Association for Written Language and Literacy
Ассоциация письменного языка и письменности
Ενωση για τη γραπτη γλωσσα και τη βασικη εκπαιδευση
书面语言和识字协会
Association for Written Language and Literacy

AWLL Newsletter: Number 16: 15 January 2025

On distribution of the 16th AWLL newsletter [Terry Joyce (newsletter editor)]

Coming exactly 11 months after the last newsletter (a delay for which I am truly sorry), I sincerely hope that this 16th AWLL newsletter (NL16) marks the start of a bright year for AWLL in 2025. Very much in that spirit, I am delighted to announce that AWLL15 will convene at the Italian National Research Council (CNR), Institute for Computational Linguistics "Antonio Zampolli", Pisa, Italy over the three days of 29-31 October 2025. Hence, NL16's main news item is the first call for papers for AWLL15 (also available as a separate PDF). Other AWLL notifications include an update about AWLL's status and an announcement from David Mora-Marín and Lynne Cahill about the *Written Language & Literacy* special issue (2023; V26:1), with papers from AWLL13 '*On the systematic nature of writing systems*'.

NL16 also features a report from Philippa Steele about the WAVE (Writing As Visual Experience) conference, two *Introducing writing systems* sections—a summary piece from me and a continuation on Arabic from Elinor Saiegh-Haddad—plus a note about a grass style dictionary from Geoffrey Sampson under the *Thought-provoking quotations and observations* section. NL16 concludes with the regular *Miscellaneous matters* section, with details for some publications by AWLL community members. Any comments, ideas, or items for future newsletters are always most welcome; just email them to terry@tama.ac.jp.

Past newsletters are available at http://faculty-sgs.tama.ac.jp/terry/awll/newsletters.html

AWLL15's first call for papers [AWLL15 organizers]

Written words: From graphematic forms to meaning

15th International Workshop on Writing Systems and Literacy

29-31 October 2025

Italian National Research Council (CNR),

Institute for Computational Linguistics "Antonio Zampolli"

Pisa, Italy

First call for papers

Extending the Association of Written Language and Literacy's (AWLL) tradition of international conferences devoted to writing systems, AWLL15 will convene to facilitate researchers from various backgrounds in exploring their shared interests in written words; from their diverse graphematic forms to the different kinds of information evoked within the reciprocal processes of writing and reading. In that spirit, this call invites abstract submissions that address relevant research questions, including (but not limited to) the following:

- How do the different dimensions of graphematic complexity (i.e., Daniels & Share, 2018) play out across different writing systems?
- How do various linguistic factors (i.e., phonological and/or morphological awareness, discursive style) interact in producing and comprehending written words?
- How can cross-linguistic studies elucidate the distinction between the language-universal and language-specific properties of written words?
- What are the cognitive and neurological mechanisms that mediate the processing from graphematic words to meaning?
- What historical practices, sociolinguistic tensions and/or technological shifts influence the realization of contemporary texts?

The 3-day program will feature two keynote talks, a themed-symposium, a series of oral and poster sessions, AWLL's business meeting and conclude with a panel discussion.

Keynote speakers: To be announced

Local organizer: Vito Pirrelli (CNR Pisa, Italy)

Program committee: Terry Joyce (Tama University, Japan), Lynne Cahill (University of Sussex, UK), Dorit Ravid (University of Tel Aviv, Israel), Vito Pirrelli (CNR Pisa, Italy)

Important dates:

First call for papers: 15 January 2025
Second call for papers: 15 April 2025
Submission deadline: 01 June 2025
Notification of acceptance: 01 August 2025

Submission guidelines:

Applicants for both oral and poster presentations should submit **anonymized** abstracts of **no more than 300 words** (not including up to 3 references) and an indication of presentation preference as a Word file. Oral presentations will be for 30 minutes (inclusive of time for questions and discussion).

Point of contact: terry@tama.ac.jp
AWLL website: http://faculty.tama.ac.jp/joyce/awll/index.html

AWLL status update [AWLL board]

Since its very first conference back in 1997—convened by Anneke Neijt at the Max Planck Institute, Nijmegen, The Netherlands—AWLL has essentially existed as a *social network* of academics with shared interests in various aspects of writing systems and written language. However, as outlined in the business minutes of the AWLL14 Rome conference in November 2023 (link), as a necessary step towards holding a bank account, since 22nd March 2024, AWLL has been registered as a Community Interest Company (CIC) in England and Wales (company number 15584755).

Moreover, the AWLL board is continuing to work through the various procedures of applying to open an account with a UK-based bank. Updates on further developments will be shared as they emerge.

