Digital Hammurabi
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ARTIFACTS

Digital Doppelgängers

Scholars mourned when archaeological artifacts in Iraq were looted or destroyed in the aftermath of the recent war. But in the future there may be a way to create a lasting record of irreplaceable artifacts. The Digital Hammurabi Project, begun at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, is working with companies like Arius3D in Toronto to develop high-resolution scanners that create detailed images such as this one of a seventh-century B.C. cuneiform tablet found in Mesopotamia. Some 300,000 tablets eventually could be scanned and their images made available through the Internet. Sitting at their own computers, researchers worldwide would be able to manipulate images, rotating the cyber tablets and zooming in to read minuscule writing. The scans could also be used to make full-size copies of the digitized artifacts. — Ann Perry