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المركز الأمريكي للأبحاث  
AMERICAN CENTER OF RESEARCH

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA | AMMAN, JORDAN

# أخبار أكور NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 35.2 | March 2024  
for July–December 2023

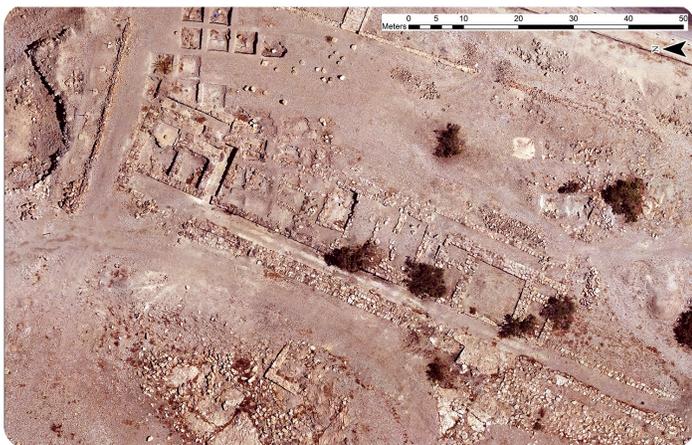
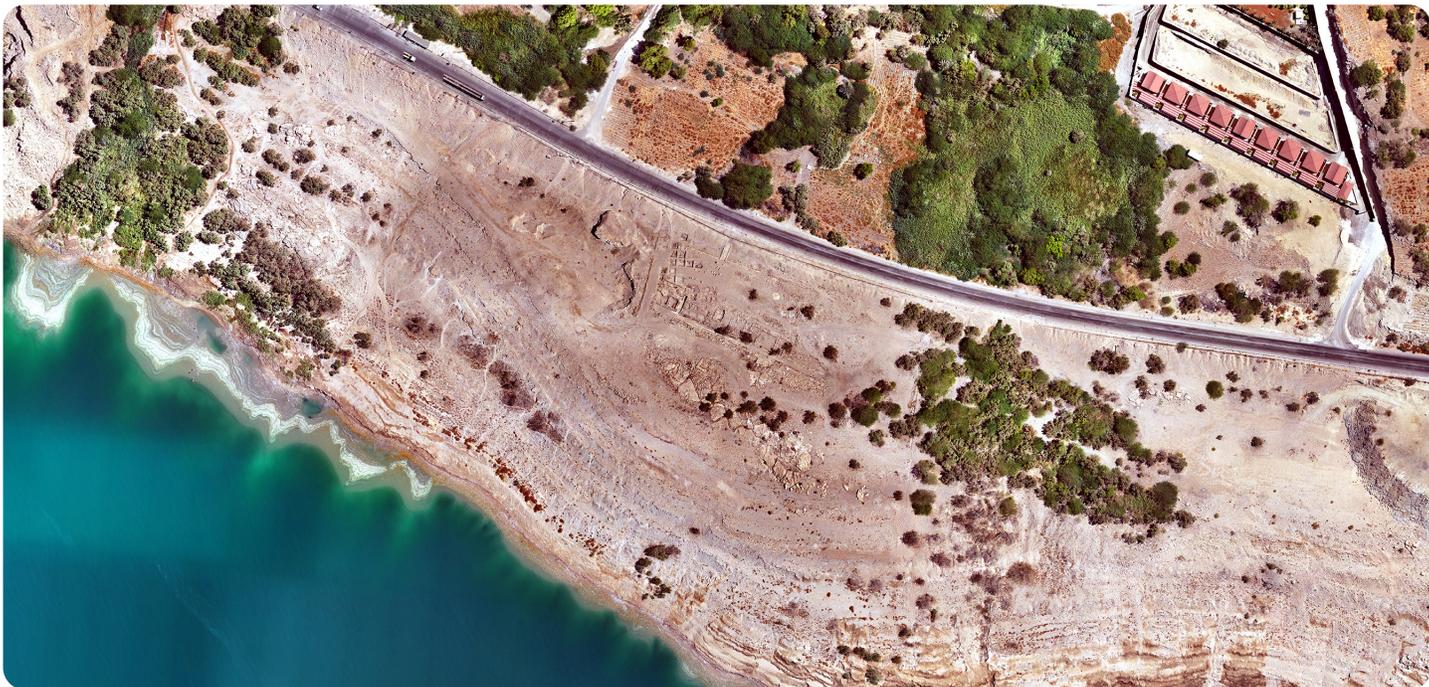


Working underwater in the Dead Sea. (Photo by J. Schneider.)

## Excavating the Dead Sea Harbor at Kallirhoe/‘Ain ez-Zara

*Pearce Paul Creasman, Aktham Oweidi, Jehad Haron,  
Justin Schneider, Frederick Fidler, & Randall Parker*

In collaboration with the Department of Antiquities, and with the support of its director general, Fadi Bala’awi, in October and November 2023 we undertook new excavations and survey at an amazing site: the ancient harbor of Kallirhoe, today known as ‘Ain ez-Zara, on—and *in*—the Dead Sea. For thousands of years, the Dead Sea has been well known for its therapeutic waters, as any visitor to its many spas and hotels today can attest. At least as long ago as the classical era, when descendants of Alexander the Great, the Hasmonians, the Nabataeans, and Herod the Great ruled the lands around the Dead Sea, the thermal waters of the “good spring” Kallirhoe (in Greek Θερμὰ Καλλιρόης, *Thermà Kallirhoēs*, as shown on the Madaba Map) has been a site of importance. Since no road is known on the eastern side of the Dead Sea in antiquity, only



Above: The site of Kallirhoe/Ain ez-Zara in its wider context.  
 Left: The terrestrial area of the harbor zone of Kallirhoe/Ain ez-Zara.  
 (Orthophotos produced by M. Vincent.)

boats provided practical access to the area, due to the steep rocky cliffs that surround it. The harbor at Kallirhoe (also often spelled Callirhoe, Callirrhoe, or Kalliroe) is today best known as the primary access point and “tether” to the rest of the world for the site of Machaerus (Mukawer), a Roman-era citadel with a remarkable history (see our new book on the site, published in January 2024, available at [publications.acorjordan.org](http://publications.acorjordan.org)). While Machaerus itself has been subject to considerable excavation in recent decades, the harbor zone of Kallirhoe has seen only a few weeks of work since the 1980s, by German and Jordanian projects. Confident there was much more to learn, and inspired by King Abdullah II’s visit to Machaerus in September 2023, we began our own investigations of the harbor on land and the underwater zone adjoining it.

