

THE DEMOTIC DICTIONARY PROJECT

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Work on the Demotic Dictionary proceeded smoothly this year with staff members Joe Manning and John Nolan checking content and format of dictionary entries and staff members Tom Dousa and Todd Hickey checking appendixes while I made final checks on dictionary entries and continued preparing “scans” of Demotic texts from which words are being cited in the dictionary. Richard Jasnow and Tina di Cerbo, staff members of the Oriental Institute’s Epigraphic Survey stationed in Luxor, Egypt, both worked with us for part of the summer checking content of entries. Richard worked for the Demotic Dictionary for several years while he was a student and we were delighted to have both of them join us. We now have three letters done (all

entries checked, all scans done and all facsimiles inserted) and four letters completely checked although the scans are only partially done and many facsimiles must yet be added. We are working on checking five letters as well as the appendices, including a "text information" list which gives date, provenience, and full publication history of every text cited in the dictionary.

I gave a report on the scope and status of the dictionary at the 20th International Congress of Papyrologists held in Copenhagen during the summer, thereby bringing the dictionary and its resources to the attention of a wide range of scholars working on Greek materials from Egypt contemporary with Demotic materials. Our inclusion of non-Egyptian derivations or correspondences for as many Demotic words as possible will enable scholars such as Greek papyrologists to make the widest use possible of the dictionary. Similarly, our inclusion of lists of titles, temples, etc. associated with particular deities and cities will enable people working on cultural studies to include Demotic material even if they read little or no Demotic themselves.

Demotic, or rather the new ways we have developed to study Demotic, will soon be affecting even more scholars with little direct connection with the language itself. This methodology, developed because of the importance of graphics in the study of Demotic, has been described in earlier *Annual Reports*. When the 4th International Congress of Demotists met in Chicago in 1990, I gave a demonstration of our use of the scanner for preparing, saving, and working with photographs on the computer. As a result, I was invited to talk at the papyrology meetings in Copenhagen in a session on "The Future of Papyrological Tools in the Era of Electronic Information." Papyrologists were among the first scholars in "humanistic" disciplines to harness the computer's potential. Almost twenty years ago, scholars began recording all Greek texts, both literary and documentary, in massive databases which are now available to classicists and papyrologists around the world. The time it takes to find a parallel or to find all known examples of a word or concept has been dramatically reduced. It is now much easier for scholars to move beyond the basics of preparing accurate primary editions, and synthetic studies combining sometimes massive amounts of material are appearing. What we were able to add is the graphic component.

I demonstrated how we scan and then work with our documents. I showed examples of enlarging a document right on the computer screen and of enhancing, on the screen, the contrast of a photograph or changing its brightness to make it possible to read badly preserved text. I also demonstrated how one can "put together" fragments which are now separate but which originally belonged to the same document. All of this can be done without ever touching the delicate originals—and it can be done for pieces

residing thousands of miles apart! I talked with numerous people, ranging from the heads of a team studying the carbonized papyri from Herculaneum to people responsible for cataloguing major papyrus collections, about the specific needs and problems of their projects. Several Greek papyrologists are now talking about the most efficient way to undertake scanning the vast collections of Greek texts. And we have begun to think about “publishing” the Demotic scans together with such Greek ones. As this happens, the artificial scholarly barrier between, for example, those studying Egypt in the Hellenistic and Roman periods using the Egyptian documentation and those using the Greek documentation will be broken and a broader yet more detailed picture of life in the ancient world will emerge.
