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ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA | AMMAN, JORDAN

# أخبار أكور NEWSLETTER

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for January–June 2024



Fig. 1: Richard Bates conducting GPR at the Treasury plaza. (Photo by M. Vincent.)

## Remote Sensing at the Treasury in Petra

*Fadi Bala'awi,  
C. Richard Bates, Faris Braizat,  
Matthew Vincent, and  
Pearce Paul Creasman*

As part of a collaboration between the Department of Antiquities (DoA), the Petra Development & Tourism Region Authority (PDTRA), and ACOR, in February we undertook a week of remote sensing in Petra in and around the Treasury. The non-invasive survey was conducted with electromagnetic conductivity and ground penetrating radar by Prof. C. Richard Bates of the University of St. Andrews (Fig. 1). The foremost intent of the survey was to assess the condition of the areas around the Treasury, its courtyard, the plaza, the exit of the Siq, and the wadi into which they all feed (Fig. 2), in advance of potential near-future works in those areas to divert and better control flood waters and improve the tourism experience. While geophysical

survey has been conducted in the area previously (e.g., Angelini et al. 2023), more high-resolution data is needed to prepare for such possibilities. Moreover, none of the prior remote sensing has been ground-truthed, which this project also expects to conduct in a subsequent stage later this year. The mid-year announcement by USAID of a \$15 million award to the PDTRA, launching the Green Growth Tourism program, reinforced the need for such data and proactive measures to understand any possible findings from the remote sensing.

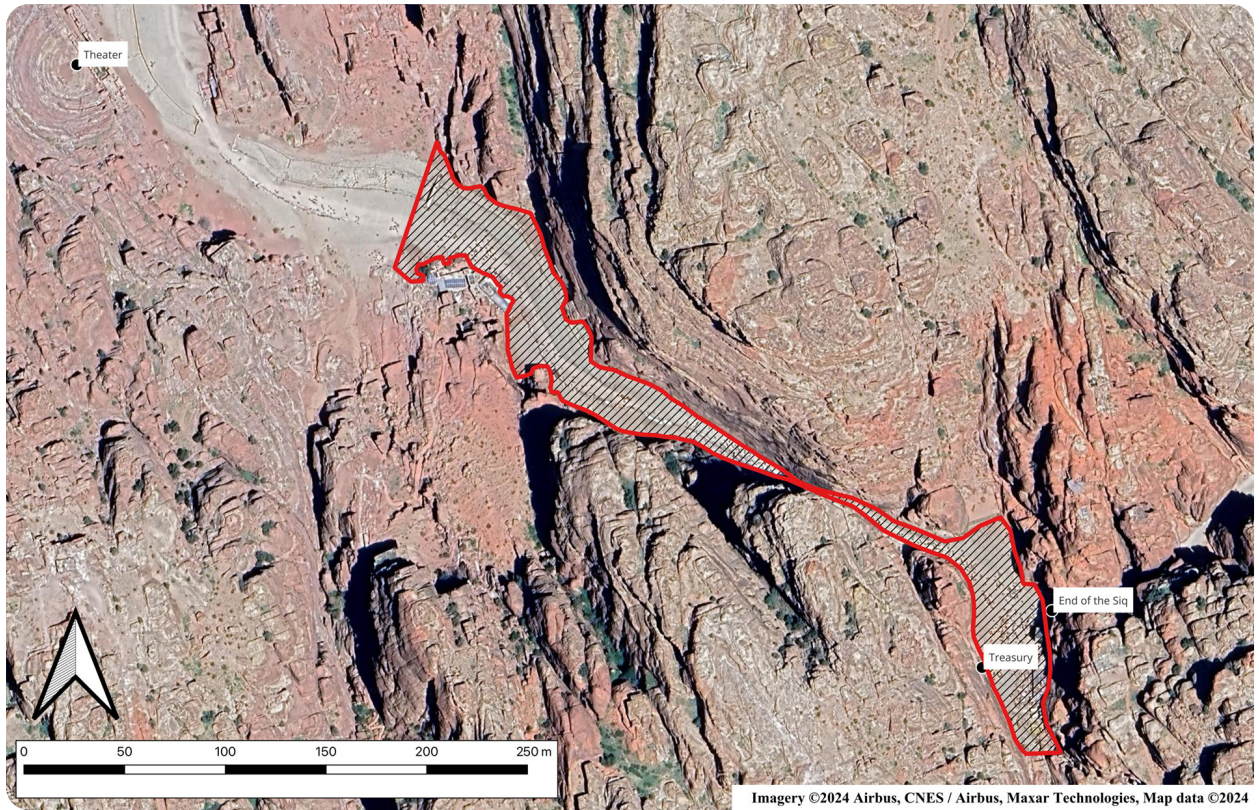


Fig. 2, above: The survey area.  
 (Map prepared by M. Vincent; photo from Google Maps; Imagery © 2024 Airbus, CNES/Airbus; map data @ 2024 Maxar Technology.)  
 Fig. 3, below: Remote sensing around obstacles. (Photo by M. Vincent.)



