated into the defensive walls of the town. Excavations by the Department of Antiquities from 1999 to 2008 revealed the theater's semicircular structure and remnants of the scaena, stage, and orchestra that survived despite erosion and reuse of the theater's stones in later periods. In late 2023, ACOR was contracted by the DoA for the Bayt Ras Theater Conservation and Development Project, a one-year collaborative effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the historical and archaeological significance of the theater, making it more accessible and engaging for visitors. Restoration and conservation activities made for a unique experience, enabling much greater engagement with the site by visitors. The project sought to balance preservation needs with sustainable tourism development, ensuring that the site's cultural heritage will be appreciated by future generations.

The Bayt Ras theater before (upper) and after (lower) restoration and conservation. (Upper photo by Ala' Al Badareen; lower by Shatha Abu Aballi.)

The interior renovation of the first level of Karak Castle's Tower 1. (Photo by P. P. Creasman.)

Karak Castle Preservation Efforts

John Shearman

Karak Castle, one of Jordan's most famous sites, overlooks a key transportation route between the Levant, to the south, Egypt, and, to the east, Mecca. The enormity of the 12th-century crusader castle, one of the largest medieval fortresses in the region, and the design of the city's walls underscore Karak's importance as a crucial point of security and rest on the pilgrimage route to the holy lands. Subsequently, the Ayyubids improved and expanded these defenses, which continued to serve the subsequent Mamluk and Ottoman dynasties. Karak's towers were strategically positioned and constructed to facilitate movement and communication. Six of these remain today.

Four (nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4) underwent conservation and site improvement starting in July 2024 as part of a collaboration among the Department of Antiquities, the Directorate of Antiquities of Karak, the Greater Karak Municipality, and ACOR. Significant cooperation and understanding from the local community regarding the importance of the project played a major role in completing the project without notable obstacles: the towers are integral features of the landscape, without clear boundaries separating them from surrounding properties. This work is the first step in what is hoped will be further measures to preserve and conserve these historically significant structures.

Above: Representatives from PARI GDI, CERIAS, Princess Sumaya University for Technology, and the U.S. Embassy in Jordan, as well as cyber academy instructors and participants, celebrating the conclusion of the on-site cyber bootcamp. Right: Students participating in the first week of on-site training in Amman. (Photos courtesy of the U.S.-Jordan Cybersecurity Youth Academy in Amman.)

Cybersecurity Youth Academy in Jordan Successfully Graduates Participants

Ginger Bolen

The U.S.-Jordan Cybersecurity Youth Academy in Amman, a joint initiative supported by the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Purdue Applied Research Institute (PARI), Purdue's Center for Research and Education in Information Assurance and Security (CERIAS), and Princess Sumaya University for Technology has successfully graduated its first class of Jordanians after an intensive 10-month program. The academy aimed to strengthen Jordan's cybersecurity posture by equipping participants aged 18–24 with essential cybersecurity skills while fostering their exploration of career and academic pathways in the sector. There are currently almost 4 million cybersecurity jobs vacant around the world according to John Glover, executive director of PARI's Global Development and Innovation division, who has noted that "Jordan is not immune from this dearth of qualified professionals. The Academy strategically addressed this gap."

Students participated in a blend of virtual sessions to increase cyber awareness and a four-week hands-on training program in Amman that focused on experiential learning, training with real-world simulations and exploration of career opportunities in the field. In addition to training sessions led by a combination of experts from both Purdue and PSUT, students had the opportunity to spend time shadowing cybersecurity practitioners at a variety of companies in Amman.

The majority of the 50 participants, who were selected based on an open and competitive competition from over 800 applicants throughout Jordan, were provided accommodations at ACOR while attending the on-site training. In addition, the center hosted participants and trainers for two days of group activities, creating a welcoming environment for all. As one participant noted "What made this experience truly special was the sense of collaboration and community. The support, encouragement, and teamwork made all the difference, and I'm proud to have been part of it."

"It's been an incredible journey contributing to the Cybersecurity Youth Academy for Jordan. This program has been pivotal in advancing cybersecurity knowledge and inspiring the next generation of professionals. I'm proud to have played a part in this initiative," said Ammar Odeh, director of the Consultation and Training Center at Princess Sumaya University for Technology, one of the program's partners. The partnership also supported the U.S. government's commitment to strengthen Jordan's cybersecurity posture while engaging youth as a major force for positive change. U.S. Embassy Amman's public diplomacy counselor, Anthony Miranda, emphasized that "[e]quipping young Jordanians with cybersecurity tools and knowledge helps them successfully compete for lucrative careers and strengthens Jordan's ICT sector, which in turn creates more opportunities for U.S. businesses looking to partner with Jordanian firms. This program underscores the U.S. government's commitment to education, workforce development, and economic opportunities."

in memoriam

Gough Winn Thompson, Jr.