[CIC information: link]

AWLL13 special issue of Written Language & Literacy 26:1
[David Mora-Marín & Lynne Cahill]

Volume 26, Number 1, of *Written Language and Literacy*, which appeared in late 2023, constitutes a special issue titled '*On the systematic nature of writing systems*'. It contains a selection of papers presented at the Association for Written Language and Literacy's thirteenth meeting (AWLL13), held via Zoom on October 21–23, 2021, co-organized by Lynne Cahill, Terry Joyce, David Mora-Marín, and Dorit Ravid, and co-hosted by the Linguistics Department various other departments and centers at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. The meeting and the special issue addressed the relationship between linguistic units and graphematic representations, the factors—whether internal or external—that influence orthographic systemization, how orthographic and grammatical properties of different types of writing

systems interface with cognitive factors in the acquisition and historical development of writing systems, and whether digital technologies contribute to systematization or diversity, among others.

Mora-Marín, David & Cahill, Lynne. (2023). On the systematic nature of writing systems. *Written Language and Literacy*, 26(1), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.1075/wll.00070.mor

Osterkamp, Sven, & Schreiber, Gordian. (2023). A proposal for a formalized, expandable approach to the taxonomy of writing systems. *Written Language and Literacy*, 26(1), 5–29. https://doi.org/10.1075/wll.00071.ost

Iyengar, Arvind. (2023). More matters of typology: Alphasyllabaries, abugidas and related vowelled segmentaries. *Written Language and Literacy*, 26(1), 30–56. https://doi.org/10.1075/wll.00072.iye

Joyce, Terry, & Masuda, Hisashi. (2023). Chaos or system? Reassessing the unique case of the Japanese writing system. *Written Language and Literacy*, 26(1), 57–75. https://doi.org/10.1075/wll.00073.joy

Selvi, Eleonora. (2023). Koineization and the Pamphylian alphabet. Instability and compromise. *Written Language and Literacy*, 26(1), 76–95. https://doi.org/10.1075/wll.00074.sel

Senesi, Rosso Manuel. (2023). Latin <XS>: seeing double. *Written Language and Literacy*, 26(1), 96–130. https://doi.org/10.1075/wll.00075.sen

Cahill, Lynne. (2023). The standardisation of spelling in Middle English: the case of *said*. *Written Language and Literacy*, 26(1), 131–153. https://doi.org/10.1075/wll.00076.cah

Not included in the special issue, due to space constraints, was the meeting's keynote presentation by Peter T. Daniels, titled 'When is non-writing writing? or, when is writing non-writing?', which appeared in Volume 26, Number 2, of the same journal.

Conference report: WAVE (Writing As Visual Experience) [Philippa Steele]

WAVE (Writing As Visual Experience) took place at the Faculty of Classics in Cambridge (and online) on 19th-22nd September 2024 - the first conference organised by the VIEWS project (Visual Interactions in Early Writing Systems). It brought together a wide range of people working with visual aspects of writing; not only academics but also practitioners, such as calligraphers, artists and typographers. This outlook and an extremely enthusiastic response to the call for papers resulted in considerable diversity both in terms of places and periods covered and the perspectives on offer.

On the first evening, a special lecture by Tim Brookes set the explorative tone of the conference and introduced what was to become an important theme: embodied writing. Talking about what writing can mean to different people in different contexts, Tim explored many nebulous facets of what writing can be from practical and experiential points of view. The lecture was about writing as process and as a "cousin of dance".

The significance of privileging emic perspectives of writing was also at the forefront of the

conference. Focusing on the inclusion of human figures that, although usually dismissed as mere embellishment, can contribute to the meaning encoded in the khipu, Sabine Hyland emphasized the importance of fieldwork with communities that preserve knowledge of Andean khipus. Logan Simpson highlighted the significance of including visual cultural elements within many of the emergent writing systems developed for minority linguistic groups. Iris Auda's paper on Ditema tsa Dinoko (or IsiBheqe SoHlamvu) richly demonstrated this principle by underscoring the relationship between the cultural tradition of Litema in southern Africa and the effectiveness and adaptability of the featural syllabary established from it.

Three papers by VIEWS researchers on the ancient world grappled with the problem of being unable to access emic perspectives unless ancient people specifically referenced them. Philip Boyes problematised modern views of Phoenician "cursiveness" and reflected on the alphabet's possible coexistence with the Byblos syllabary. Jordan Miller tackled the Egyptian concept of the hieroglyph by considering the word *tjt*, as well as the potential for signs that look like bodies to act as bodies. Considering the audiences for Mesopotamian cuneiform inscriptions (could the gods read?), Colton Siegmund adopted a multimodal approach to the ways in which monumental inscriptions may have both interacted with their surroundings and been interacted with and viewed by human agents.