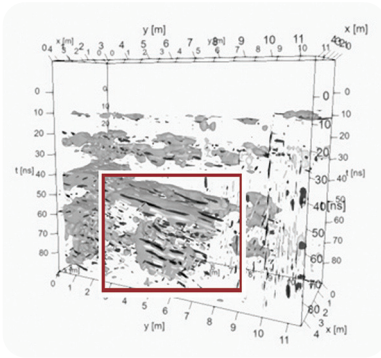


Fig. 4: GPR imaging of the reported but unexcavated tomb “62 C.”  
(Graphic by C. R. Bates.)

The goals of this survey were threefold:

- Assess the nature of the sediment within the main wadi system from the Treasury’s plaza down toward the theater;
- Determine if geophysical methods could be used to explore for hitherto unidentified features beneath the alluvium deposits of the wadi, to guide future water-management works; and
- Survey the floor of the Treasury and its courtyard to identify potential features beneath its current ground level.

While the technical aspects of the survey are not discussed in detail here, the opportunities and findings were significant. Foremost, while all involved in this project preferred the situation to have been otherwise, the comparatively low volume of tourists in Petra made such work possible at this time, lending toward higher-quality data (e.g., fewer sources of interference with the electromagnetics, although some were inevitable [Fig. 3]). Consequently, we did our best to collect as much data as

possible and over as much area as possible, maximizing this opportunity. Numerous features were identified during the survey, many of which are expected to be cultural rather than geological.

Foremost, the remote sensing indicated several voids: one beneath the Treasury’s southernmost chamber and beneath the entirety of the Treasury’s courtyard. The voids beneath the courtyard should come as little surprise in the southern section, as a 2003 excavation there discovered two tombs (“62D” and “62E”) that sit empty and visible to the public today beneath a steel grate (Farajat and Nawafleh 2005). During the same 2003 excavation, the field team indicated they may have identified another tomb to the north but did not excavate it (“62 C”); our survey imaged such a feature in that location, albeit with a S–N sloping roof (Fig. 4). Perhaps even more exciting, and a new addition to our knowledge of the area, our surveys conducted inside the excavated tombs (62 D and E) yielded essentially identical geophysical signatures *below* those tombs, suggesting another row of voids in the bedrock even deeper. That is, potentially a third row of ancient structures lies under the Treasury’s façade and courtyard.

With the data collected during this survey, we have collectively proposed fieldwork in July and August of this year to evaluate the information and our interpretations of it. We hope to report back in the next newsletter with updates regarding those excavations.

## References

- Angelini, A., M. Cozzolino, R. Gabrielli, V. Gentile, and P. Mauriello. 2023. “Geophysical and Geometric Methods for the Knowledge, Conservation, and Management of Jordanian Cultural Heritage.” *Geosciences* 13(11), 349: [52 pp.]. doi.org/10.3390/geosciences13110349
- Farajat, S. and S. Nawafleh. 2005. “Report on the Al-Khazna Courtyard Excavation at Petra (2003 Season).” *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 49: 373–393.



Fig. 5: Ground-penetrating radar scanning within the main chamber of the Treasury.  
(Photo by M. Vincent.)

## ICHAJ 16

Under the patronage of  
HRH Prince El-Hassan bin Talal,  
**the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the  
History and Archaeology of Jordan,**  
“Archaeology and Sustainability: Learning from  
the Past for a Safe, Resilient Future,”  
will be held at the  
**University of Athens, Greece,**  
**September 22–26, 2025.**

For more information:  
[ichaj.org](http://ichaj.org)



Dancers at a ceremony held on June 8, 2022, to commemorate the reopening of the National Heritage Museum on the University of Jordan campus after renovations and improvements, a project supported by SCHEP. (Photo from the USAID SCHEP collection.)

## Celebrating the Completion of USAID SCHEP, 2014–2024

*John Shearman & Shatha Abu Aballi*

From 2014 to 2024, the USAID-funded Sustainable Cultural Heritage Through Engagement of Local Communities Project (USAID SCHEP), implemented by the American Center of Research, was a beacon of sustainable cultural heritage preservation in Jordan. By fostering a community-first approach, SCHEP has not only safeguarded Jordan’s rich cultural heritage but also created avenues for education, employment, and economic growth within local communities.

The cornerstone of SCHEP’s success lies in its commitment to local communities as the primary stakeholders and beneficiaries. By harnessing the potential of cultural heritage resources (CHRs), SCHEP has empowered communities around archaeological sites to develop opportunities for education and economic development. SCHEP catalyzed micro-economic growth, fostering the diversification of Jordan’s tourism industry and promoting local micro- to small-scale enterprises focused on cultural heritage and community-based tourism.