23 May 1929–13 September 2024

We sadly note the passing of Gough Winn Thompson, Jr., who was president of the ACOR Board of Trustees from 1982 to 1986 and lived a life of great ambitions. A graduate of Princeton University, he served in the Korean War, founded a financial firm with offices in Riyadh, Princeton, and London, and, even in his final hours, was attempting to establish water projects near Tijuana, Mexico, and in Gaza—and this only hints at the life he led. We are grateful to him for all he did for ACOR and extend our condolences to all who knew him.

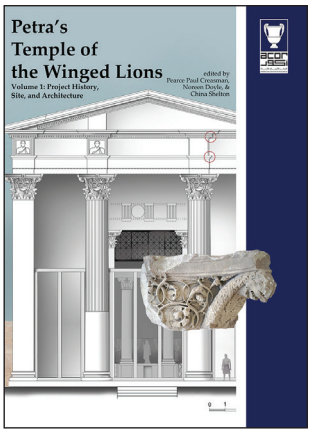
ruckfuneraltowson.com/obituary/gough-thompson-mr

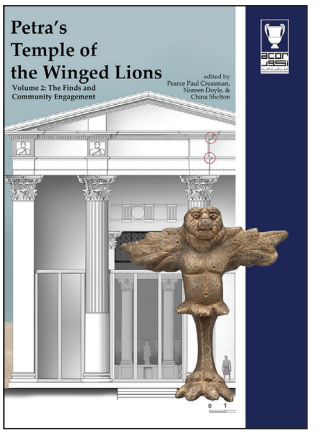
Archaeology in Jordan 4 (2022–2023 Field Seasons) Published

This past August the American Center of Research published *Archaeology in Jordan* 4, which covers the 2022–2023 field seasons. We are grateful to the many contributors who chose to share their recent insights and discoveries from archaeological and cultural resource management projects across Jordan. *AIJ* 4 includes updates from 111 authors and co-authors on 68 sites across Jordan. Both the whole volume and individual report PDFs can be downloaded from the American Center of Research website. *Archaeology in Jordan* is an open-access journal published by the American Center of Research every two years; past volumes and editorial guidelines are also available on our website.

Online
publications.acorjordan.org/volumes

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES





Petra's Temple of the Winged Lions Published

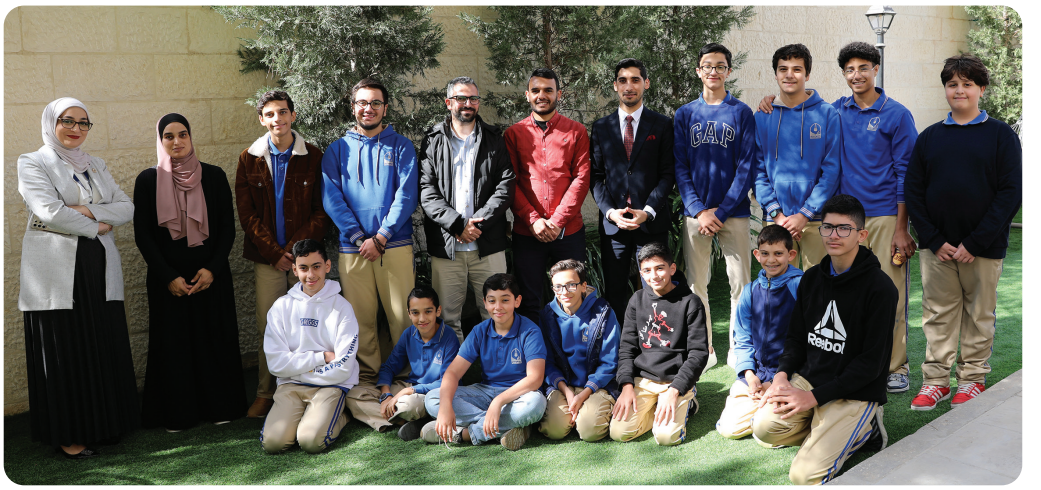
Excavations and conservation work stretching back to 1974 and a significant grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded in 2021 have resulted in *Petra's Temple of the Winged Lions*, edited by Pearce Paul Creasman, Noreen Doyle, and China Shelton. An international group of contributors made this monumental work possible: John D. M. Green, Mukhles M. Al Ababneh, Khaled Al Bashaireh, Zeyad Al Salameen, Liaqat Ali, Nora Alomari, Deirdre Grace Barrett, Summer Courts, Marco Dehner, Giuseppe Delmonaco, Caroline Durand, Kathryn M. Grossman, Catreena Hamarneh, Jehad Haron, David J. Johnson, Chrysanthos Kanellopoulos, Hussein K. Khirfan, Raneen Naimi, Matthew O'Connor, Tim Penn, Megan A. Perry, Pauline Piraud-Fournet, Luca Maria Puzzilli, David S. Reese, Faris Saadeh, Muhammad Shiraz, Francesco Traversa, Robert Wenning, and William G. Zimmerle.

