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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**JORDANIAN HERITAGE AUTHORITIES, THE GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE
AND WORLD MONUMENTS FUND LAUNCH MIDDLE EASTERN GEODATABASE
FOR ANTIQUITIES**



View within the ancient Roman city of Gerasa looking east toward the modern city of Jarash. Photographer: Samer Muscati

***Bilingual, Web-Based
Geographic Information Systems
Will Aid in Protecting and Managing
Important Archaeological Sites
in the Middle East***

JORDAN—Under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan, The Jordanian Department of Antiquities (DoA), the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) in Los Angeles, and World Monuments Fund (WMF) today are launching the Middle Eastern Geodatabase for Antiquities, Jordan—**MEGA-Jordan** or MEGA-J —an Arabic-English, web-based geographic information system (GIS) that aims to standardize and centralize information on archaeological sites throughout the country into a single system.

"The preservation of Jordan's archaeological heritage depends upon a comprehensive understanding of historic site locations, dimensions, and their key characteristics, but the boundaries of ancient cities and sites are increasingly at risk from a range of threats including tourism and urban encroachment," said Dr. Ziad Al-Sa'ad, Director General of the DoA. "The database will greatly facilitate the work of the DoA staff, Jordanian scholars and academic colleagues worldwide, and will play an important role in preserving Jordan's archaeological treasures."

MEGA-J will allow the DoA to assess the potential impact of projects such as construction of buildings, roadways, and pipelines on or near archaeological sites. This particular encroachment risk is especially relevant in Jordan today due to the recent influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees, regional investment in the country, and the resulting boom in development.

Importantly, MEGA-J will enable the DoA to coordinate heritage site data with other national authorities, such as ministries dealing with infrastructure development, agriculture, and tourism, as well as provincial and municipal governments, and better track World Heritage site requirements.

The newly live GIS, which has been in development for the past four years, now serves as the primary tool for the DoA in its ongoing work of inventorying, monitoring, and managing Jordan's vast number of cultural heritage sites. The system currently contains records of 10,750 sites and 45,000 site elements, which include the World Heritage Sites of Petra, Umm er-Rasas and Qasr Amra.

"The archaeological record found in Jordan is among the world's most important. The Getty Conservation Institute has been privileged to partner with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and World Monuments Fund on this important new heritage preservation tool," said Tim Whalen, Director of the Getty Conservation Institute.

Added Gaetano Palumbo, World Monuments Fund's representative for the Middle East, "World Monuments Fund is delighted to aid Jordan in protecting and managing their important archaeological heritage. Jordan has long been a leader in site documentation and MEGA represents the latest generation of technology for the heritage sector."

A new memorandum of understanding, signed today by the three partners, will include two years maintenance and support during the program implementation. The original development agreement was signed in 2007.

The DoA also plans to collaborate with the GCI and WMF to incorporate a heritage building component into the system in the future.

Jordan pioneered a database for the management of archaeological sites in the early 1990s, originally called JADIS. When that database needed to be replaced, the DoA turned to the GCI and WMF for the development of MEGA-J. Jordan has taken a pioneering role in implementing and fully integrating the use of MEGA-J into the DoA's daily activities, and in training colleagues from the region. The DoA is proud to welcome colleagues from regional departments of antiquities (Palestine, Syria, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Iraq), in the hope they will be the next countries to implement the MEGA system.

MEGA-J, now live at www.megajordan.org, uses open source software that is sustainable, economic to implement, avoids the need for specialized training to use, and requires no specialized staffing to maintain. The MEGA system was originally developed by the GCI and WMF in conjunction with Farallon Geographics. The GCI and WMF also are working with the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage to implement MEGA.

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The Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DoA) is the official institutional authority mandated by law to be responsible for the revealing , protection, conservation and presentation of antiquities. The DoA supervises the archaeological activities including research, survey, excavation and site management. conducted by various local, national and international institutions.

The Getty Conservation Institute works internationally to advance conservation practice in the visual arts—broadly interpreted to include objects, collections, architecture, and sites. The Institute serves the conservation community through scientific research, education and training, model field projects, and the dissemination of the results of both its own work and the work of others in the field. In all its endeavors, the GCI focuses on the creation and delivery of knowledge that will benefit the professional conservation community through scientific research, education and training, model field projects, and the dissemination of the results of both its own work and the work of others in the field. In all its endeavors, the GCI focuses on the creation and delivery of knowledge that will benefit the professionals and organizations responsible for the conservation of the world's cultural heritage. To learn more, visit www.getty.edu, or subscribe to the GCI's E-Bulletin by visiting www.getty.edu/subscribe/gci_bulletin/. Additional information is available at www.getty.edu.

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For over 40 years, working in more than 90 countries, our highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, we inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide. For more information, please visit www.wmf.org.

Farallon Geographics (www.fargeo.com), based in San Francisco, is a leader in the planning, implementation, and integration of GIS systems and software to support mission critical business functions. As systems integrators focused on geographical data, Farallon provides unique and unbiased strategic and technical implementation services for enterprise-scale GIS.