### Site Development

Jordan boasts over 20,000 documented archaeological sites, yet public knowledge and visitation are often limited to a few iconic locations. SCHEP set out to change this narrative by selecting 11 diverse cultural heritage sites for development, ranging from the globally renowned Petra to lesser-known treasures. This initiative faced the formidable challenge of creating tailored preservation and promotion models for each unique site, ensuring the active

involvement of surrounding communities.

Ethical and effective site development was at the heart of SCHEP’s goals. The project staff diligently worked to clear and clean each site and developed visitor pathways and interpretive panels to enhance the visitor experience. This was accomplished through comprehensive conservation and restoration plans and surveys and community engagement to mitigate any negative impacts. The ultimate goal was to transform each site into a vibrant destination for education, exploration, and community-building.

### Capacity-Building and Institutional Development

One of SCHEP’s foundational goals was to leave a lasting impact on Jordan’s approach to cultural heritage preservation. Rather than starting from scratch, SCHEP partnered with existing projects, universities, and government agencies. After conducting needs assessments and engaging in dialogues with stakeholders, SCHEP focused on areas needing strengthening or new skills. This led to a series of capacity-building initiatives, including training courses, conferences, and policy-writing sessions. These efforts equipped more than 300 heritage professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to continue their work independently post-SCHEP.

A landmark achievement in this domain was the development of the Strategy for the Management of Jordan’s Cultural Heritage 2023–2027. SCHEP provided technical and financial support to the Department of Antiquities (DoA) and other CHR institutions to formulate this comprehensive strategy. Prepared in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, it was based on a thorough analysis of the current challenges and realities facing archaeological heritage management.

During the Beginners in Creative Videos workshop (2023), trainees receive guidance on how to find the best angles for creating stunning visuals.  
(Photo by Shatha Abu Aballi.)

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SCHEP launched a grant program in 2020 that provided opportunities to develop and save businesses or create new projects to serve local communities. This included developing and establishing museums, supporting a range of research works and publication of books, and enhancing tourist experiences.

### Tourism and Economic Development

Building on the momentum of Jordan's growing tourism sector, SCHEP played a pivotal role in supporting local actors to develop enterprises that manage and benefit from cultural heritage. By 2018, SCHEP had facilitated the establishment of 4 local micro- and small enterprises (MSEs) in Aqaba, Busayra, Ghawr as Safi, and Umm el-Jimal. These enterprises now manage cultural heritage resources and develop tourism products, attracting new visitors and generating income and employment opportunities for local communities.

SCHEP's efforts extended beyond establishing local companies. Project staff collaborated with organizations such as the Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association (JITOA) and the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) to introduce tour operators to lesser-known sites and produce promotional materials. Training workshops on site promotion were also provided to local stakeholders, equipping them with the skills to elevate their local sites to national and international prominence.

### Fostering Awareness and Community Engagement

The success of heritage projects hinges on the support of host communities. SCHEP prioritized building strong relationships with local communities, engaging key members to clearly explain project goals and methods. Once these relationships were established, SCHEP launched awareness campaigns targeting youth and families. By highlighting the historical and material benefits of heritage sites, SCHEP enlisted communities as active partners in preservation.

The project emphasized hands-on learning, enabling students to engage with heritage sites through activities such as writing in ancient scripts, making mosaics, or reconstructing pottery. These interactive experiences fostered a sense of ownership and pride in the sites, turning community members into advocates for preservation. Over 5,500 students from 12 governorates and 41 municipalities participated in its programs, promoting local understanding and appreciation of archaeology. The focus on disadvantaged and marginalized communities underscored SCHEP's commitment to inclusivity and making cultural heritage accessible to all.



### The USAID SCHEP Photo Collection

A testament to SCHEP's dedication to sustainability and knowledge-sharing is the USAID SCHEP collection in the ACOR Digital Archive. This extensive collection houses nearly 7,000 selected photographs and videos, showcasing site development work, modern conservation methods, and local community involvement.

### A Decade of Impact

The decade-long journey of USAID SCHEP has been marked by significant achievements in cultural heritage preservation, community empowerment, and economic development. By centering local communities in its efforts, SCHEP has both safeguarded Jordan's rich cultural heritage and created sustainable pathways for education, employment, and economic growth. Long after its conclusion, its legacy of community engagement, capacity-building, and innovative site development will continue to inspire and guide future heritage preservation efforts in Jordan and beyond. The success of SCHEP is a testament to the power of community-first approaches in preserving and promoting cultural heritage for the benefit of all.