Their scholarship has produced 22 chapters in two volumes that total nearly 800 heavily illustrated pages designed and typeset by Noreen Doyle. The six chapters in volume 1 discuss the history of the projects, geology, architecture and architectural decoration, marble, and a catalog of plaster and similar material. The sixteen chapters in volume 2 address artifacts, inscriptions, faunal and human remains, and aspects of public outreach. Additional papers about the temple are being prepared. Volumes 1 and 2 may be downloaded at no cost from the website (publications.acorjordan.org/books), and printed editions are also available for purchase through Amazon.

The editors are grateful for decades of support and cooperation from so many, particularly Jordan's Department of Antiquities, the Petra Archaeological Park, the NEH, and, of course, all of those who contributed in so many ways to fieldwork and to archival care for the artifacts. Only through such joint effort has it been possible to bring to light, preserve, and present this important Nabataean monument.

Library and Digital Archives Update

Samya Khalaf Kafafi & Ibrahim Rantissi



The Al-Radwan International Private School's Read Cultural Club. (Photo by Shatha Abu Aballi.)

The library's role and activities during the second half of 2024 were clearly set out, as the library began implementing a plan of change to make the library a more attractive place for academics, researchers, and students.

Associate librarian Samya Kafafi cooperated with several official bodies to hold workshops and courses in the library. The library hosted the first workshop on July 2 in cooperation with the University of Jordan's Faculty of Archaeology and Tourism, Applied Drawing of Pottery Pieces, presented by Mr. Munjed Qasem, in which 15 students participated. On July 18, another workshop was organized with the same university, Citations and References: Documenting Your Sources, presented by Dr. Mona Sleihat, attended by 19 students. The library hosted the workshop, and Ms. Kafafi gave an introductory lecture about the library and its services, the archives, and ACOR grants for Jordanian students. The library also cooperated with the Jordanian Library and Information Association, where we hosted two training courses. The first was Specialized Course in Subject Analysis in Information Sources (September 25), and the other was Time Management (November 25). These workshops drew attendance from several institutions, universities, and official bodies, which increased the integration of the library with the local community.

The library also encourages a group visit program to introduce its resources and services. It hosted a student delegation of 26 students from the Faculty of Architecture at Al-Zaytoonah University, as well as a student delegation from Queen Rania College of Tourism and Heritage from Hashemite University of about 35 students. They learned about the efforts the library makes to facilitate the work of students and researchers, provide books and services, and how they could benefit from the space allocated for study.

Another of the library's goals is local participation in conferences and seminars. Ms. Kafafi attended the Innovation and Technology in Libraries—Have We Realized It? conference, held October 15–16 at the University of Jordan. On October 30, she attended the 22nd conference of the Library and Information Association (Libraries and Information Institutions in the Age of Artificial Intelligence), and on November 17, she gave a presentation at the University of Jordan's Faculty of Archaeology and Tourism about scholarships offered to Jordanian students, in addition to promoting the library and archive.

One of the most prominent library activities of this season was hosting the Read Cultural Club from Al-Radwan International Private School, in which a group of 16 students of various education levels, teachers, specialists in Arabic literature, and the librarian from the school discussed a book in Arabic. The students benefited especially from getting to know the ACOR Digital Archive, about which Ms. Kafafi gave a lecture as part of an initiative that she is working on to spread the idea of linking cultural heritage to education. She associated the archive with the national education curricula and demonstrated how students can use the archive's images to learn about Jordanian heritage and to make history and geography classes interactive. In this approach, the archive becomes a main visual resource for Jordan's educational sector.

The library catalog gained 230 items from July to December, including books, articles, and open-source online resources. Arabic-language books made up a good share of these because staff visited the Amman Book Fair and purchased a valuable collection of volumes.

The digital archive staff, now led by Ibrahim Rantissi, focused on finalizing the collections of Linda Layne, Robert Schick, Barbara A. Porter, Prescott H. Wlliams, and the Karak Castle complex as the 2020–2024 Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education drew to a close. A total of 10,000 photos were rehoused and numbered, and their metadata were written in Arabic and English. Ms. Kafafi led an initiative to integrate the ACOR Digital Archive in schools focusing on heritage preservation, history, and geography. This initiative was adopted by Radwan International School, where students now use this archive instead of general internet searches to learn about archaeological sites in Jordan.

Global Digital Heritage train the National Inventory and Amman Citadel Museum staff on 3-D artifact digital documentation. (Photo by Miguel Ángel Hervás.)

National Cultural Heritage Property Database of the Kingdom of Jordan Update

Matthew Vincent

The National Inventory is transforming the way Jordan preserves and protects its cultural heritage. Since its launch, the project has made remarkable progress in documenting and safeguarding thousands of archaeological artifacts, making them more accessible to researchers, museums, and heritage professionals.

The project is 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.

So far, over 26,000 records have been successfully transferred to the National Inventory database, ensuring a more comprehensive and secure record of Jordan's rich history. In addition, more than 7,000 new records have been created, expanding digital access to invaluable cultural assets.