On land, DoA representative Aktham Oweidi was joined by our own Jihad Haron to survey and excavate several sections of what we believe is a marketplace or administrative area

in the harbor. Around the harbor zone, Matthew Vincent and professors C. Richard Bates (University of St. Andrews) and Martin Bates (University of Wales) conducted remote sensing and geoarchaeological analyses on land to better understand the whole of the area, its site formation, and the potential for what knowledge might be gained by continued excavation. The land excavations, survey, and remote sensing provided remarkable insights, finding what is likely an ancient spring that served the harbor’s market, waterworks, and new structural components of the port, but, as archaeology so often does, they posed more questions than answers. When completed, our geoarchaeological analyses alone can be expected to contribute to a fuller understanding of the filling and draining of the Dead Sea since the last ice age, which likely saw the water levels rise and fall nearly 1,000 feet (333 m). That the levels of the Dead Sea have risen and fallen significantly since the Neolithic era is well established scientifically, so any time in these many thousands of years the coastline might have been an appealing building location, as it is today. The freshwater and thermal springs at Kallirhoe make it a particularly suitable candidate for past human activity.

Supported in part by our USAID-funded SCHEP (p. 8), we conducted four week-long trainings for Department of Antiquities staff in remote sensing, surveying, and maritime archaeology.

The most difficult and novel parts of our work occurred underwater (by the authors): *in* the Dead Sea. While objects have been recovered from within and around the Dead Sea

for generations, underwater excavations have never been conducted in it. More than a decade ago, the Department of Antiquities commissioned a survey of the waters just off the edge of the harbor. The area around harbors and ports through all of human history tend to collect the detritus of the civilizations that ply those waters, revealing important information about the past that rarely preserves on land (e.g., nearly all of the classical bronze statues from the Mediterranean world that remain today were found underwater, having escaped the patterns of pillaging and reuse that befell those on land; shipwrecks serve as time capsules of the past). That prior survey work, conducted by a remotely operated underwater vehicle and sonar, identified five specific areas of interest—areas that appeared to have human-made rectangular structures, submerged deep in the salty waters. But these areas require direct human investigation to fully comprehend them, which was not possible then and is possible today only with immense difficulty and high risk.

In late October, we took our first steps into the Dead Sea, to try to see and study a world virtually no one knows. While others have scuba dived on the western side of the Dead Sea, there are no public records of anyone having done so on the eastern side. On neither side has archaeological excavation (or in-person survey) occurred underwater. In the most hospitable locations, underwater archaeology is difficult and risky—underwater in the Dead Sea is, in a word, inhospitable and accordingly high risk and immensely difficult. The foremost challenge, after assembling all the gear and attending to the theoretical and practical issues (i.e., health and safety) of *starting* a dive at some 500 meters



Layers of salt accumulated over millennia on the bottom of the Dead Sea.  
(Photo by P. P. Creasman.)

(1,500 feet) *below* sea level, was the simple matter of sinking in the Dead Sea. The water is so salty that each of our divers required 40–60%(!) of their body weight in lead attached to their persons in order to submerge. For the average American today, that is nearly 100 pounds (46 kilos). In a normal sea dive—Aqaba, perhaps—it is usually 5%. Finding places to attach all of this weight on the dive gear was a challenge, so we put it anywhere we could, including on our fins. Once properly weighted, we were still diving in some of the saltiest water on earth... one drop of which in an eye is blinding. We utilized full facemasks to help mitigate this, and down we went.

Underwater in the Dead Sea is unlike anywhere else in the world. It is a barren green and blue Wadi Rum,



A possible human-built feature submerged in the Dead Sea. (Photo by P. P. Creasman.)

deserted, caked in salt layers and sharp crystals. Thanks to surprisingly clear water most days, we were able to navigate to most of the five anomalies found a decade ago and investigate. While some appear to be natural collections of stones and salt formations, others may not be natural. We excavated two 1x1-meter units, with great difficulty. A return and further excavation is required, but at least one of these features may be a stone Neolithic (7000–5000 BCE) structure, now submerged but likely near that era’s waterline.

At least as significant, and perhaps even more so, we experienced and recorded environmental conditions in the Dead Sea that are not supposed to exist today, thought to be consigned to the past. For example, at instrumentation depths of about 100 feet (30 meters), we experienced rapid sinking, as if a hand was pulling us into the depths. Even when accounting for Boyle’s law and the additional pressure at such depths, this sinking was significant. Somehow, it seems that the Dead Sea became *less* salty at that depth, causing the heavily weighted divers to descend. Fortunately, the experienced divers reacted, controlled their ascent, and suffered no ill effects from this accidental discovery, but it was the most dangerous instance we encountered and must prepare for differently in the future. While we went looking for harbor debris, and found none, we found much else, especially questions. We hope to return to begin addressing those questions more fully.



P. P. Creasman, J. Schneider, and F. Fidler, ready to dive. (Photo by P. P. Creasman.)

### **Preserving Jordan’s Heritage: ACOR and the DOA’s New Collaborative Projects** *Ala’a Al Badarin*

In a significant stride towards conserving Jordan’s rich cultural legacy, the American Center of Research and the Department of Antiquities have embarked on a new collaborative effort, demonstrating a commitment to the long-term preservation of Jordan’s cultural heritage. Commencing in late 2023 and lasting for one year, these joint projects focus on safeguarding and enhancing historical sites in Aqaba, Karak, and Bayt Ras.