For detailed information about SCHEP's work, see our publications *The Story of SCHEP* (2020) and *The Story of SCHEP 2* (2024), which can be downloaded from our website: [publications.acorjordan.org/books](https://publications.acorjordan.org/books).



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.

## Trustees Announce the Donald O. Henry Fellowship

The Donald O. Henry Fellowship provides support for a field project, publication, or related event in support of archaeological research in or about Jordan. Best known for his research regarding the prehistory of the Near East, human behavioral ecology, lithic technology, and paleodemographics, for over 40 years Prof. Henry conducted research and led field schools in southern Jordan, Oklahoma, and Texas. The National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Geographic Society are just three of the sources of funding for his projects. He was, and his family remains, especially proud of his work at the site of Ayn Abu Nukhayla, Jordan, which continues to shape the study of the Neolithic era and the region.

The fellowship thus has a preference for the support of archaeological efforts related to prehistory and/or work in southern Jordan, but proposals involving all periods and locations are eligible, welcome, and encouraged. The most compelling proposal will receive the award.

Undergraduate students, graduate students, and post-doctoral researchers of all nationalities are eligible to apply. The award can be made in addition to any other grants or fellowships. In 2025, the expected award amount is \$500.

Details may be found at: [acorjordan.org/named-fellowships/donald-o-henry-fellowship](http://acorjordan.org/named-fellowships/donald-o-henry-fellowship).



Donald O. Henry.  
(Photo courtesy of the Henry family.)

### Donors

Nancy Henry and family; Nisreen Abu al-Shaikh; Maysoun Al Nahar; Geoffrey A. Clark; Pearce Paul Creasman; Tom Davis; Noreen Doyle; Jihad Haron; Edward W. Gnehm, Jr.; Danielle Macdonald; Jenna de Vries Morton; Susan Morton in honor of Don and Nancy Henry; Jennifer Ramsay; John Shearman; Matthew Vincent; Richard H. Wilkinson; Rex and Cathe Zedalis; anonymous (several).

## Fellowship Awardees

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP: **Gary Rollefson** (Whitman College, Anthropology), Final Report on the Excavations at 'Ain Ghazal, 'Ain Ghazal, Excavation Reports, volume 1. ACOR-CAORC POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS: **Leigh-Ann Bedal** (Penn State Erie, The Behrend College, Anthropology), The Petra Pool and Garden Complex, volume 1: History, Excavation, and Interpretation; **Joel Burnett** (Baylor University, Religion), Interpreting Iron Age Religious Evidence from Jordan; **Konstantine Politis** (Hellenic Society for Near Eastern Studies), Kalliroe ('Ain ez-Zara, Jordan) Documentation and Study Project; **Robert Schick** (Independent Scholar), Identifying the Sites that Alois Musil Recorded in His Travels in Southern Jordan and the Negev in 1896–1902. ACOR-CAORC PREDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP: **Fadi Kaferty** (University of Houston, History), A History of the Jordanian Communist Party, 1951–1993. BERT AND SALLY DE VRIES FELLOWSHIP: **Sherihan Inalo** (University of Bonn, Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies, Islamic Archaeology Research Unit), Tall Hisban, Madaba Plains Project. BURTON MACDONALD AND ROSEMARIE SAMPSON FELLOWSHIP: **Joshua Feland** (University of Alberta, Department of History, Classics, and Religion), Exploring Continuity and Transition in Southern Jordan. FREDERICK-WENGER JORDANIAN EDUCATIONAL FELLOWSHIPS: **Alhareth Aldmour** (University of Jordan, Archaeology), University Study; **Esra'a Alhunaity** (University of Jordan, Archaeology), Settlement Pattern Transformations from the Middle to Late Bronze Ages in Northern Jordan. HARRELL FAMILY FELLOWSHIP: **Tucker Deady** (University of Toronto, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations), Khirbat Iskandar Expedition. LAWRENCE T. GERATY TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP: **Kayssa Mavrides Sales** (Sapienza University of Rome, Cultural Heritage in the Near and Middle East and Africa), Khirbat Iskandar Expedition. JAMES A. SAUER FELLOWSHIP: **Carolina Cioffi** (University of Rome, Sapienza, Archaeology of the Ancient Near East), Khirbat Iskandar Expedition. JENNIFER C. GROOT MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIPS: **Nina Rozic** (Archaeology and Heritage Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University), Town of Nebo Archaeological Project; **Asad Zaman** (Ohio State University, Near East and South Asian Languages and Cultures), Badia Epigraphic Project 2024. JORDANIAN GRADUATE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP: **Qais Wedyan** (University of Jordan, School of Archaeology and Tourism), Tell Abu Suwwan: A Socio-Economic Study during the Neolithic Period. KENNETH W. RUSSELL MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP: **Ahmad Thaher** (The University of Tulsa, Anthropology), Nizzanan Technology at Kharaneh IV: A Comparative Study of Epipalaeolithic Cultural Diversity and Technological Innovation of Stone Tools in the Southern Levant. PIERRE AND PATRICIA BIKAI FELLOWSHIP: **Megan Nishida** (University of Notre Dame, Anthropology), Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain. S. THOMAS PARKER MEMORIAL FUND: **Zulkayda Mamat** (Stanford University, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences), Characterizing the Nature of Spiritual Dreams in Positively Transforming the Dreamer's Life Trajectory.