A key part of the project's success is training the people who care for these collections. Nearly 40 museum staff, researchers, and interns have been equipped with the skills to manage and track artifacts more effectively, helping museums and archaeological storage facilities across Jordan implement better inventory systems. In 2024, Global Digital Heritage completed its first season of work in Jordan, providing specialized training in 3-D photogrammetric capture to the National Inventory team and Jordanian museum staff. This cutting-edge technology enhances documentation efforts, ensuring Jordan's history is preserved in high detail for future generations.

(Photo courtesy of the University of Jordan.)

ACOR at the University of Jordan Open House

On November 17, associate librarian Samya Khalaf Kafafi visited the Faculty of Archaeology and Tourism at the University of Jordan, at the kind invitation of the vice dean of the faculty, and gave a presentation on the ACOR Fellowships offered to Jordanian graduate and undergraduate students. She reviewed the requirements for the fellowships and how to fill out the application, and also described the students who received the fellowships last year (three of whom were from this faculty).

She also provided an introductory overview of the library and the services it provides to facilitate the work of researchers, academics, and students. They furthermore learned about ACOR's digital archive and how to search the database and use images rich in Jordan's history and heritage. Approximately 50 students attended, in addition to Vice Dean Dr. Mona Sleihat and a number of professors on the faculty.

NEW GRANTS!

Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad: Center for Arabic Study Abroad (CASA) I—Advanced Arabic Language & Culture Training in Amman, Jordan, Group Projects Abroad

Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad: Center for Arabic Study Abroad (CASA) II—Group Research & Arabic Language Training in Amman, Jordan

Department of Education Title VI: Enhancing the ACOR Digital Archive: Making a Multimedia Research, Teaching, and Learning Resource More Accessible

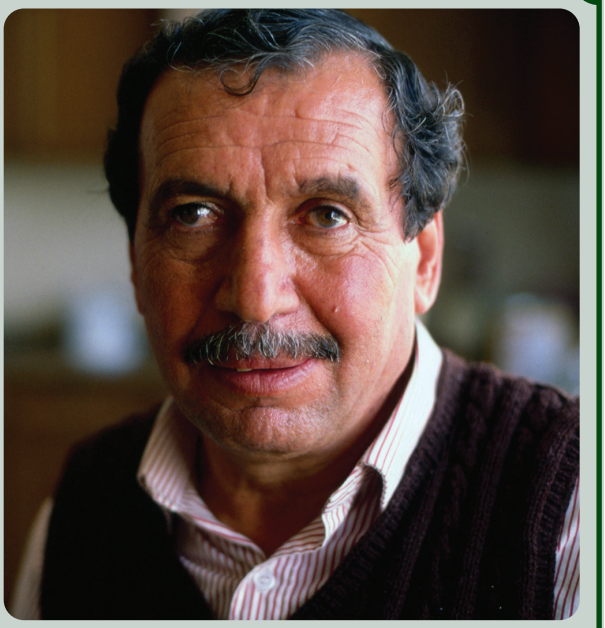
Department of State U.S. Embassy in Amman Fulbright-Hays Cultural Property Agreement Implementation Grant: Engaging Enforcement Agencies in the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property in Jordan

USAID American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA): Public Diplomacy in Amman, Jordan: Climate and Inclusivity Enhancements at the American Center of Research

in memoriam

Mohammed (Abu Ahmad) Adawi

January 1939–December 2024



Abu Ahmad, 1992. (Photo by Jay Guikema.)

It is with heavy hearts that we say goodbye to Mohammed Adawi, who was the chef at the American Center of Research from its founding in 1968 until his retirement in 2018. Known to many as Abu Ahmad, he was the oldest of five children and came from the Palestinian village of Zakarriya, northwest of Hebron. His family relocated to Jericho in 1948, and in 1956, he began working at the archaeological site of Tell es-Sultan, directed by British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon. This proved to be the first step in a lifetime dedicated to supporting archaeology and creating a home for scholars, as after a year working in the excavations, he was chosen to run the project house and learned to cook. In 1960, he obtained a position at the Jerusalem School (now the W. F. Albright Institute in Jerusalem), where he worked until 1967 as assistant to the head chef. He also worked as chef on several archaeological excavations during this period, married, and started his own family. In 1967 the family relocated to Jordan, and in 1968, he became the project cook for the Hisban excavation, where he made the connections that soon led to his position at ACOR and his long tenure here. In honor of his many years at ACOR, he was awarded the W. F. Albright Service Award in 2015 by ASOR. His wisdom, warmth, and unforgettable dishes touched countless lives. Our deepest condolences to his family and all who knew him. Rest in peace, Abu Ahmad.