One way into understanding ancient writing is through the choices of individual writers. Angela McDonald surveyed the scribal choices made within one particular Egyptian medical papyrus, itself a copy and so mediated through multiple individuals, while Paola Corò and Massimo Maiocchi presented a number of Mesopotamian maps and the scribal strategies employed in laying out information. Nicla de Zorzi and Flaminia Pischedda demonstrated surprising similarities in ancient Mesopotamian and Chinese divination in the ways writers used logographic signs to both depict and translate the rituals. Sarah Finlayson examined writing direction in Bronze Age Aegean, contextualising writers' choices through both cognitive and physiological frameworks.

Other papers contributed by focusing on the interactions between writing systems, such as Cory Crawford's examination of Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions borrowing features from Anatolian hieroglyphs and Niv Allon's discussion of Egyptian hieroglyphs and hieratic in Amenhotep III's festival palace. Nadia Ben-Marzouk took us back to the genesis of some Mediterranean writing systems in the Middle Bronze Age and the sign shapes that appear to make up a sort of shared visual koine. Closer to the present day, Jie Wang looked at Chinese Arabic calligraphy following the 1978 cultural reforms in China, especially the choices made in periodicals to mediate religious and linguistic experiences.

The visual appearance of writing was important for all the papers, albeit in different ways. David Brezina presented his study of the shape elements in various writing systems and their fundamental visual properties in the mind of the writer. Emily Patterson shared a wealth of literary evidence from the Roman world regarding the visual perception of the written word; from observations about uses of colour to Ovid's flying little books and Optatian's poems with structured layout. Stefanie Weigele described the history of Kurrent writing and, as a calligrapher herself, noted how no two letters drawn by hand are ever identical, depending on the

pen itself but also time and posture.

Many papers challenged our preconceptions of what writing is.   Eva Miller took us to late 19th and early 20th America to see some of the heavily fictionalised views of how writing was created, which came to be so central to its notion of "civilisation".   Alice Mazzilli presented her theoretical concept of interowriting, reflecting on the emotional and contextual connectivity of writing and how it involves time, space, environment, rhythm and, of course, bodies.   Michael Macdonald illustrated the intriguing features of Ancient North Arabian inscriptions, whose authors lived a nomadic life and had very different writing needs from contemporary sedentary societies.   Nicholas Ganz took us on a tour of graffiti, or "unsolicited writings" as he called them, with insights into writers' motivations, from the thrill of rebellion to artistic accomplishment and personal recognition.

At the end we were grateful for and humbled by many comments from the audience about not only the multidisciplinarity of the conference but also its warm, inclusive and supportive atmosphere.   We hope to organise a second conference in the series soon - look out for the call for papers in 2025.

For information and videos of most talks; https://viewsproject.wordpress.com/writing-as-visual-experience/

Introducing writing systems: Japanese [14] [Terry Joyce]

This *Introducing writing systems* serialization on the Japanese writing system (JWS) started with the third AWLL newsletter, which was distributed on 25 September 2016.   Over the intervening 8-plus years, there have been 13 instalments in total, which together extend to about 9,300 words. In writing each instalment, Keisuke Honda and I have strived to make each sufficiently self-contained to be read alone as concise, introductory explanations of a specific aspect of the JWS, albeit with some instalments forming as mini-blocks on a broader theme.   However, reflecting the spaced nature of the series instalments, we also appreciate how it may, understandably, be difficult for some readers to discern the slowly emerging trajectory of the series when presented as separate pieces (even though all past instalments can be accessed and read together).   With that in mind, given that the series is now at a major transition point in terms of the topics covered, it seems appropriate to tender a few summary points from the expositions so far, as a bridge towards some of the topics to be taken up in future instalments.

At the very outset, the series acknowledged JWS's distinctive reputation among writing system scholars for being the most complex writing system in modern use (Honda, 2011; Joyce, 2013, 2016; Joyce & Masuda, 2023).   One aspect that is frequently singled out as a contributing factor is the fact that the JWS consists of multiple scripts that are employed together as complementary parts of a coherent system for graphematically representing the Japanese language.   Hence, all past instalments have essentially sought to adequately introduce the various component scripts according to their relative significance, as a prelude to delving more deeply into the various graphematic conventions that guide their complementary functions across the range of written mediums, from official documents, newspapers, the internet to posters and billboard signs, such

as these along a wall of Tsukuba train station, and yet also allow for considerable degrees of graphematic variation.