## Jehad Haron Named Associate Director Emeritus

On the occasion of his retirement from ACOR, effective June 1, 2024, Jehad Haron was honored by the board of trustees with the title “Associate Director Emeritus.” Recognizing not only his formal employment with the organization of nearly a decade but also his three prior decades of meaningful engagement and support, he is only the second person in our history to be so honored. We expect to continue to see him around the center as he pursues projects about which he is most passionate and his continued engagement with UNESCO as a world heritage expert. Congratulations, Jehad!



## Fellows in Residence January–June 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: **Suzanne Richard** (Gannon College, History and Archaeology): Archaeological Expedition to Khirbat Iskandar and Its Environs, vol. 2: Final Report on the Early Bronze IV Area B Settlements. ACOR-CAORC PREDOCTORAL FELLOWS: **Molly Hickey** (Harvard University, Political Science): The Political Economy of Reform under Authoritarianism. PIERRE AND PATRICIA BIKAI FELLOW: **Megan Nishida** (University of Notre Dame, Anthropology): Expedition to the Dead Sea Plain.

## Lecture Highlights

*Shatha Abu Aballi*

Our spring 2024 lecture series highlighted innovative archaeological projects with a focus on community engagement and discovery. Starting on February 12 with “Digging Together: Community and Discovery in the Abdoun Community Archaeology Project,” presented by Matthew Vincent, we explored a pioneering initiative that emphasizes community involvement in archaeological exploration. Established in 2021 through a partnership between the American Center of Research and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, the project invites volunteers to participate in excavations, deepening public engagement with the rich history and heritage of the Abdoun area. Next, Prof. Pearce Paul Creasman and Aktham Oweid gave “Diving the Dead Sea: Archaeological Investigation of Kallirhoe” on March 26, a discussion of the survey and exploratory excavation at the Dead Sea port site of Kallirhoe (modern ‘Ain ez-Zara), conducted in fall 2023 with the Department of Antiquities (see the cover story of *ACOR Newsletter* 35.2). This project explores the ancient port dating back to the Hasmonaean period (1st century BCE) and includes the first in-person underwater excavation in the Dead Sea, highlighting

the challenges and discoveries of this unique endeavor. The final event of the season was Dr. Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky’s online lecture “Empire of Refugees: North Caucasian Muslims and the Late Ottoman State,” held on April 22.

Recorded versions of most of our lectures are available to watch at on our YouTube channel: [youtube.com/@ACORJordan1968](https://youtube.com/@ACORJordan1968).



Matthew Vincent engages the in-person audience with the Abdoun Community Archaeology Project. (Photo by Shatha Abu Aballi.)



## The International Women’s Forum’s LEMP 12 at ACOR

*Zovinar Mananian*

On March 2–3, 2024, ACOR hosted a two-day session of the Leadership Enhancement and Mentoring Program (LEMP), 12th Edition, designed and run by the International Women’s Forum (IWF)/Jordan Chapter. The program was sponsored by the Australian Embassy in Amman, the Princess Sumaya University for Technology, and the Ministry of Culture. LEMP is an eight-module training program that identifies rising women leaders in the public and private sectors and helps them develop important leadership skills essential for success in their careers of choice. LEMP 12 focused on employees of the Ministry of Culture, and we had the privilege of hosting 35 women from the ministry.

The fifth module of the program, “Harmony in Heritage: Safeguarding Intangible and Tangible Heritage,” was presented and led by Ammar Khammash, a noted Jordanian

Participants in LEMP 12, including staff from the Ministry of Culture, Ammar Khammash (architect and presenter), Reem Habayeb (IWF board member), Rabab Mango (IWF board member), Noor Hijazi (IWF Jordan executive director), Nisreen Abu Al Shaikh (ACOR), Shatha Abu Aballi (ACOR), and Zovi Mananian (ACOR).

(Photo by Zaid Kashour.)

architect and designer. The program covered many aspects of presenting Jordan’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage, among them showcasing cultural identity, countering stereotypes and prejudice, promoting cross-cultural dialogue, fostering innovation and creativity, and more. It was an enriching experience, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding and preserving Jordan’s cultural heritage for future generations and empowering and celebrating women in every field.