#### **The Aqaba Church Rehabilitation Project**

The Aqaba project focuses on a remarkable Byzantine structure dating back to the 3rd century CE, unearthed during the 1990s excavations of the Roman Aqaba Project under the leadership of S. Thomas Parker. This structure is believed to be one of the oldest purpose-built churches in the world. In this new endeavor, ACOR and the DoA are addressing weathering and degradation challenges, consolidating the structure, and constructing an open-air shelter. This initiative ensures the integrity and significance of the site, contributing to Aqaba’s archaeological wealth.

The project encompasses four main objectives: archaeological conservation work, construction of an open-air protective shelter, enhanced pathways for improved

accessibility, and implementation of informative signage. In collaboration with the French Institute for the Near East (IFPO), we completed the conservation efforts between October and December 2023. Following this, ACOR is developing designs for the shelter and visitor pathways, prioritizing a meticulous design approach that minimizes disruption. Essential considerations include implementing a support system with few pillars, managing rainwater flow, and mitigating sand slopes to best preserve the site.

#### **Karak Castle: Safeguarding the City’s Ancient Towers and Walls**

In Karak, our preservation efforts center on the historic Karak Castle complex, dating back to the Late Bronze or early Iron Age but most famous for its use during the crusades. With five target sites varying in their cultural resource management (CRM) requirements, the center has partnered with geologists and structural engineers from the Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale (ISPRA) to guide the scientific proceedings.

Morphologically situated on a narrow ridge with inherent geological intricacies, Karak Castle and its ancient citadel present a unique set of challenges. Leveraging ISPRA’s expertise, acquired after an ACOR-facilitated mission in December 2021, a master plan has been developed. This outlines both urgent and long-term actions, meticulously addressing the monitoring of



*A. Al Badarin and W. Jaradat of the IFPO conservation team discuss on-site conservation in progress at Aqaba. (Photo by S. Abu Aballi.)*



*Francesco Traversa, ISPR engineering geologist, inspects Al Soub Tower, one of the projects target sites at Karak. (Photo by A. Al Badarin.)*

archaeological and architectural features, understanding geological characteristics, and, where feasible, enhancing engineering and structural aspects. Within the project's scope of work, we will be focusing on the urgent aspects of these actions.

### **Bayt Ras (Capitolias): Preservation Efforts at the City's Theater**

Building on the successful efforts of ACOR's USAID-funded SCHEP project at the Bayt Ras Painted Tomb, the center continues its preservation endeavors elsewhere in Bayt Ras, now setting its sights on the Roman-era theater, an underappreciated gem spanning various historical periods of the ancient city once known as Capitolias.

ACOR, in collaboration with the local conservation center Tarmeem, has implemented a comprehensive conservation plan. It encompasses three essential stages: site assessment involves meticulous data collection, condition assessment, and comprehensive documentation; conservation goals focus on stabilizing the structure, enhancing the visitor experience, and ensuring sustainability through minimal intervention; and treatment strategies encompass material conservation, structural stabilization, and drainage/vegetation management.

### **Shared Commitment, Joint Progress**

These collaborative projects exemplify a shared commitment to preserving Jordan's cultural heritage. ACOR and the DoA synergize their expertise and resources for the long-term conservation of these sites, ensuring



*A worker signals approval to a crane operator, directing the precise placement of an ashlar during stone sorting in front of the stage area of the Capitolias Theater. (Photo by M. Vincent.)*

their historical and archaeological significance for generations. The American Center's dedication to research, collaboration, and promoting Jordan's cultural heritage is evident, making a positive impact on the country's cultural landscape.

Stay tuned for further updates as these collaborative projects unfold, contributing to the enduring legacy of Jordan's cultural heritage.



Left: Volunteers helping to unravel the rich historical tapestry of Qasr Abdoun.  
(Photo by M. Vincent.)

Below: The Byzantine wine press discovered in 2023.  
(Photo by M. Vincent.)



## Abdoun Community Archaeology Project Updates

*Matthew Vincent & Jehad Haron*

Qasr Abdoun, located in the heart of Amman, in the Abdoun neighborhood, offers traces from the Iron Age to the Umayyad period. The 2021 season laid the groundwork with GPS mapping and photogrammetry, leading to the exploration of a late-Ottoman sheep pen and adjacent ancient structures in 2022. In 2023, excavations expanded significantly, revealing such key findings as a carved ashlar (stone building block, to be described in a future newsletter when we have studied it more closely) and a Byzantine press, likely for winemaking. Central to the project is public engagement in archaeology, aiming to foster historical appreciation and support.

### The Volunteers: Heart and Soul of the Excavation

The Qasr Abdoun excavation was enriched by the participation of some 140 volunteers, including local Jordanians and expatriates and ranging from high-school students to seasoned adults, all sharing a passion for archaeology. Their varied backgrounds brought rich perspectives to the dig, making the often-exclusive experience of archaeology accessible and engaging and fostering a deep connection with cultural heritage. This resulted in overwhelmingly positive feedback and transformed the volunteers into ambassadors of history, bridging the gap between the site and the community. Their involvement was crucial in making archaeology approachable and relevant and turned the excavation into a vibrant hub of cultural exchange and learning, thereby highlighting the essential role of community engagement in bringing history to life and ensuring its relevance within the community.

### The Byzantine Wine Press: A Revelation in Archaeology

The discovery of a Byzantine-era wine press challenges our

understanding of the site's southern edge, previously believed to be dominated by Iron Age structures. The discovery, which was unanticipated, includes not only the press itself but also part of its pressing floor, indicating long-term use and reuse further evidenced by multiple layers of plaster and signs of erosion. This find leads to a reassessment of the immediate vicinity, with hints of a second press nearby, suggesting a history of significant agricultural or industrial activity. Considering the site's proximity to another site with Byzantine presses, less than 1 km away, this discovery may link the two during this period, suggesting a more dynamic and interconnected past continuity in the area. This enhances our understanding of the site's history and the region's agricultural and economic practices during the Byzantine era, opening new perspectives on the broader landscape.

