MIDDLE EGYPTIAN TEXT EDITIONS FOR ONLINE RESEARCH

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METEOR (Middle Egyptian Text Editions for Online Research) is the acronym given to the annotated Middle Egyptian readingbook project which is sponsored as part of a Mellon Foundation grant to a consortium of Universities for Less Commonly Taught Languages. The Readingbook Project aims to produce an annotated, interactive readingbook for students of classical Middle Egyptian. A selection of texts representing the many genres of preserved Middle Egyptian materials are being entered into the computer, together with grammatical and lexical analyses. Students will be able to select a text and work through the text, sentence by sentence, practicing reading the hieroglyphs and transliterating and translating the text. A click of a button will bring help with reading signs, understanding grammar, or finding vocabulary. Extensive graphics will illustrate Egypt, the areas where individual texts were discovered, items mentioned in the texts, and, to the extent possible, the actual individuals mentioned in the texts being read. The readingbook is intended to serve as a classroom aid, but it should also be possible for individuals to use it as a stand-alone teaching aid in learning, or reviewing, Middle Egyptian. It may eventually be published as a CD-ROM, but it is currently being delivered over the Internet using the World Wide Web.

For the last two years, students Harold Hays and Nghiem Thai, using transliterations, translations, and grammatical analysis provided by Jan Johnson, have worked closely with computer programmer Sandra Schloen as she developed an elegant interface for inputting data, including

hieroglyphs. Three texts, two short and one quite long, have now been completely entered. During this year, Schloen has begun work on the user interface, designing an extremely attractive and inviting opening screen where students can select the text with which they wish to work. The screens on which the students can practice or test their reading (transliteration and translation) of the Egyptian texts are very clear and easy to use, with extensive potential links to help in reading and understanding the ancient documents. Since most of the problems involved in data-entry have now been resolved, this summer (2001) sees a data-entry push; seven graduate students are entering transliterations, translations, and hieroglyphs for seven different texts (a narrative story, a didactic "instruction," hymns to the king, a formal royal stele recording a great Egyptian military victory, a legal transfer of property, a private stele, and private graffiti left in a stone quarry). In addition, we had a meeting with our University of Michigan collaborators Janet Richards and Terry Wilfong, who will begin data-entry on a set of private stele from the site of Abydos, where Richards has been excavating for several years. In addition, Michael Berger, a graduate student here in the Oriental Institute and the Manager of the Language Faculty Resource Center here on campus, has begun identifying appropriate graphics and other supplementary materials which will help put the individual texts into chronological, geographical, historical, and cultural contexts. John Sanders, a geographer who is Head of the Oriental Institute Computer Lab, will prepare a series of maps for inclusion in the site/program.

A preliminary demonstration of the readingbook, as a work in progress, was provided to the Visiting Committee of the Oriental Institute in May 2001. An outside review committee of established scholars of Middle Egyptian will meet in October 2001 to review the project and provide comments and suggestions. A further demonstration, again as a work in progress, will be given at the Open House sponsored by the Division of the Humanities at the end of October. It is hoped that classroom testing of the readingbook can begin during the 2001/02 academic year.