The training program concluded with a graduation ceremony under the patronage of Her Excellency the Minister of Culture, Haifa Najjar, held on June 29 at Princess Sumaya University for Technology. At the end of the ceremony, the minister, joined by Samar Nassar, president of IWF Jordan, and Reem Habayeb, member of the IWF board (and co-chair of the LEMP program with Dr. Wafa Al-Khadra), presented the graduation certificates.

They also awarded the American Center with a certificate of appreciation for our hospitality and cooperation, wishing us continued success and prosperity. This was received by our CFO and deputy director, Nisreen Abu Al-Shaikh, and our operations and administration manager, Zovi Mananian.

Our contribution to this program will open opportunities for further collaborations among ACOR, the Ministry of Culture, and IWF Jordan.

## ACOR Digital Archive Receives a PNT Heritage Award 2024

*Shatha Abu Aballi*

On June 4, the ACOR Digital Archive was among the honorees of the Petra National Trust 2024 Heritage Awards. This recognition underscores our unwavering commitment to preserving Jordanian heritage and raising awareness about its cultural significance. The other two awards went to projects that ACOR has supported through the USAID SCHEP. These achievements highlight the positive impact our efforts have on local communities, reinforcing our mission to safeguard history for future generations.

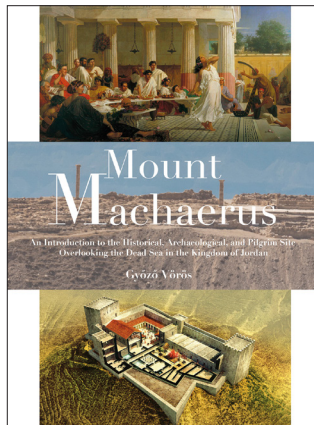
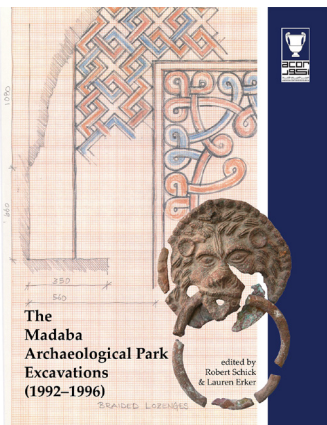
This award is a collaborative effort with the European Union Delegation—Jordan and the Jordan Kuwait Bank. We are grateful for their support and partnership in our ongoing endeavors to protect and promote Jordan’s rich cultural heritage.



Presenters and representatives of the recipient organizations, from left to right: Pearce Paul Creasman (ACOR), Fadi Bala’awi (Department of Antiquities), HRH Princess Dana Firas, Margaritis Schinas (European Commission), Haethum Buttikhi, Alida Madaeen, Nisreen Abu Al Shaikh (ACOR), and Raed Nael Zabin.

(Photo courtesy of the Petra National Trust.)





## New Books!

*The Madaba Archaeological Park Excavations (1992–1996)*, edited by Robert Schick and Lauren Erker, is the first of three anticipated “legacy” publications. This is the final site report for the western half of the Madaba Archaeological Park, around the Burnt Palace and the Roman Street to its south, made possible by the efforts of the volume’s editors and contributors.

*Mount Machaerus: An Introduction to the Historical, Archaeological, and Pilgrim Site Overlooking the Dead Sea in the Kingdom of Jordan* by Gyöző Vörös is a lavishly illustrated book offering an accessible encapsulation of volumes of scholarship about the site, where the author excavated for ten years.

Online  
[publications.acorjordan.org/books](https://publications.acorjordan.org/books)

## Library & Archive Updates

*Samya Khalaf Kafafi & Dina Al Majali*

As of mid-April, the library has extended its operating hours three days a week until eight in the evening. We are confident that this new schedule will better suit visitors’ needs, providing better access to our resources and facilities during the evening, whether they are looking for a quiet environment to study, work, or use the collections. The first half of 2024 saw the acquisition of 464 books and new online open-access resources. The cataloging of books donated by the family of Shuja’ Al-Asad, a wonderful addition to our library, has been completed.

In addition to a presentation for participants in LEMP 12 (see p. 8), in June, 15 students from Yarmouk University from the Faculty of Archeology, accompanied by Dr. Khaled Al Bashayra, received an overview of the library, archive, and fellowships offered to Jordanian students. We were also visited by staff of JSTOR, regional director Arta Kabashi and account development manager Zachary Rasmussen, with whom we discussed many different topics related to the library’s subscription to the JSTOR

## Other Publication News

The completion of USAID SCHEP was marked by publication of *The Story of SCHEP 2: 2019–2024* (see pp. 4–5).