This remembrance draws upon many conversations Barbara A. Porter had with Mohammed Adawi over the years, which formed the basis of an essay that appeared in *ACOR Newsletter* 20.1 (summer 2008). Her essay can also be read on our website.

acorjordan.org/2015/12/21/the-distinguished-career-of-acor-chef-mohammed-adawi

Fellowship Awardees

ACOR-CAORC Predoctoral Fellowship: **Eliza Marks** (Graduate Student, CUNY Graduate Center, Anthropology), Experimentation and Betweenness: The Formation and Mobilization of Sound Collectives in/between Amman, Outside, and Online. S. Thomas Parker Memorial Fund: **Lama Khaled Maabreh** (Postdoctoral Scholar, Yarmouk University, Social Studies Curriculum), New Technologies for the Presentation of Cultural Heritage Environments in Education.

Staff Awards and Achievements

Lina Shara'an

Ahmad AlKhateeb (senior grant financial officer) was recognized as Employee of the Year by ACOR (p. 9). Zovinar Mananian (operations and administration manager) completed a Google Digital Marketing certificate, which consisted of seven units online over the course of seven months. Samya Khalaf Kafafi (associate librarian) undertook two training courses, "Planning and Managing Digital Heritage Libraries Projects" from the Arabic Union Catalog Academy and "Specialized Course in Subject Analysis in Information Sources" from the Jordan Library and Information Association. She also received an award from the Queen Rania College of Tourism and Heritage at Hashemite University, which honored her as among the best success stories of past graduates who now work in prestigious places related to the heritage sector and have achieved accomplishments in their practical lives.

Fellows in Residence July–December 2024

National Endowment for the Humanities Postdoctoral Fellow: **Sarah Islam** (Princeton University/University of Bern, Co-produced Religions Project, Institute of Advanced Study): Blasphemy: *Sabb al-Rasul* as a Legal Category in Medieval Islamic History. ACOR-CAORC Postdoctoral Fellow: **Fadi Kafeety** (Graduate Student, University of Houston, History), A History of the Jordanian Communist Party, 1951–1993. Pierre and Patricia Bikai Fellow: **Megan Nishida** (University of Notre Dame, Anthropology): Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain.

ACOR Participation at the ASOR 2024 Annual Meeting

China Shelton

The Annual Meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR) took place in person in Boston, MA, November 20–23. Many American Center board members, staff, and fellowship alums participated in the "Art Historical Approaches to the Near East," "The Archaeology of the Southern Levant," and "Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Presentation, and Management" sessions, among others. ACOR's board members were very active: Jenna de Vries Morton chaired a workshop entitled "Culture in Crisis: People Oriented," Debra Foran chaired two contiguous sessions on "Gender in the Ancient Near East," and Megan Perry co-chaired the "Bioarchaeology in the Near East" session. Bethany Walker presented on "Market Gardening and Rural Settlement in Mamluk and Early Ottoman Syria: The Case of Khirbet Beit Mazmīl" in the "Archaeology of Islamic Society" session. Jennifer Ramsay and Björn Anderson, along with ACOR fellowship alum Craig Harvey, discussed their new research on Pre-Nabatean Jordan in the session titled "Archaeology in Jordan." Øystein LaBianca spoke on "Canonical Discourses as a Form of Sub-Imperial Power and Means to Local Social Order in the Southern Levant" and also coauthored "The Hisban Interactive Archive Project (HIAP)," a paper presented in a workshop on preserving cultural heritage in the Madaba Region.

Staff of the American Center of Research and the Department of Antiquities used this opportunity to present the National Inventory Project to this broader audience with the paper "Preserving the Past, Enriching the Future: Establishing Jordan's National Cultural Heritage Database." Matthew Vincent presented this paper, which was co-authored by Fadi Bala'awi, Jehad Haron, Lena Bakkar, Basem Al-Mahamid, and Pearce Paul Creasman. We were also pleased to observe the extent to which former ACOR fellows shared their research—16 of them authored or coauthored papers and/or chaired sessions, a figure that does not include the board members who gave papers, some of whom were, of course, fellows before they joined the board!

The board of trustees and friends gathered for a much-enjoyed dinner at Bistro du Midi on the Friday evening before the board meeting. A good time was had by all as they celebrated the center's many successful undertakings in 2024.

Other Publication News

Five new essays—contributed by interns, fellows, and a senior scholar—appeared on our blog, *Insights* (publications.acorjordan.org/insights): July 8: "Joining the 2024 Study Season at Khirbet al-Mukhayyat" by Nina Rozic (Jennifer C. Groot Memorial Fellow); September 5: "Together with ACOR: Fifty Years of Cooperation" by Zeidan Kafafi (Professor Emeritus, Yarmouk University); October 17: "ACOR Internship Experience: The National Inventory Project" by Madeleine Tripp (intern); November 14: "ACOR Internship Experience: In the Library with Rare Books and Maps" by Dima Nafez Amin Harb (intern); December 8: "Dating Fatimid and Ayyubid Manuscript Fragments through Handwriting and Material Analysis" by Sarah Islam (ACOR-NEH Postdoctoral Research Fellow).

In November 2024, ACOR entered into a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Department of State, in its role as the secretariat of the Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee. The memorandum outlines a collaborative effort to make America stronger and safer by developing an advanced technological tool to quickly and accurately identify illegally trafficked cultural property, cutting off a source of funding for terrorists and criminals.

