Meeting of the Scripts Institute

Minutes for

Friday, September 26, 2014

Attendants: Tom Palaima, Kevin Pluta, Joann Gulizio, Sara Kimball, John Heuhnergard, Sigrid Kjaer, Sarah Buchanan, JoAnn Hackett, Will Bibee, Cassandra Donnelly, Matt Milligan, Aren Wilson-Wright, Tiffany Montgomery

The meeting commenced at 4:00 pm.

Hackett began by asking why we think our LIFT grant proposal (which we applied for last academic year requesting RTI equipment) was turned down. Pluta replied that, though we did not receive much feedback about the grant application, he believes that the LIFT grant would have preferred more potential on our part for equipment sharing. Pluta also mentioned that we are now entering grant season again and he would like to reapply for this grant with this in mind. Hackett and Palaima agreed it was worth reapplying.

Pluta provided an overview of the goals of the Scripts Institute for the upcoming academic year (as outlined in the attached document). In particular, he suggested that the Institute provides an excellent opportunity in the future to examine undeciphered scripts, such as Linear A, as well as focus on broader research topics that are of mutual interest to Institute members. He suggested that this year we test the waters with a pilot program focusing on the theme of "Religion in Writing." This suggestion was accepted and it was agreed that the Scripts Institute would try to meet on a bi-monthly basis during the year.

Palaima proposed that these meetings would consist primarily of presentations of various works-in-progress by individual members of the Institute. Pluta expanded on this stating that the primary goals of the Institute was two-fold: (1) to encourage collaborative research among scholars in a variety of departments and fields; (2) to disseminate information about such research to the public at large in the form of blog-style summaries and/or abstracts demonstrating how such collaboration aided in their research. Online publications via the Scripts Institute may also be a possibility, though Pluta mentioned it could be problematic if there was a desire to publish one's research elsewhere. Heuhnergard suggested that both were certainly possible, especially if we publish our research in a blog-style format. Other possibilities for online publication could include abstracts or conference-style papers, which would allow the author to also publish their work in a more formal paper-based journal.

Kimball asked what is meant specifically by the theme "Religion in Writing." Pluta answered that this theme can be as broad as we like, so long as it concerned ways in which religion shows up in written sources.

At this point, we asked who would be interested in presenting their research in the upcoming meetings. Several proposals were made:

- Wilson-Wright volunteered to discuss a recent paper which he will present at the upcoming ASOR meeting on an early alphabetic script where he proposes a new reading for one of the gods.
- Hackett expressed interest in discussing an inscription from the mid-70s that mentions YAHWEH of a place and his consort. Something about Asherah meaning pole.
- Bibee has been working on a paper discussing the function of a vessels used in unguent boiling, noting similarities between *a-ke-a$_2$* attested in the Linear B tablets and the term *agannu* seen in Ugaritic texts. These vessels seemed to have some ritual use.
- Palaima would like to discuss his recent research on kingship, specifically the use of the terms for scepter and throne as a means of support.
- Gulizio is interested in presenting the Linear B evidence for male and female divinities whose names are linguistically derivative (e.g. *di-we/di-u-ja* and *po-se-da-o/po-si-da-e-ja*) and how this phenomenon relates to divinities in Near Eastern religions.

The possibility of bringing in visiting scholars for the year was also raised, but funding for this year may be an issue. Pluta mentioned that grant season is now underway, so if there were any specific requests for equipment or personnel, please let him know. Hackett mentioned the need for RTI equipment to scan inscriptions and Heuhnergard suggested requesting funding for more graduate assistants.

A request was made to spread the word about the upcoming meetings to other faculty and graduate students. Palaima suggested we include Paula Perlman of the Classics department who is incorporating RTI with her research on Cretan inscriptions. Pluta is trying to involve Jason Baldridge from Computer Languages, who would be particularly helpful when we are focusing on decipherment.

Buchanan briefed us on the work that she has been doing as an archivist in PASP. In particular, she is archiving the newly-acquired Brice material and is working with Montgomery on creating RTI scans of cuneiform tablets from the Classics department. It was recommended that we contact Jennifer Hecker, a digital librarian, who is also working with RTI. Montgomery asked to be included in this meeting.

Pluta updated us on the progress of the PASP website. The need to comply with ADA standards and to provide workable formats for both computers and smart phones has slowed the progress, but it should be up and running shortly. The goal of the website will be to bring together all of PASP's resources in a fully searchable format. He would like to create seamless transition, something about API and search engines, and will include scanned archival material, SMID online and eventually RTI scans of Linear B tablets. The latter will require Web GL for viewing large documents online without having to download extra programs.

Montgomery suggested we explore the possibility of creating apps for RTI viewing, which would be useful in archaeological fieldwork and could potentially earn money for the Institute.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm.

Minutes were taken by Joann Gulizio.