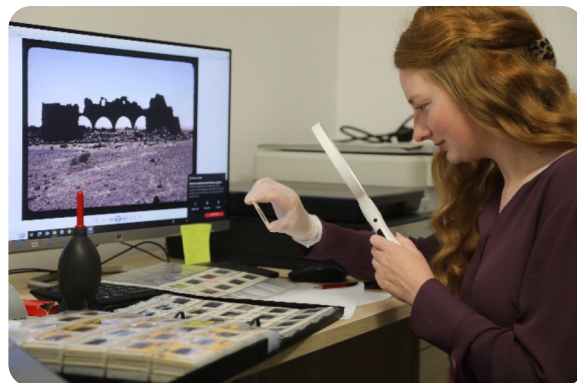
Four new essays appeared on our blog, Insights, during the first half of 2024, covering an array of ancient and modern topics: January 23: “Dating Mamluk Manuscripts from Levantine Collections” by Sarah Islam (ACOR-CAORC Postdoctoral Fellow, 2022–2023); February 20: “Through the Cracks of Détente: The Superpowers, the Arab ‘Radicals,’ and the Coming of the Second Cold War, 1977–1984” by Benjamin V. Allison (Pierre and Patricia Bikai Fellow, 2023–2024); April 14: “The Early Bronze Age IV Cultic Complex at Khirbat Iskandar” by Suzanne Richard (ACOR-CAORC Postdoctoral Fellow, 2023–2024); May 30: “How Regional Dynamics Impact Domestic Politics: The Case of Fuel Subsidy Reform in Jordan” by Molly Hicky (ACOR-CAORC Predoctoral Fellow, 2023–2024).

All of these, and more, can be read on our website: [publications.acorjordan.org/insights](https://publications.acorjordan.org/insights).

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**FY 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

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Archive intern Emma Holdren at work. (Photo by Abed Al Fattah Ghareeb.)

database. Associate librarian Samya Kafafi participated in the career day held by the University of Jordan’s Faculty of Archaeology and Tourism and presented ideas to students on how to join training programs in the library and archive.

Two photo essays have been published over the past six months: “Adventures in 1970s Levant with Robert Schick and Family,” which draws from the 6,500 images in the Robert Schick collection, and “The Linda L. Layne Collection: Documenting Life in the Jordan Valley,” which features some of the 500 photographs that she donated to our collections. Intern Emma Holdren’s contribution played a major role in numbering and re-housing these images; she spent three months as part of a training program in the archives.

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

Matthew Vincent

The National Inventory project continues to make significant strides in its mission to catalog and preserve cultural heritage across Jordan. Recent developments highlight our commitment to partnership, data integration, and standardization.

We are pleased to announce that the first Partnership Development Grant (PDG) has been awarded to the Madaba Regional Archaeology Museum Project. This milestone achievement has yielded immediate and tangible results. With the PDG in place, we have successfully integrated the museum's data into the National Inventory. Our staff has provided comprehensive training to the museum staff, ensuring they are well equipped to utilize the National Inventory system effectively. Furthermore, we have included the museum's folklore collection, enriching the diversity of our catalog. Perhaps most importantly, we have worked closely with the museum to incorporate the National Inventory into their day-to-day operations, demonstrating the practical value of our system in real-world settings.

Building on this success, our staff continues its proactive approach to engaging with museums throughout the country. We are conducting on-site visits to various institutions, where we prepare diverse collections for integration into the National Inventory. During these visits, we provide customized training sessions for staff at each location. This ongoing outreach ensures that the National Inventory becomes a comprehensive and inclusive resource, representing the rich cultural tapestry of this nation.

In parallel with our museum engagement efforts, we are making steady progress in developing a standardized terminology and vocabulary for the database. This crucial work is being carried out in close collaboration with the Department of Antiquities. By establishing a common language for describing and categorizing cultural heritage items, we are enhancing the searchability and cross-referencing capabilities within the inventory. This standardization will facilitate more accurate and consistent cataloging of artifacts and improve communication and data sharing between institutions.

The National Inventory project continues to evolve as a vital tool for preserving and promoting our cultural heritage. Through strategic partnerships, ongoing outreach, and the development of standardized practices, we are building a robust and accessible resource. This comprehensive inventory will serve researchers, institutions, and the public for generations to come, offering unprecedented access to Jordan's rich cultural legacy.

As we move forward, we remain committed to expanding our partnerships, refining our processes, and continuously improving the National Inventory. Our team's dedication and the enthusiastic participation of museums and cultural institutions across the country are driving the project's success, bringing us closer to our goal of creating a unified, comprehensive catalog of the nation's invaluable cultural heritage.



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.



### Staff Spring Retreat

Lina Shara'an

On April 24 and 25, 2024, our spring staff retreat took place in Aqaba. It began with an early morning departure from the center to visit the Aqaba Church and the Islamic City of Ayla. During the trip, we had fun spending time on a yacht and watching the sunset. On the following day, our staff ventured to dive into the depths of the Red Sea, where we delighted in an exciting experience.