Employee of the Year!

Ahmad AlKhateeb
Senior Grant Financial Officer

ICHAJ 16

The **16th International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan,** will be held at the **University of Athens, Greece, September 22–26, 2025.**

For more information: ichaj.org

Lecture Highlights

Shatha Abu Aballi

Our fall 2024 lecture series highlighted diverse topics of historical and cultural significance through two engaging presentations. Richard Harrod's lecture on September 23, 2024, "Very Much Akin": The Relationship between Jordan and Oman in the Mid-20th Century," delved into the evolving political and military ties between Jordan and Oman, exploring their shifting alliances during key conflicts such as the Jabal Akhdar War and the Dhofar Rebellion. Harrod shed light on the personal connection between King Hussein of Jordan and Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id, as well as the broader geopolitical factors that shaped their cooperation. Andrea Flinn's lecture on October 13, "How Can Large Collections of Machine-Readable Data Support Arabic as a Second Language in the Classroom?" addressed the growing demand for Levantine Arabic proficiency. Flinn demonstrated how her research, informed by interviews with cultural experts and extensive linguistic data, can transform Arabic language instruction by identifying high-frequency vocabulary and developing tailored teaching materials. For those who could not attend in person, recorded versions of these lectures are available on our YouTube channel: youtube.com/@ ACORJordan1968.

Andrea Flinn presenting her lecture. (Photo by Shatha Abu Aballi.)

Staff and Intern Updates

Lina Shara'an

Sahar Abu Laila was promoted to senior accountant, and Faris Saadeh was promoted to project assistant director with the National Inventory project. Ayman Kharma worked from November 2022 to December 2024 as projects account manager.

Ibrahim Rantissi joined ACOR as digital project archivist on December 16, 2024. He is a versatile professional with a background in both creative and business fields, holding a BA in business administration. His real-world experience in journalism and consulting demonstrates his strong skills in content creation, content management, and building content strategies. He has a passion for visual storytelling that led him to professional photography and also expertise in content editing. This diverse skill set allows him to approach projects with a comprehensive perspective, ensuring clarity and impact.

ACOR was assisted by seven interns at various times during the second half of 2024, five of whom worked in the library. Zain Fanik (Georgetown University) is pursuing a Certificate in Arab Regional Studies focusing on the inclusion outcomes of Palestinian Christians in the West Bank. She had the opportunity to intern with ACOR as a recipient of Georgetown's Student Experience Fund, which supports research and internships for students. After earning her BS in foreign service, she plans to pursue a master's degree in archaeology or heritage studies and aspires to build a career in this field. Lina Burghol (undergraduate, archaeology, University of Jordan) was responsible for organizing duplicate copies of books, creating book lists in English and Arabic, and reshelving. Toby Davis created a list of duplicate books and numbered slides in the archives. Fatima Haron (undergraduate, conservation science, The Hashemite University) had the duty of rearranging and storing the archive's physical media, numbering photographic prints and slides, rehousing slides, organizing and labeling files, scanning images, and creating image metadata. Dima Nafez Amin Harb, a valedictorian cultural resources management and conservation graduate from the University of Jordan, undertook an ACOR internship at the recommendation of her professors. As a student, she had used the ACOR Library for research and so was especially pleased to help the librarian.

Two interns worked with the National Inventory project. Roma Aatifi (Master's Program in Sustainable Cultural Heritage, American University of Rome) drafted a report examining the National Inventory's fundamental purpose in preserving Jordan's cultural identity, heritage, and historical narratives for the future. It analyzed how this database is a vital tool for preserving Jordan's cultural heritage; rather than focusing solely on the technicalities of cataloging, her work examined the broader theoretical and legal frameworks that underlie this preservation effort. She also explored how it helps combat the illegal trade of cultural assets by establishing clear ownership and provenance records. Madeleine Tripp also undertook an internship with the National Inventory Project. She is an emerging objects conservator with a background in archaeology, art history, and heritage protection. She is currently undertaking the University of Melbourne's Master of Cultural Materials Conservation program and aims to apply her conservation skills in continued archaeological and cultural heritage work.

Donations (July–December 2024)