### Looking Forward

We have applied to continue this project in 2024 and are excited about the potential to unearth a second press and further explore the ashlar's mystery, all of which promises to deepen our understanding of the site and challenge our existing perceptions. Our journey of discovery illuminates the past and integrates it into the present, fostering a continuous dialogue between eras. We invite the community and volunteers to continue this exploration with us—each excavation bringing us closer to uncovering the rich layers of human history embedded in this land.

Online

[acorjordan.org/abdoun-community](http://acorjordan.org/abdoun-community)

## Fellows in Residence July–December 2023

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW: **Sarah Wenner** (University of Cincinnati, Classics): South Jordan Ceramics as a Lens to Site Formation Processes. ACOR-CAORC POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS: **Kimberly Katz** (Towson University, History): Between Jordanian and International Law: UNRWA's Involvement in Jordanian Court Cases; **Gary Rollefson** (Whitman College, Anthropology): Completing a Lithic "Library" for Future Late Neolithic Research in the Black Desert of Jordan. ACOR-CAORC PREDOCTORAL FELLOWS: **Nadine Fattaleh** (New York University, Media, Culture, and Communications): The Genesis of the Visual Culture of the Palestinian Revolution: Amman 1968–1971; **Molly Hickey** (Harvard University, Government): The Political Economy of Reform under Authoritarianism; **Alex Jreisat** (University of Michigan, Anthropology and History): Occluded Circulations: Mapping the Smuggling Histories Straddling the Jordan River. PIERRE AND PATRICIA BIKAI FELLOW: **Benjamin Allison** (University of Texas at Austin, History): Through the Cracks of Détente: The Superpowers, the Arab "Radicals," and the Coming of the Second Cold War, 1977–1984.

### Fulbright-Hays Country Seminar in Jordan

*Jehad Haron & Zovi Mananian*

Sixteen American K–8 educators visited the center in July as part of their month-long Fulbright-Hays Country Seminar in Jordan, which was hosted by the Binational Fulbright Commission in Jordan and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. Focused on refugee and migration issues, the seminar provided opportunities for the participants to develop curriculum modules for their students in the United States based on their experiences and knowledge gained in Jordan.

Jehad Haron, associate director for projects, gave an overview of the heritage and history of Jordan and ACOR's work here and addressed the key question of how migration has shaped and contributed to the country and the region. Jordan's location between the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant and crucial trade routes that pass through it, connecting the ancient world, has added to the richness of Jordan's ancient history and produced significant heritage resources for understanding the past. Ancient migrations, such as those during the Roman era, brought about the establishment of many cities that remain active today, including Jerash, Umm Qays, Amman, and others. Whatever the motivation, human migration occurs among all nations and can help develop modern nations.

Following this, the group received a tour of ACOR facilities and residences and visited Khirbet Salameh, the archaeological site next to the center.

in memoriam

**Donald Owen Henry**

**25 November 1945–15 March 2023**

The field lost one of its stalwarts last year with the death of Professor Emeritus Donald Henry of the University of Tulsa's Department of Anthropology. He made significant contributions to our knowledge of the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods in the region, including Neanderthal culture.

[obituaries.durangoherald.com/us/obituaries/durangoherald/name/donald-henry-obituary?id=51519807](https://obituaries.durangoherald.com/us/obituaries/durangoherald/name/donald-henry-obituary?id=51519807)



*The sixteen Fulbright-Hays Country Seminar in Jordan participants and Mona Naffa, the seminar facilitator, during their visit to the center, accompanied by Jehad Haron and Zovi Mananian. (Photo by Mona Naffa.)*



Participants from the DoA in Irbid practice ground-penetrating radar techniques during a capacity-building program. (Photo by Shatha Abu Aballi.)

### **USAID SCHEP Updates: July–December 2023**

*John Shearman, Hanadi Al Taher,  
& Shatha Abu Aballi*

#### **Amman Citadel Tourist Trail**

The Amman Citadel is one of the most visited sites in Jordan and offers a glimpse of the area’s rich history along with a stunning view of the city. Included in this view is the downtown Roman Theater, which also attracts tourists and visitors from around the globe.

SCHEP proposed a project to create a tourist trail that links the downtown theater to the Citadel. The goals of the project included conducting improvements on the Citadel’s southern slope and providing opportunities to local individuals that could benefit from tourists and visitors.

The intensive survey of the slope involved generating a topographic map, a slope stability study, and a storm-water drainage study that concluded with a design that, if implemented, will improve preservation of the existing stone structures. As an added feature, an archaeological field school was conducted with the Department of Antiquities.

At the same time, studies were conducted to provide data on the best approach to provide opportunities for local residents. Assessments determined the trail route, socioeconomic characteristics, spatial infrastructure, and accessibility issues. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted with the local community, and opportunities were identified. The project supplied materials and supplies to individuals in the community in order to help to create and foster micro-businesses and linked their goods with established tourist-themed enterprises that were eager to serve people from the local community. The established businesses were supported, too, through additional improvements to support the micro-businesses. This not only created a sustainable approach but also served as a mentoring system for the new micro-businesses.

Finally, signs were installed on the trail route on the front of the established business places. The signage features a description of the business, a trail map showing the viewer where they are along the trail, and a QR code that links to a page on the ACOR website that provides additional information about the business.

#### **Strategy for the Management of Jordan’s Cultural Heritage 2023–2027**

After finalizing the Strategy for the Management of Jordan’s Cultural Heritage 2023–2027, an implementation plan was developed. Series of workshops were conducted to identify the critical projects required to achieve the desired goals and fulfill the agreed-upon strategic objectives, resulting in a total of 16 projects. Project-related information, such as the project’s alignment with strategic objectives, project ownership, procedural steps, involved authorities, necessary resources, and the project’s time frame, was developed.

Performance indicators have also been established as part of the monitoring and evaluation system to measure progress toward the strategic objectives and to allow for the implementation of preventive and corrective measures if necessary.

The strategy and its implementation plan will help CHR institutions to identify their priorities and plans and provide a timeline to achieve it.