Staff aboard a glass-bottom boat, enjoying the beautiful blue waters of the Red Sea. (Photo by Matthew Vincent.)

## Donations (January–June 2024)

### ANNUAL FUND

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Reham Abdullah; Mohammad Al Asad; Maysoon Al Nahar; the Department of Antiquities of Jordan; The German Protestant Institute of Archaeology Amman (GPIA); Morag Kersel & Yorke Rowan; Danielle Macdonald; Eman Marzouq; Randolph B. Old; Robert Schick; Bashar Tabbah; Richard Talbert

## Staff & Intern Updates

*Lina Shara'an*

With the closing of SCHEP on February 7, 2024, most of the project's staff left ACOR's employ early in the year: Hanadi Al Taher (deputy CoP/institutional development lead), Hisham Al Majali (CHR field manager), Maen Al Omari (senior accountant), Emad Abu Rassa (financial manager), and Zaid Kashour (monitoring and evaluation specialist).

SCHEP chief of party John Shearman has stayed on as deputy director, as of February 8. Nora Alomari (SCHEP research assistant) also stayed on, working on the Title VI and NEH Temple of the Winged Lions grants, until her resignation on April 22. Dina Al Majali, SCHEP's

capacity-building officer until December 2023, has rejoined ACOR as archive assistant.

Jehad Haron retired as associate director for archaeology and research (see p. 7).

Several interns have worked for ACOR during the first half of 2024 as well: Ivona Smith, a student at the Qasid Institute, for the National Inventory project (February–May); Emma Holdren, who is studying history at Wesleyan University and is in Jordan University's CIEE Program, for the archive (January–April); and Lina Burgol, studying archaeology at Jordan University, for the library (March–June). Ioana Iacobescu came for one week in May; she has a background in banking and finance and reviewed the financial policies in May 2024.

## Staff Awards & Achievements

*Lina Shara'an*

*The Jordanian Journal of Library and Information Science* 58(4) features an article written last year by library staff members Ryder Kouba, Samya Khalaf Kafafi, and Nora Alomari: "The ACOR Digital Archive: An Example of a Visual Resource That Helps Children Understand Jordan's Heritage and History" (in Arabic).

Samya Khalaf Kafafi attended the Study Day on Research Tools and Approaches in Manuscript and Documentary Studies organized by the Heritage Library of the Qatar National Library. Ala'a Al Badarin enrolled in NYU Abu Dhabi's Digital Humanities course. Faris Saadeh took part in the Kambly Training Center's online English and Technical Reporting Language Skills training. Eleven staff members also attended time-management training held by the center.



Outings for the trustees who gathered in Amman for the board meeting included a visit on June 1 to the Amman Citadel to see the new path that connects the upper archaeological remains and museum to the lower area, around the theater and Roman baths and the site of the Abdoun Community Archaeology Project before a BBQ lunch hosted by ACOR for the trustees, staff, and their families.

On Sunday, June 2, the trustees took a field trip to Ajloun, where they visited the castle and some (including our intrepid board president, Skip Gnehm, seen here) ventured along the Zipline, “flying” over the greenest area in Jordan, the Ajloun Forest Reserve. Reengaging with ACOR-supported projects in person and having the opportunity to reconnect with each other and the center staff was a valuable experience for all.

(Photo by P. P. Creasman.)

## June 2024 Board Meeting

The American Center of Research Board of Trustees meeting took place in person on June 1, 2024, at the American Center of Research in Amman, Jordan (with some members attending remotely via Zoom). Edward (“Skip”) Gnehm, Jr., called the meeting to order and stated that a quorum was present. Seven returning members were elected to the 2027 class of the board of trustees. President Gnehm noted that SCHEP had closed in February 2024 and that Dr. John Shearman (formerly chief of party of SCHEP) was now deputy director of ACOR. He also reported on the activities of the Executive Committee since the last board meeting. The board approved granting the title of “associate director emeritus” to Jihad Haron upon his retirement in July 2024 and also approved the creation of the Donald O. Henry Fellowship. A new Endowment Committee was established. Executive director Pearce Paul Creasman gave his update to the board, noting that while all is going well with general operations, the conflict in Gaza has caused a decline in tourism and academic visitation. ACOR has still hosted some in-person events and digital outreach is going well; in addition, there are multiple international television documentaries in the works. All three of the DoA-ACOR collaborative projects (Aqaba, Bayt Ras, and Karak) are moving along well. The Madaba Burnt Palace volume has now been published, and we expect the Temple of the Winged Lions publication in September 2024. Treasurer David Nickols reported on the center’s financial situation, which continues to be strong. The Fellowship Committee noted a need to find increased funding for Jordanian fellowships, especially given the very high number of applicants. The next board meeting will take place in Boston, MA, on November 23, 2024.

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