Annual Fund

Anne H. Aarnes; Ahmad and Sirine Abu Ghazaleh; Susan Ackerman; Catherine S. Alexander in fond memory of the Petra Church Project; Abdelelah Al Khatib; Björn P. Anderson; Jon W. Anderson; Betty Anderson; Richard Anderson; Andrews University; Anonymous; Anonymous; Anonymous; Anonymous in memory of Anne Cabot Ogilvy; Talitha Jane Arnold; Roger S. Bagnall; Jim Barnhart; Robert and Mette Beecroft; Virginia L. Bennett in memory of David H. Bennett; Marcia Boraas in honor of Miriam Boraas; Julia R. Bradford; Laurie A. Brand; Patricia M. C. Briska; Joseph A. Bruder IV in honor of Dr. Barbara A. Porter; Constance L. Christensen; Briann Clark; Douglas R. Clark and Carmen L. Clark; Martha and James Clark; James Cogbill; Geoffrey Coll; Pearce Paul Creasman; Clinton & Kay Creasman; Bonnie Lee Crosfield in memory of Dr. James Sauer; Thomas Davis; Nina Dodge; Fred M. Donner; Elisabeth Dudley; Wesley and Virginia Egan; Steven Falconer and Patricia Fall; Debra Foran; Larry T. Geraty; Claus Gielisch; Joseph A. Greene; Reem Atalla Habayeb; David Hale; Beverly Hamilton; Gerard L. Hammink in memory of Bert de Vries; Debbie Harper in memory of Dr. Phillip C. Hammond in honor of his work in Jordan and especially on the Temple of the Winged Lions; Spencer Harper III in honor of Dr. Barbara A. Porter; Timothy P. Harrison; Craig Harvey; Ellen Herscher; Valerie Hird in honor of Barbara A. Porter; Randall L. Hoffman; Charles O. and Ellen Porter Honnet; Linda K. Jacobs; Donald Keller & Margaret Sablove in memory of S. Thomas Parker; Morag Kersel & Yorke Rowan; Sara M. Knight; Øystein & Asta LaBianca; Carol M. Landes in memory of her husband, Rev. Dr. George M. Landes; Nancy L. Lapp; Hala Bsaisu Lattouf; Guillaume Malle; Stanley M. Maxwell and Phemie C. Maxwell; Jenna de Vries Morton; David and Gail Nickols; Carolyn Nobes in memory of Burton MacDonald; John P. Oleson; Jennifer Olmsted; Deborah I. Olszewski in memory of Nancy R. Coinman; Megan A. Perry; Sarah and Alec Peters in memory of Thomas Parker; Arthur J. Piccinati; Thomas R. Pickering; Meg Pickering and John Schmidt; Ariadne Prater & Mitchell Allen; Nanette M. Pyne; Jennifer Ramsay; Ulle Rannut; Judy Reaves in honor of Pearce Paul Creasman; Jonathan Rees-Davies; Barbara Reeves; Suzanne Richard; Thomas Roby; Allan and Cecilia Rogge; Anne and Charles Roos; Sylvia L. Sauer in memory of Peter and James Sauer; Janel Schneider; Jennifer and Warren Schultz Family Foundation; John Scott; Joe D. Seger; John Shearman; Lance Shipley; Robert W. Shutler; Doug and Catherine Silliman; Andrew Michel Smith II; BJ Smith; Sandra R. Smith in honor of Barbara A. Porter; Pamela H. Smith; Martin St. Clair; Joseph T. Stanik; Susan Ullman; Ben P. Unger in honor of the Temple of the Winged Lions Cultural Resource Management Initiative; Matthew Vincent; Bethany J. Walker; Daniel C. Waugh; Leah Webb; Peter & Penelope West in memory of Jennifer C. Groot; Thomas and Theresa Whetstine in memory of Dr. Donald Wimmer

General Endowment

Larry T. Geraty

Library and Archive Support

Larry T. Geraty; Bethany J. Walker

Pierre and Patricia Bikai Fellowship Endowment

Larry T. Geraty

Bert and Sally de Vries Fellowship Endowment

Sally de Vries; Larry T. Geraty

Jordanian Graduate Student Scholarship Fund

Nisreen Abu Al Shaikh; Larry T. Geraty

Lawrence T. Geraty Travel Scholarship Endowment

Larry T. Geraty

Jennifer C. Groot Memorial Fellowship Trust

Peter & Penelope West in memory of Jennifer C. Groot

Donald O. Henry Fellowship Fund

Geoffrey A. Clark; Rex and Cathe Zedalis

Burton MacDonald and Rosemarie Sampson Fellowship Endowment

Larry T. Geraty

Anne C. Ogilvy Memorial Library Endowment

Anonymous in memory of Anne Cabot Ogilvy; Anonymous in memory of Anne Cabot Ogilvy; Thomas D. Cabot & Martha Stone in memory of Anne Cabot Ogilvy

S. Thomas Parker Memorial Fund

Anonymous; Craig Harvey; Mary Mattocks & Grace Parker in memory of S. Thomas Parker

Kenneth W. Russell Memorial Fellowship Endowment

Steven R. Simms

James A. Sauer Memorial Fellowship Endowment

Bonnie Lee Crosfield; Larry T. Geraty; Meg Pickering and John Schmidt; Sylvia L. Sauer in memory of Peter and James Sauer; Susan A. Sauer in memory of James A. Sauer

In-Kind Donations

Numan Abu-Aisheh; Khaled Bashayreh; Pearce Paul Creasman; Ashraf Daba'en; Muayad Said Damerji; Edith Dunn; Lamia El-Khouri; Tali Erickson-Gini; Heba Haroun; Samya Khalaf Kafafi; Zeidan Kafafi; Hashemite Documentation Center; Fatima Marii; Konstantinos D. Politis; Robert Schick

