CHICAGO DEMOTIC DICTIONARY (CDD)

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with the assistance of Jonathan Winnerman, Ariel Singer, and Theresa Tiliakos

The Chicago Demotic Dictionary has continued to work towards its short-term goal of publishing updated PDFs on the Oriental Institute Publications website and a hard-copy version for libraries based on those PDFs. Conveniently, the current work is also necessary for the long-term goal of creating a web-based dictionary in database format. This current work consists of extracting and labeling the Demotic image files from the old Word documents, recovering corrupted image files from PDF copies, and converting the text files to Unicode fonts.

The Demotic image files need to be extracted from the old Word documents and labeled because the Publications Office will prepare the updated PDFs and hardcopy of the CDD using a program called InDesign, which uses linked rather than embedded images. Embedded images are unsuitable because in recent versions of Word they are compressed and lose sharpness. Linked images are not compressed, but the links require them to have unique names, so that the program can find them in the computer. We had originally estimated that there were about 40,000 images of scans and hard copies in the dictionary files, but we now know that there are probably "only" 38,000 images. Of these, over 31,000 have now been extracted and labeled. Almost 1,500 of these extracted images have been corrupted as a result of having been compressed, however, and it will be necessary to find uncorrupted copies in earlier versions of the files.

The text files also need to be converted to Unicode fonts. Tom Urban, the head of the Publications Office, is designing a Unicode font that will have all the letters and diacritics we need (plus Coptic, Greek, various Northwest Semitic languages, Akkadian in transliteration, even Egyptian hieroglyphs, and Meroitic) within the one font. He is intending to include everything that they ever use in the Publications Office so that they can always use the same font and can make the font available on the OI Website. Sandy Schloen and Miller Prosser of OCHRE Data Service are assisting with our conversion of the text files to Unicode fonts. We thank all of the above, as well as Knut Boehmer, the OI's fine IT guru, and Leslie Schramer, who resigned this year after many years working in the Publications Office with Tom Urban. We miss Leslie but know she is enjoying her time with her infant son.

Once all the images have been extracted and labeled and all the texts have been converted to Unicode fonts, hopefully by the coming fall, we will begin to transfer the texts to InDesign and to link the images to their appropriate places in the texts in the course of the coming year. These InDesign files will be used to make new PDFs to replace the (sometimes rather old) ones currently on the OI Publications website. They will also serve as the basis for the upcoming hard copy publications of the dictionary, aimed at universities, museums, and other institutions but available to individual purchasers as well. The same labeled image files and the Unicode text files will also eventually be uploaded to an online database to form a web-based version of the dictionary.

Our staff this year has consisted of Jan Johnson as Editor, Brian Muhs as Associate Editor, and Jonathan Winnerman and Ariel Singer as Student Stalwarts. In anticipation of both Jonathan's and Ariel's departure for Chicago House in Luxor next year, and Jonathan's anticipated completion of his dissertation next year as well, we hired a young student, Theresa Tiliakos, whom they are training in image preservation, etc. She just finished her MA in Egyptology from the University of Chicago and has been admitted into our PhD program to work on Women's Studies, mostly in the New Kingdom. We are glad to have her as part of the team. We hope to hire one or two more students in the coming fall, when Jonathan and Ariel head to Egypt and while we are making our push converting to InDesign.

Jan was invited to give a lecture in the training sessions for new OI Museum docents. She talked on writing (especially as it relates to the museum), and the CDD, trying to give both new docents and several returning docents who come to the training sessions an understanding not only of the importance of Demotic to our understanding of ancient Egypt, but to also convey the actual process we have followed as we used developing electronic technology to study and collect the data for the dictionary.

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