#### **Capacity-Building Program**

USAID SCHEP conducted a range of capacity-building training programs between July and December. These programs aimed to enhance knowledge and skills across various fields, including archaeological documentation, strategic planning for heritage management, and entrepreneurship for local communities. A comprehensive visitor-focused communication, photogrammetry, and scientific publications program contributed to the development of capabilities for engaging local communities and safeguarding cultural heritage. USAID SCHEP also organized workshops on English-language proficiency, on grant-proposal writing, and on maritime archaeology and ground-penetrating radar, demonstrating its commitment to supporting diverse sectors and facilitating knowledge exchange. These training programs exemplify USAID SCHEP’s goal of empowering individuals and communities in the preservation and promotion of Jordan’s abundant cultural heritage.

The works described here are made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of ACOR and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.



Megan Perry receiving the W. F. Albright Award from ACOR board president Edward "Skip" Gnehm at the ASOR annual meeting in Chicago, November 2023 (see p. 10).  
(Photo by P. P. Creasman.)

## Trustee Prof. Megan Perry Receives the W. F. Albright Award

Megan Perry, ACOR trustee (since 2009) and Rivers Distinguished Professor at East Carolina University, has received ASOR's W. F. Albright Award. She was nominated and honored for her many years of service to the American Center, particularly for the five she spent as chair of the Fellowship Committee, one of the board's most intensive service engagements, which was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Under her guidance, the fellowship program grew to exceed 35 awards and 125 applicants annually, with multiple new fellowships established and offered. Steady and considerate oversight and direction from Prof. Perry have ensured that this essential component of ACOR's mission has thrived in recent years. Thanks to her guidance during the pandemic—especially for fellows, reviewers, and staff—the center remained unwaveringly committed to advancing knowledge during a challenging period. Prof. Perry has served and continues to serve ACOR in numerous other capacities, for which the board and staff express their gratitude and recognize her dedication and energy, which are consistently invested in the American Center of Research and its future.

## EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR!



**Faris Saadeh,**  
**Data Entry Specialist**  
**&**

**Ayman Kharma,**  
**Projects Account Manager**



## Dendrochronology Field School

*Pearce Paul Creasman*

ACOR was pleased to host the 10th International Dendrochronology Field School in Amman. From July 30 to August 13, twelve students—from the U.S., six Arab countries, Pakistan, and Greece—received an intensive course in the applications of tree-ring research. Professors Ramzi Touchan and David Meko, of the University of Arizona's Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research, were joined by ACOR's executive director (who was also a professor in the Tree-Ring Lab, until coming to ACOR) in planning and implementing the two-week course, further assisted by Matthew Vincent. Mohammad Omari, vice dean at the University of Jordan, guest lectured on the forests of Jordan and wood anatomy. From our center in Amman, day trips to the Dibeen Forest saw collection of tree-ring samples, prepared and analyzed back at ACOR.

The science of dendrochronology (derived from the Greek words for tree, *dendron*, and "knowledge of time," chronology) is a set of techniques by which the annual growth layers of trees can be assigned to a definite calendar year. The history of changes in the tree's environment is reflected in various properties of the tree rings. These properties include ring width, cell size, wood density, trace-element composition, and concentrations of stable isotopes and

radioactive isotopes. External environmental variables affect the physiological processes that control tree growth and leave a permanent record in ring properties. Tree-ring series can be used to reconstruct past variations in precipitation, temperature, soil moisture, river flows, frequency of droughts, forest fires, major forest pest outbreaks, and other phenomena important to the management of natural resources and the natural and human environment.



Students take a sample (core) from a tree in the Dibeen Forest.  
(Photo by M. Vincent.)



The board of trustees gathered for dinner in Chicago. (Photo by C. Shelton.)

### ACOR at ASOR China Shelton

The annual meeting of the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR) took place in person in Chicago, Illinois, November 15–18. Many American Center board members, staff, and fellowship alums participated, in a variety of sessions, among them: Prehistoric Archaeology; So What? Finding Meaning in Near Eastern Studies; The Archaeology of Petra and Nabataea; and Environmental Archaeology in the Ancient Near East. The board members were very active; Jenna de Vries Morton chaired a workshop entitled “Culture in Crisis: People Oriented,” Debra Foran chaired three contiguous sessions of Gender in the Ancient Near East, and Megan Perry chaired two contiguous sessions of Bioarchaeology in the Near East. Perry was also honored with the W. F. Albright Award for outstanding service to an overseas center (see p. 9), and Bethany Walker received the P. E. MacAllister Field Archaeology Award for outstanding contributions to Near Eastern archaeology over the course of her career (photo at right).

Two Jordanian Travel Scholarship for ASOR Annual Meeting recipients presented papers: Jalal Al Heji spoke on “Neolithic Lithic Sickle Blades of Tell Abu Suwwan from the 2005–2008, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2022 Seasons” in the session Archaeology of the Southern Levant I, and Fardous Al Ajlouny presented “The Application of Laser Scanning and Photogrammetry for the Documentation, Preservation, and Conservation of Miniature Figurative Ancient Pieces from Southern Levant in the Early Bronze Age (Khirbet Ez Zeraqon Miniature Figurative Pieces, Case Study)” in the Digital Archaeology and History session.

in memoriam

**Edgar C. Harrell**

**6 September 1934–31 October 2023**

It is with great sadness that we convey news of the passing of Edgar C. Harrell, who was president of the board of trustees from 1986 to 1988 and whose family generously endows the Harrell Fellowship, which supports graduate students working in Jordan. His career spanned the U.S. Navy, a PhD in economics at Columbia University, USAID, teaching at several universities, helping to found another, and the establishment of a venture capital fund.

[legacy.com/us/obituaries/washingtonpost/name/edgar-harrell-obituary?id=53624433](https://legacy.com/us/obituaries/washingtonpost/name/edgar-harrell-obituary?id=53624433)

National Inventory Project co-director Matthew Vincent presented in that same session on “Reassessing the Utility of 4D Photogrammetry at Tall al-‘Umayri: Novel Approaches for Daily Photogrammetry in the Trenches.” SCHEP deputy chief of party Hanadi Al Taher discussed “The Amman Citadel Southern Slope Development Project: An Insight at the Heritage Houses” in The Archaeology of Jordan III: Methods and Heritage session. Hisham Al Majali, SCHEP’s CHR field manager, presented “Heritage, Cultural, and Tourism Experiences: Opportunities for Amman Citadel Local Community—Amman, Jordan.”

