

## NEW DIRECTIONS

The Director Writes

The Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania voted on 6 December 1887 to send 'an exploring expedition to Babylon'—perhaps the most romantically-worded decision ever taken by that august body.

In this way was founded not only the University Museum but also the Museum's exceptional commitment to field research. From this commitment have grown both the remarkable systematic collections in archaeology and anthropology, and a research tradition that has spanned the continents and remains perhaps unequalled by any other private institution. Statistics are always open to interpretation—'lies, damned lies,' Lord Randolph Churchill once called them—but on one set of calculations at least, the Museum has over its ninety-three years undertaken some 338 different expeditions, not counting the many successive seasons over which individual operations often took place. Some of those were no more than individual forays—one man without his dog, as it were—to collect ethnographic materials or to survey new sites, but others were among the largest archaeological excavations ever mounted, pursued over years on a vast scale, often under adverse conditions of desert-fringe or jungle.

Activity on this scale has brought its rewards—in discoveries made and knowledge gained, in collections for the Museum, in reputations won both for individuals and for the institution—but it has also brought a fair crop of problems. It is to these and the challenges they represent that I want to devote this page in the next few issues of *Expedition*.

The questions we must explore fall under a number of very different headings, but when they have been examined we ought to be able to define some clear goals for the Museum's research in the field in the years ahead.

First and foremost, our work has to be undertaken in the context of rigorously analyzed strategies which will allow us to apply our necessarily limited resources to the solution of precisely defined problems. The days of digging a site 'because it's there' are gone. Second, our work has to take into account the destruction of archaeological sites and the transformation of 'primitive' societies and their ways of life. These problems now exist on so serious a scale that they cannot be ignored in the delineation of research programs. Third, we have to ask ourselves what we can offer the countries in which we work, and discover from our colleagues there what co-operation they need from us, whether in training or scientific technology, or in terms of their own research priorities. Fourth, we must question and refine our own research methods and ensure that our field-teams and resources are fully adequate to undertake work in the field to the highest standards. Fifth, we have to ensure that we have at home in the Museum the right facilities for the analysis of our results and their preparation for publication. Sixth, and perhaps above all, we must be able to publish the work we do promptly, both for the scholar and for the wider public.

Perhaps these six points are self-evident. Certainly, some of them can be seen in the Museum's record from the beginning. Today none of them can be ignored. The Museum's continued success as a great research institution in archaeology and anthropology will depend on how it reacts to these questions.

MARTIN BIDDLE