

EAIS Newsletter

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Egyptian Antiquities Information System

Issue 4

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The Egyptian Antiquities Information System (EAIS) is part of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) as an independent department and has the official SCA mandate to create a bilingual (Arabic and English) Geographical Information System (GIS) for ancient Egyptian, Islamic, and modern sites in Egypt. Jointly supported by the SCA and the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EAIS assists the SCA in mapping, documenting, and protecting archaeological sites. We invite you to read further to learn what we have accomplished and how mutual cooperation will help you to benefit from the system.

Ensuring Sustainability

The Supreme Council of Antiquities has recently offered nine new contracts to EAIS employees, bringing the total number SCA-contracted EAIS staff to nineteen full-time and twenty part-time employees. The first time SCA contracts have been awarded in this manner, this move is a

major step in ensuring the sustainability of the Egyptian Antiquities Information System.

At the same time, EAIS has contracted the services of organizational consultants to advise on issues of sustainability, management, and development. It is hoped that this advice will help

in creating a permanent SCA GIS department, as well as improve the quality of EAIS's work and of its relations with other organizations. EAIS will leverage this organizational strength to strengthen other institutions and departments.

Data Systems Improved and Redefined

The creation of the Islamic database and production of the ash-Sharqiyah cahier has spurred innovation across the system. EAIS is reexamining its database structure, making it more helpful to the spectrum of users who benefit from the system.

Those involved in the management of historical sites need more than lines on maps and legal decrees—although these elements are essential to site protection. Different groups have different needs, and EAIS is currently reassessing those needs and creating a system which will accommodate them all. Land use planners, such as those in the Ministry of Agriculture and the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP), need maps of site boundaries and their relationships to other

elements in the environment, such as agricultural and urban areas. Amlaak, the department of the SCA responsible for surveying and maintaining legal records on registered historical sites, needs accurate maps,

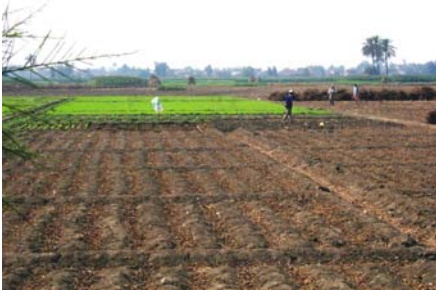


DESIGN OF THE DATABASE

archaeological descriptions of the site and other material justifying its protection. Members of the Taftish, charged with the regular monitoring of historical sites, need limited, general information about the twenty to thirty sites under their supervision. The SCA's Department of Foreign Missions needs an

accurate, up-to-date accounting of who is working where and what kind of work they are doing. Researchers need a range of information, from a site's historical background and archaeological content, to information on who has worked at particular sites in the past and the resources available for further research.

To meet these demands, EAIS's methods for describing and organizing site data are being redefined to provide more precision and flexibility into the future. Site attributes are now being associated in new and better ways, amplifying the power of the search engine to provide meaningful data. Information about sites in the system will be clearer, more uniform and more pertinent to our user's needs.



**AGRICULTURAL LAND
COVERING QANTIR**

**ASSESSING AND
ANALYZING THE
RISKS FACING
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SITES IS ONE OF
THE MOST
IMPORTANT
ASPECTS OF EAIS'S
MISSION.**

Risk Methodology Improving

Assessing and analyzing the risks facing archaeological sites is one of the most important aspects of EAIS's mission. Dr. Adbd al-Fattah al-Banna of the Faculty of Archaeology at Cairo University has partly helped to refine the approach, giving EAIS

better indication what causes specific risks and what their effects are. At the same time, complementary work has begun with John Dolson, an Exploration Advisor for British Petroleum, who is helping to create a system to accurately maps risks and

combinations of risks so that planners and decision-makers have the visual record they need to protect archaeological sites. The end result should be an integrated approach which takes account of threat nature, severity, and location.

Collaboration Continues

Collaboration with governmental institutions is an essential part of EAIS's work. Amlaak is giving EAIS the locations, or centers of gravity (CGs), of Pharaonic sites, starting with sites in the deserts and then extending to the whole of Egypt, including the Nile Valley and Delta. At the same time, the Taftish has continued to lend its time and expertise to site visits, most recently in Alexandria.