The board of trustees and friends gathered for a lovely Italian dinner on the Friday evening before the board meeting to enjoy each other’s company and to salute the center’s many recent accomplishments.



Prof. Bethany J. Walker, ACOR trustee and director of the Research Unit in Islamic Archaeology at the University of Bonn’s Department of Islamic Studies, receiving the P. E. MacAllister Field Archaeology Award for her decades of work in the field. This award, given by ASOR, recognizes “outstanding contributions to ancient Near Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean archaeology.” (Photo by C. Shelton.)

## Library and Archive Updates

*Ryder Kouba & Samya Khalaf Kafafi*

### Archives

The archives were very active in the second half of 2023, with new collections and records arriving throughout the summer. Around 50 boxes arrived from the U.S. office after a long voyage to Aqaba; these had largely been inventoried in the U.S., making the process much smoother, and contain a variety of ACOR records, largely from the 1970s to 1990s. While these are typical organizational records, there is some drama and intrigue, in addition to a documentary history of communications. One string of letters was particularly amusing, revealing that Bert de Vries refused to accept that Steven Spielberg was not interested in working with ACOR and culminating in Harrison Ford's agent finally having had enough. The shipment also contained dozens of audio cassettes, floppy disks, and CDs, the latter two of which have been migrated as best as possible following digital preservation best practices.

Two special collections also arrived and were processed, digitized, and made accessible online. The Linda L. Layne collection documents Dr. Layne's anthropological fieldwork in the Jordan Valley in the early 1980s, including some great images of rural life in Jordan. She also hosted an academic conference with Gary Rollefson, *Anthropology in Jordan: State of the Art*, which featured her photography and a visit from Queen Noor.

Conservator and cultural heritage specialist Edith Dunn documented Jordan in the 1990s: in 1993 for her publication *The Preservation of Jordan's Historic Fabric: An Evaluation* with Zaki Aslan, as well as a 1998 trip. Photographic prints and 35mm slides from sites around the country comprise this collection, with a special focus on the architecture of Amman and villages in the Karak Governorate. Her documentation of Amman in the early 1990s as well as rural Karak are unusual for the ACOR archives, including the Hartha Guesthouse, which is completely new for us.

### Library

The library had a busy fall with the generous donation of the Shuja' Al-Asad library from his family, notably Mohammad Al-Asad, founder of the Center for the Study of the Built Environment. Thanks to the generous help of our facilitator, Sa'id Adawi, thousands of books, journals, and magazines were safely transported to ACOR, where they were indexed and cataloging began on the Arabic-language works. We also provided the library with new books through purchase.

Samya Khalaf Kafafi and Nora Al Omari presented, in Arabic, at the Jordan Library and Information Association's 22nd annual conference, which this year was held at the King Hussein Cultural Center. The theme was school

in memoriam

## Jonathan N. Tubb

**21 December 1951–25 September 2023**

With deepest regret we note the loss of Jonathan Tubb, who was responsible for the tremendous expansion of the British Museum's Middle Eastern collection and Levant gallery. He excavated Bronze and Iron Age sites in Jordan, particularly Tell es-Saidiyeh, and also became deeply involved in the post-conflict preservation of cultural heritage in Iraq by establishing the museum's Iraq Emergency Heritage Management Training Scheme.

[acorjordan.org/news-and-events/jonathan-n-tubb-1951-2023/](https://acorjordan.org/news-and-events/jonathan-n-tubb-1951-2023/)

librarianship, and the conference was a good opportunity to reach out to librarians around the country about the resources that the center has available for students and teachers.

We also had the honor of presenting a lecture at the University of Jordan's College of Archaeology and Tourism in the presence of the college dean, Ziad Al-Rawadiya, and members of the faculty in December. Our associate librarian, Samya Khalaf Kafafi, spoke to around 150 students about the facilities and objectives of our fellowship program and how to apply and also presented about the ACOR Library and the ACOR Digital Archive.



*Ryder Kouba and Samya Khalaf Kafafi at the 22nd annual conference of the Jordan Library and Information Association. (Photo by M. Al Awamleh.)*

### Call for Submissions!

## ARCHAEOLOGY IN JORDAN 4

The deadline for *AIJ 4* (covering work in 2022–2023) is April 1, 2024. For details, visit:

[publications.acorjordan.org/how-to-submit-aij](https://publications.acorjordan.org/how-to-submit-aij)



## Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property Project Completed

*Noreen Doyle*

In September 2023, the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property Project brought its two years of activities to a successful close. As a direct result of this project and its grant, the capacity of Jordan’s Department of Antiquities to combat the illicit trafficking in antiquities grew from a single employee in an inactive program to some fifty staff stationed throughout the country armed with current knowledge of legislation, the antiquities market, and practical procedures, as well as with up-to-date equipment.

To sustain the project goals after its closing, an open-access manual (in English and Arabic editions) and a webpage have been made available.

To learn more about this important project, see *ACOR Newsletter* 35.1, pp. 1–4, and the project webpage.

### Online

[acorjordan.org/prevention-of-illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property-project](http://acorjordan.org/prevention-of-illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property-project)

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.

## Public Events

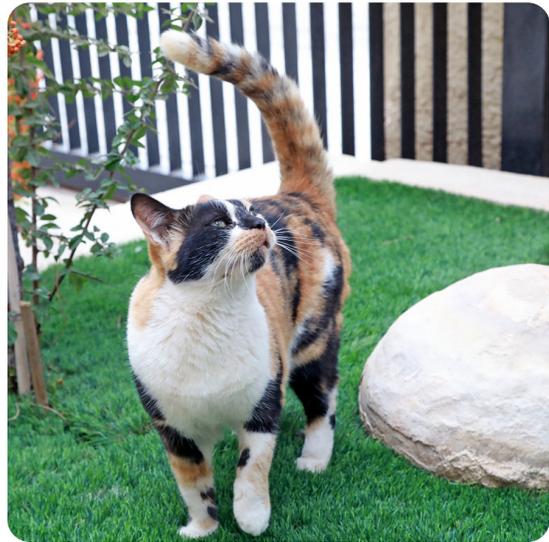
Due to war in the region, the 2023 Fall Lecture Series featured only two presentations.