November 2024 Board Meeting

The American Center of Research Board of Trustees meeting took place in person on November 23, 2024, at the Department of History at Boston University (with some members attending remotely via Zoom). Edward ("Skip") Gnehm called the meeting to order, stated that a quorum was present, and noted that while there have been challenges in the past five years, there have also been fantastic changes to the organization under executive director Pearce Paul Creasman's leadership. Leah Webb was elected to the 2027 class of the Board of Trustees. Executive director Dr. Creasman gave his update to the board, recognizing that the ongoing war is creating nervousness in the region and that tourism and academic traffic has been down. Many digs are planning to go ahead in Jordan in the coming year, however, so we are hopeful for 2025. The excavation at Abdoun, the library, and online outreach have been going very well. We expect to have solar panels on the roof soon thanks to new funding from ASHA. All three of the DoA-ACOR collaborative projects (Aqaba, Bayt Ras, and Karak) are complete or very nearly so. We continue to be very productive with publications this year, with the Temple of the Winged Lions two-volume publication out in October 2024, and we are also working on the proceedings of *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 15. Treasurer David Nickols reported on the center's financial situation, which continues to be strong. The Board approved the 2025 budget. John P. Oleson reported for the Library and Archives Committee that we are close to hiring a new archivist. Reem Habayeb thanked the Board on behalf of the Personnel Committee for their continued support of and concern for the staff in Amman, given the circumstances in the broader region. The next board meeting will take place in Washington, D.C., on April 26, 2025.

YOUR SUPPORT KEEPS US GOING.

To donate to the American Center of Research, you can mail a check to our U.S. office or use other means through our website: acorjordan.org/donate

U.S. Office:
209 Commerce Street
Alexandria VA 22314-2909
+1 (703) 789-9231 acor@acorjordan.org

Coming in the next newsletter—
More information about our collaborative excavations at Petra Treasury Tomb 62c!

(Photo from the ACOR institutional collection.)

Trustees

Class of 2025: Prof. Thomas Davis; Prof. Debra Foran; Mrs. Reem Atalla Habayeb; Prof. Morag Kersel (Second Vice President); H.E. Dr. Abdelelah Al Khatib (First Vice President); Mr. Guillaume Malle; Mr. James Murren; Prof. Jennifer Ramsay

Class of 2026: Mrs. Anne H. Aarnes (Secretary); Dr. Jim Barnhart; Mr. Ahmad Abu Ghazaleh; Mr. Geoffrey H. Coll; H.E. Mr. Claus Gielisch; Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm, Jr. (President); H.E. Ms. Hala Bsaisu Lattouf; Ms. Jenna de Vries Morton; Mr. David Nickols (Treasurer); Prof. Andrew Smith II

Class of 2027: Prof. Maysoon Al-Nahar; Prof. Betty S. Anderson; Prof. Björn Anderson; Prof. Øystein S. LaBianca; Prof. John P. Oleson; Prof. Megan A. Perry; Prof. Bethany J. Walker; Ms. Leah Webb

Trustees Emeriti: Prof. Lawrence T. Geraty; Prof. Moawiyah Ibrahim; Mrs. Widad Kawar; Prof. Nancy Lapp; Prof. David McCreery; Mr. Randolph B. Old; H.E. Senator Laila Sharaf; Prof. James R. Wiseman; H.R.H. Prince Raad Bin Zeid

Contents

Preservation and Rehabilitation of the Aqaba Church 1
Bayt Ras Theater Conservation and Development Project 3
Karak Castle Preservation Efforts 3
Cybersecurity Youth Academy in Jordan 4
In Memoriam: Gough Winn Thompson, Jr. 5
Archaeology in Jordan 4 (2022–2023 Field Seasons) Published 5
Petra's Temple of the Winged Lions Published 5
Library and Digital Archives Update 6
National Cultural Heritage Property Database Update 7
ACOR at the University of Jordan Open House 7
New Grants 7
In Memoriam: Mohammed (Abu Ahmad) Adawi 8
Fellowship Awardees 8
Staff Awards and Achievements! 8
Fellows in Residence July–December 2024 8
ACOR Participation at the ASOR 2024 Annual Meeting 9
Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Department of State 9
Other Publication News 9
Lecture Highlights 10
Staff and Intern Updates 10
Donations 11
Coming in the Next Newsletter 12
November 2024 Board Meeting 12
Trustees 12

The American Center of Research, is a nonprofit academic institute, the services of which are supported through endowments, donations, and grants. The American Center of Research is tax exempt as a 501(c)(3) organization, as determined by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. Inquiries may be sent to ACOR, P.O. Box 2470, Amman 11181, Jordan, tel.: (962-6) 534–6117, e-mail: acor@acorjordan.org, or to the U.S. office. The *ACOR Newsletter* is edited by Pearce Paul Creasman and Noreen Doyle. All photographs are courtesy of ACOR unless otherwise noted.