EAIS will also be the first to use new maps of Port Sa'id and al-Isma'iliyyah which have been developed by the government. Over the past several months, EAIS has also built stronger ties with GOPP and the Ministry of Agriculture. A protocol has recently been signed with the Geological Survey Authority, and collaboration is eagerly

anticipated by both sides. The Ministry of Education's Educational Buildings Authority has begun discussions with EAIS on how to protect the historic buildings under its care, many of which are remnants of Egypt's pre-revolutionary past. The Authority already has an excellent GIS, and EAIS looks forward to working with them to protect those pieces of Egypt legacy's of which they are stewards.

Dr. Per Storemyr has teamed once again with EAIS to save an ancient quarry. Widan al-Faras in the Fayyum is currently threatened from modern basalt quarrying around the site, putting what is according to Dr. Storemyr the most ancient paved road in the world at risk from bulldozers and other heavy equipment. EAIS

has provided both Storemyr's English-language report and an Arabic summary to Dr. Ibrahim El Nawawy (*see "The Year Ahead" below*) who has brought the matter to the governor of Fayyum.

EAIS is also grateful to the many archaeologists, who, working with the Department of Foreign Missions, have provided information. Their work is presently being stored in the system.

These many and varied collaborations underscore the multifaceted approach necessary for site protection. EAIS will continue to work with these diverse actors to ensure that those responsible for site protection have the best possible information made available to them.



QANTIR UNCOVERED

Software Upgrade

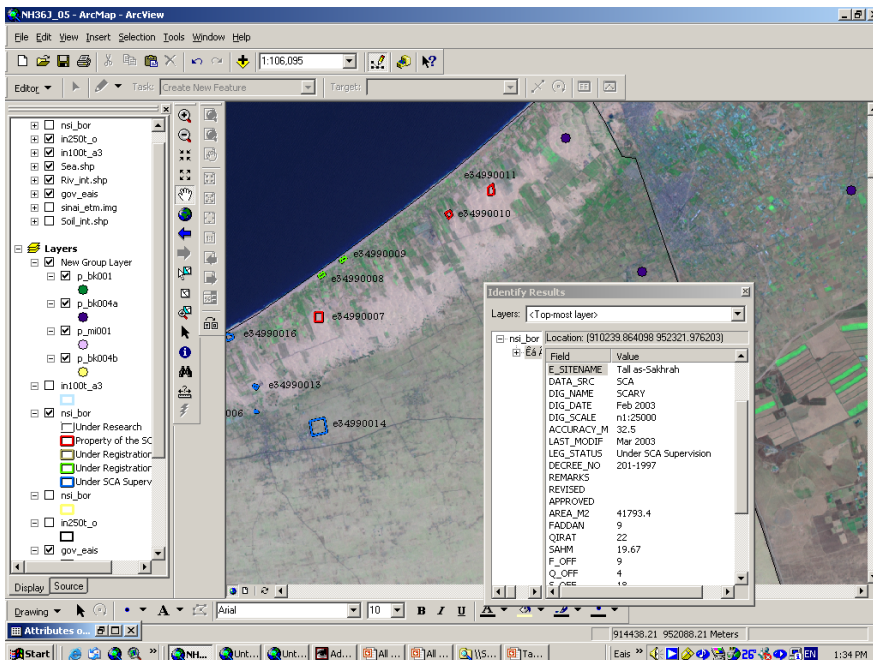
EAIS has recently upgraded its GIS software from ArcView 3.2a to ArcGIS 8.3. The new software will enable customized interfaces, more capabilities for digitizing, and improved accuracy. Not only will the upgrade help EAIS keep pace and

compatibility with new technologies, ArcGIS can almost be considered a new concept in GIS software: the mapping system will now have more capabilities for analysis, Arabic layouts are now possible, and images are now easier to handle than ever.

Database Graphical User Interfaces (GUI) will also be upgraded using Visual Basic. The exact version of Visual Basic is yet to be determined. EAIS is also using Office XP Developer Kit to make its databases stand-alone applications so that users will not need

Microsoft Access to view data.

Along with these upgrades, EAIS is working on building a stronger link between its mapping a tabular data systems, an effort which will make the system more powerful and more useful to our key stakeholders.



ARCGIS 8.3 [THE NEW SOFTWARE] WILL ENABLE CUSTOMIZED INTERFACES, MORE CAPABILITIES FOR DIGITIZING, AND IMPROVED ACCURACY

Events Held and Attended

EAIS recently held a roundtable meeting with the Taftish in Fayyum, fostering collaboration and gaining valuable insight on what they and all members of the Taftish would need from the system. EAIS plans to continue to hold roundtable discussions with Taftish as its work moves from governorate to governorate.

The Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) and EAIS

been exploring ways of working together, and at their October 2003 conference Team Leader Dr. Naguib Amin and National Project Director Ms. Azza Shwarby spoke on the compatibility of environmental conservation and historical site preservation.

Dr. Nagib and Ms. Azza also attended a Centre d'Études et de Documentation Économiques, Juridiques, et

Sociales (CEDEJ) conference on monuments in Alexandria and a GOPP conference on standard of living development in December. In early January, Ms. Azza participated in a lecture given by Minister of Communication and Information Ahmed Nazif to the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt on the recent improvements in Egyptian communication and information technology.



EAIS HELD A ROUNDTABLE MEETING WITH THE TAFTISH IN FAYYUM

Satellite Image and Map Resources Grow

EAIS has recently bought several new satellite images. These images cover the entire Fayyum and Sinai Peninsula, all of the governorates of Port Sa'id and al-Isma'iliyyah, ninety percent of Alexandria, parts of Beheria and Qafr al-Sheikh, almost all of Giza, a small part of Wadi Gedid, and half of Cairo. Now, EAIS has satellite coverage of ninety to ninety-five percent

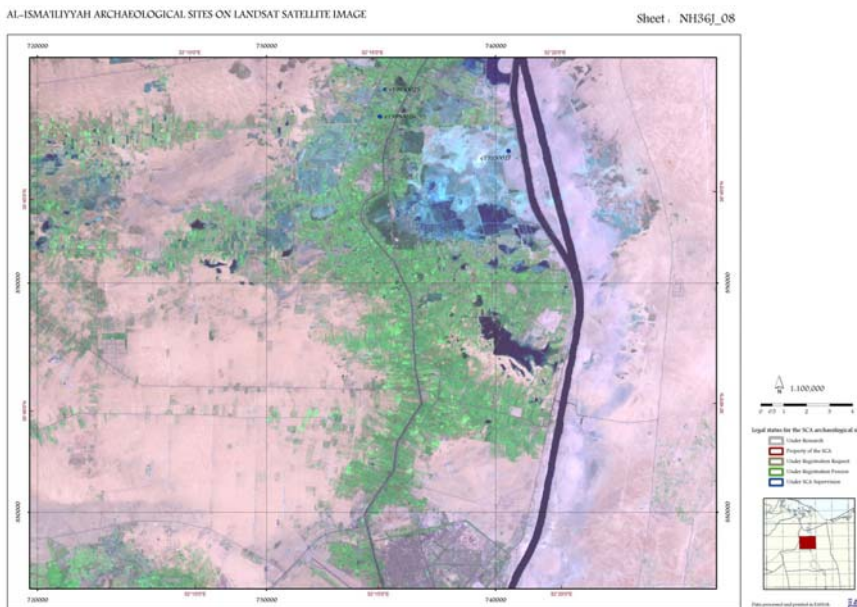
of the Delta and Greater Cairo. Seven bands of information are represented, and images can be viewed in panchromatic and monochromatic formats. EAIS plans to have full satellite coverage of Egypt from one year, probably either 2000 or 2001, in order to systematically keep track of changes in the urban and rural landscapes.

Updated 1:10,000 vector layers of the al-Salaam Canal have recently arrived in EAIS's offices. These maps include sites which will be published in forthcoming cahiers. EAIS has also obtained 1:250,000 maps of the entire country. These maps will help in determining the locations of sites found in Egypt's desert areas.

Egyptian Antiquities Information System

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EAIS's Geographical Information System is intended to be a valuable cultural protection resource for government decision-makers, archaeologists, and land use planners. The system, however, has a variety of capabilities and uses. If you or your organization are interested in collaborating on its expansion and improvement, please contact EAIS at eais@eais.org.eg or visit us on the Web at www.eais.org.eg.

AL-ISMA'ILIYAH ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ON LANDSAT SATELLITE IMAGE



The Year Ahead

For 2004, EAIS planning to complete its work on the governorates of al-Isma'iliyyah, Port Sa'id and North Sinai, and move forward with the production of their cahiers. A threat map of Luxor is planned to assess the risks facing one of the world's most well-known historic areas. Alexandria will continue to serve as a test of how the system handles Islamic data, and its Gumruk Quarter will continue to

be studied in order to improve the methods for registering historic buildings. Dr. Ibrahim Nawawy, SCA Museum Sector Consultant, will be carrying on the work of the late Mr. Metaw' Balboush, acting as an advisor and advocate for site protection. Among other things, Dr. Ibrahim will be paying particular attention to monitoring developments regarding threatened sites in Tushka and Nubia.

www.eais.org.eg

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