On September 11, “Reviving Polymathy in Contemporary Education: Integration of Interdisciplinary and Cultural Contexts to Enhance Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Curricula,” a pre-recorded lecture by Salwa Al-Noori, associate teaching professor at the University of Washington, began the season. This was followed on September 20 by a live lecture by Bilal Khrisat, the commissioner of the Petra Archaeological Park and Tourism at the Petra Development Tourism Regional Authority: “Game Boards from Petra.” Dr. Khrisat explained how these board games were an integral part of the landscape and social activities of ancient Petra and offer valuable insights into human interactions. They were more than just pastimes—they were catalysts for collaboration and skill development and need to be better understood.

These and many other lectures are available on our YouTube channel.

### Online

[youtube.com/@ACORJordan1968](https://youtube.com/@ACORJordan1968)



To acknowledge ACOR's participation in common American-style social media campaigns, such as World Animal Day, we present this photo of Princess the cat, a resident of the center for some eight years. (Photo by S. Abu Aballi.)

## Fellowship Awardees

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP: **Sarah Islam** (Postdoctoral Fellow, 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. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TITLE VI EDUCATOR FELLOWSHIP: **Layla Goushey** (Professor, Department of English, St. Louis Community College, Forest Park); **Ritu Khanduri** (Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Texas, Arlington); **Jennifer Morey** (Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Virginia Peninsula Community College, Virginia).

## Staff Awards & Achievements

*Lina Shara’an*

Sahar Abu Laila, Fayzeh Darwazeh, Ahmad AlKhateeb, Ayman Kharma, and Ghassan Adawi passed a successful English conversation training. Shatha Abu Aballi received training in project management for development and social media and digital marketing. Noreen Doyle attended the Association of Moving Image Archivists Copyright Symposium, held on August 8. Samya Khalaf Kafafi, Ryder Kouba, and Nora Al Omari participated in the 22nd Jordanian Librarian Conference 2023, held at Al Hussein Cultural Center in Amman, October 4–5.



Staff at the Dead Sea. (Photo by M. Vincent.)

## Staff Retreat

Lina Shara'an

Early in the morning of September 28, 2023, staff left the center and headed to Wadi al-Hasa, where a hike took them through lush hanging gardens, water pools, and small waterfalls, allowing them to witness the ever-changing sandstone colors and rock formations along the trail. They then went to a salt beach along the Dead Sea to enjoy watching the sunset.

## Staff & Intern Updates

With the completion of the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property Project (p. 12), its director, Ahmed Fatima Kzzo, left the American Center. He was with us from November 2021 through September 2023.

Ryder Kouba, librarian and archivist from July 2021 to December 2023, also departed.

With the conclusion of SCHEP (p. 8) looming early in 2024, the project's capacity-building officer, Dina Al Majali, ended her employment with us in December. She had been with SCHEP since July 2017.

SCHEP furthermore had an intern from October through December. Mo'ath Munir Ali Altaji AlFarouqi completed 96 hours of training each month with the project.

## We Are Hiring!

### LIBRARIAN AND/OR ARCHIVIST

Full-time position, resident in Amman.

For details, visit:

[acorjordan.org/news-and-events/  
now-hiring-librarian-and-or-archivist](http://acorjordan.org/news-and-events/now-hiring-librarian-and-or-archivist)

## Publications Update

Five new essays by fellows appeared on *Insights* during the last half of 2023: August 17: Kimberly Katz: "Between Jordanian and International Law: UNRWA Involvement in Jordanian Court Cases, 1948–1967"; September 7: Sarah Wenner: "Recycling Refuse in Ancient Petra"; October 5: Miya Pletsas: "Being Introduced to Archaeology in Jordan at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat"; November 5: Nicolas Seth Reeves: "Places and the Past: The Bidul, the Layathna, and Narratives about Indigeneity in Petra"; and December 8: Gary Rollefson: "Decoding Late Neolithic Tools and Technology in the Black Desert of Jordan."

Some "new" older print publications are available for download. The full text of the 2009 edition of *Arabic for Archaeologists*, revised by Robert Schick, can be found on the website. This is the third edition, the first being by Paul Lapp, published in 1963, which Nancy Lapp subsequently revised (1971, 1990). It offers a vocabulary of words and phrases useful during excavation fieldwork—such as "heritage," "camp manager," and "Dump the wheel-barrow on the excavation dump"—in English, romanized Arabic, and written Arabic. Also added, thanks to the library and archive staff, are 1993–2000 issues of the *ACOR Newzette*. These two-to-four-page bimonthlies provide glimpses of goings-on at the center and activities of the staff. They have been bundled by year and can be found on the website among volumes of the newsletter.

Three much more recent volumes have been added as well: the English and Arabic editions of the *Manual for Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property* (see *ACOR Newsletter* 35.1, pp. 1–4), published thanks to a grant by the U.S. Embassy in Jordan for the project of the same name (see p. 12), as well as the Arabic edition of the *The Pottery of Jordan: A Manual*, edited by Jihad Haron and Douglas R. Clark, to complement the English one published in 2022, both with funding from SCHEP (p. 8).

Looking toward the future: work is underway on a number of substantial new books, at least one of which will launch in time to be covered in the next newsletter. These include volumes on Mount Machaerus, the Madaba Burnt Palace, and Petra's Temple of the Winged Lions.

