The Trace of a Child

When I was two years old, my father gently pressed my hand into cement to create a record of my childhood that I still have today. Later he told me that children grow up so quickly that he wanted a tangible reminder of those early years, when the world was still a great wonder to me. He had no idea that parents had been doing the same thing for millennia. One of the many fascinating objects pulled from storage for our new Middle East Galleries is the footprint of a baby from Nippur, seen in this issue on page 6. It was pressed into clay thousands of years ago. Often, we imagine the ancient world as very different from our own. But evidence like the footprint helps us understand how similar our thoughts and actions really are.

The Spring 2017 issue of Expedition includes four articles and several short pieces, all related to research supported by the Museum. “City of the Moon” outlines 2015 excavations at Ur in Mesopotamia; the Museum is participating in this new examination of domestic spaces at the fabled city. DNA analysis described in “Ancient Lineages” reveals the deep history of Svaneti in northwest Georgia. “Captain Cook’s Barkcloth Books” tells the story of unusual books that date back to the Polynesian journeys of Captain Cook. Our last article honors the memory of J. Alden Mason, a respected Americanist who worked at the Museum for almost 30 years, on the 50th anniversary of his death.

“Report from the Field” highlights a new project in Azerbaijan, and “In the Labs” describes a database of ancient plant remains developed by one of our CAAM instructors. We hope you enjoy the rest of our short features as well, including recent news on the Building Transformation underway at the Museum, “From the Archives” with archival photographs of exhibitions from the 20th century, and updates on new programs and upcoming events.