Online  
[publications.acorjordan.org](http://publications.acorjordan.org)

## New Fellowship Award Amounts

We are pleased to announce that due to the continued generous support of donors and strong endowments, the board of trustees approved increases in the award amounts for the fellowships, as noted here. The increased awards will be effective in the 2024 award cycle and should serve to better support students and scholars in pursuit of our shared mission. The trustees have also refined our travel scholarship for Jordanians, further opening the scope of the award. Renamed the “Conference Travel Award for Jordanians,” it is now intended to assist Jordanians resident in Jordan participating in and delivering a scholarly paper at an international conference held in the United States or Canada. One award of \$3,500 will be made for an in-person paper presentation, and one award for a paper presentation in a virtual conference (i.e., to cover conference registration and membership when required) will be available annually. Any field of study related to ACOR’s mission is eligible for these awards.

For details, see [acorjordan.org/fellowships-2](http://acorjordan.org/fellowships-2).

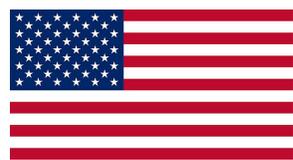
Named Fellowship	# of Awards	Award Amount Effective 2024
Pierre and Patricia Bikai Fellowship	One award for two months <i>or</i> two awards for one month each	Residency at ACOR, stipend each month \$800
Conference Travel Award for Jordanians	Two awards: one award in person <i>and</i> one remotely	In person: \$3,500 Online: registration and/or membership
Bert and Sally de Vries Fellowship	One award	\$2,500
Frederick-Wenger Memorial Endowment	Two awards	\$2,000
Lawrence T. Geraty Travel Scholarship	One award	\$1,250
Jennifer C. Groot Memorial Fellowship	Two awards	\$3,000
Harrell Family Fellowship	One award	\$2,500
Jordanian Graduate Student Scholarship	One award	\$3,000
Burton MacDonald and Rosemarie Sampson Fellowship	One award ( <i>two options</i> ): travel grant <i>or</i>	\$2,500
	residency at ACOR and stipend	Four-week residency and travel/stipend \$1,500
S. Thomas Parker Memorial Fund	One award	\$1,750
Kenneth W. Russell Fellowship	One award	\$2,500
James A. Sauer Fellowship	One award	\$1,500 <i>or</i> \$500 and one-month residency

## National Cultural Heritage Property Database of the Kingdom of Jordan Update

*Jehad Haron & Matthew Vincent*

The work on the National Cultural Heritage Property Database project is ongoing. Many archaeological items from the American Center of Research have been entered into the National Database, which allows researchers to explore the database, identify any gaps, and determine strategies to address them. The project staff has inventoried the lists of artifacts owned and loaned by the American Center and assessed all team projects related to the center and the Temple of the Winged Lions (TWL) collections. In addition, we have enhanced the locations and terminology of the database software (Axiell), streamlined the uploading process, and imported and exported materials and data to prepare for new collections, resulting in the creation of more than 7,000 records. The system mapping has been updated, and a new hierarchy is being established for a part of Jordan associated with the TWL collection. We have worked with representatives of the Department of Antiquities to develop an action plan for next year.

A new opportunity has been introduced within the project framework in the form of Partnership Development Grants. These aim to integrate large datasets into the National Inventory, focusing on collections from long-standing archaeological excavations, regional museums, rural repositories, and previously obscure or overlooked collections. The objective of these grants is to significantly enhance the National Cultural Heritage Property Database, ensuring a diverse and comprehensive representation of Jordan’s archaeological heritage and creating a more complete and detailed record. We strongly encourage all interested parties to apply for these grants, to contribute to this important national initiative. For further information or inquiries about the grants or the project in general, interested parties are encouraged to contact us at [ni@acorjordan.org](mailto:ni@acorjordan.org).



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.

**Now Available:**  
**FY 2022 ANNUAL REPORT**

[acorjordan.org/annualreports](http://acorjordan.org/annualreports)

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On 30 September 2023, in some parts of the world the day's Google Doodle celebrated the discovery of the first cache of Neolithic statues at Ain Ghazal, found exactly forty years earlier. A second cache was found in 1985. ACOR helped to support excavations at the site during that time (1982–1998), which were undertaken by Gary O. Rollefson and his co-directors,

Zeidan Kafafi and Alan H. Simmons.

Each statue consists of a "skeleton" of twigs and reeds wrapped in twine, which was then layered with plaster and provided with details, including spots of bitumen for pupils. By the standards of three-dimensional artistic production of their time (7<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE), they are enormous: the largest one, found in the second cache, measures a meter (c. 3 feet) tall. Most are in Amman, but thanks to the generosity of the Department of Antiquities, some can also be seen on loan at the British Museum, the Louvre Museum, and the Louvre Abu Dhabi. The ACOR Digital Archive contains many photos from the project. (Image © Google LLC.)



## November 2023 Board Meeting

The American Center of Research Board of Trustees meeting took place in person on November 18, 2023, at the Hilton Chicago Hotel in Chicago, IL (with some members attending remotely via zoom). Edward ("Skip") Gnehm called the meeting to order, noted that a quorum was present, and welcomed the newest board member, Dr. Jim Barnhart. Executive director Pearce Paul Creasman gave his update to the board, noting that while all is going well with general operations, the war in Gaza has changed the tenor of all work in Jordan. The fellowship selection process for the 2024 NEH award recently concluded, and we received the most applications that we have ever had. The Abdoun Community Archaeology Project also surpassed its participation goals. ACOR is still moving toward installing solar panels on the roof. SCHEP has about three months remaining before it concludes. Two Department of Antiquities projects done in cooperation with the DoA at Aqaba and Bayt Ras are underway; a third, at Karak, should start in December. The newsletter went out on schedule, and we see growth on our social media platforms. We have the Madaba Burnt Palace publication in its entirety now and expect to publish it soon; we will publish a Machaerus guidebook in January 2024. We expect all legacy publications to be complete within the next two years. Treasurer David Nickols reported on the center's financial situation, which continues to be strong, and the 2024 budget was approved. The board approved amendments to the bylaws and committee charters. The Development Committee was dissolved, as its duties have now been taken over by day-to-day operations, and is expected to be replaced with one or more new committees in 2024. The ACOR to ASOR travel scholarship has now been converted to an award for Jordanians to attend any approved international conference. The next board meeting will take place in Amman, Jordan, on June 1, 2024.

### 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](https://acorjordan.org/donate)

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