Accordingly, Instalments 1 to 8 focused on the main component of morphographic 漢字 /kanji/ (lit. *Chinese characters*). More specifically, Instalment 2 noted the numbers of kanji in contemporary use, which range between the 2010 revised official list of 常用漢字表 /JŌYŌKANJIHYŌ/ 'characters for general use', which specifies 2,136 kanji, and the 6,355 kanji of the Japanese Industrial Standard JIS X 0208 installed as standard on computers, mobile phones and smartphones. That instalment also preempted a mini-block on the internal structure of kanji, with some comments about stroke numbers and the three basic configurations that most kanji conform to. Instalments 3 to 5 continued to describe the internal structure of kanji by outlining the principles of kanji formation. After acknowledging a traditional classification and its limitations in Instalment 3, Instalment 4 illustrated the two simplex principles of 象形 /SHŌKEI/ 'pictogram' and 指事 /SHIJI/ 'ideogram' and sought to stress the problems that accompany loose interpretations of these technical terms. Concluding the mini-block on internal structure, Instalment 5 illustrated the two complex principles of 会意 /KAII/ 'semantic compound' and 形声 /KEISEI/ 'phonetic compound': the latter being the most common in accounting for 1,312 (61.42%) of the 2,136 jōyō kanji (Shirakawa 2012).

A second source of the JWS's complexity lies in the fact that most kanji are associated with two basic kinds of readings; namely, 音 /ON/ Sino-Japanese (SJ) and 訓 /KUN/ native-Japanese (NJ) readings, which generally correspond to specific morphemes of SJ and NJ origins, respectively. These phonological dimensions of kanji were described across a mini-series of Instalments 6 to 8. Instalment 6 outlined the historical background to the contemporary situation, while Instalment 7 sought to emphasize the importance of the immediate context for interpreting kanji usage; a point that was further underscored in Instalment 8, which sought to further illustrate the complex nature of the relationships between kanji and Japanese morphology and phonology.

Although kanji is the primary component script, the JWS also employs the two syllabographic 仮名 /KA-NA/ 'kana' scripts of 平仮名 /HIRA-GA-NA/ 'hiragana' [plain + kana], which are more cursive in appearance, and 片仮名 /KATA-KA-NA/ 'katakana' [part; side + kana], which is quite angular in form. After briefly describing the historical developments of the two kana sets in

Instalment 9, Instalment 10 presented a chart of the basic kana signs and outlined the principal strategies for extended signs. Concluding the mini-block on kana, Instalment 11 sought to exemplify the basic graphematic conventions that guide the uses of hiragana and katakana.   As the final component script of the JWS is the segmental Latin script, conventionally referred to as ローマ字 /rōmaji/ 'Roman letters', Instalment 12 acknowledged the primary use for transcription to graphematically represent the Japanese language, for example, when 日本語 /nihongo/ 'Japanese language' is transcribed as <nihongo>. Finally, Instalment 13 sought to illustrate the notion that many instances of rōmaji graphematic representations are arguably the primary representations, rather than the secondary glosses of kanji or kana representations, reflecting the extent to which rōmaji has become an indispensable element of the contemporary JWS.

Having covered the basic groundwork of describing the component scripts of the JWS, future instalments of this series will attempt to illustrate and elucidate the graphematic principles by which the component elements interact to visually represent the Japanese language in both conventional and creative ways.

Introducing writing systems: Arabic [2] [Elinor Saiegh-Haddad]

In the first instalment of this series of *Introducing writing systems* on the Arabic writing system, I sketched out a brief overview introduction to the structures of the Arabic language.   In this second instalment, I start to provide a fuller description of the graphematic aspects of the Arabic writing system, noting its historical origins and the diacritics that characterize the modern Arabic script.

Arabic is written from right to left in a cursive script.   All of the 28 letters of the alphabet represent consonants, apart from the letter ا aleph (alif), which, metaphorically, may act as a 'bearer'; كرسي *kursiyy* 'chair' of an additional sign.   This is the hamza, which represents the 28th consonant, a glottal stop (Holes 2004, p. 89).

The Arabic script is believed to have originated in the earlier Nabatean script (Bateson 2003, p. 54ff).   The Nabatean script, which itself descended from the Aramaic alphabet, was used first to write the Nabatean dialect of Aramaic, and subsequently for writing Arabic.   Because Arabic had more consonants than Aramaic, the script was modified to represent the extra Arabic consonants. Ligatures, which were adopted from the early Canaanite alphabets to form a cursive script, also resulted in the loss of some phonological distinctions.   Thus, some originally distinct Aramaic letters became indistinguishable in shape, such that in early writings, 15 distinct letter-shapes were employed in representing 28 sounds.   In order to disambiguate between pairs, and even triplets, of letters that were identical in basic shape but represented multiple sounds, e.g., modern ف - ق, ذ - د, ز - ر, غ - ع, and ب - ت - ث, a system of consonant pointing was developed, named اعجام *ʔiʕjaːm* 'foreignizing', which involved the use of distinguishing dots.   The ambiguous graphemes were differentiated according to their sounds by either one, two, or three dots, which are placed either above or below the letter to render them distinctive.   However, it was not until

the eighth century AD that the pointing system became standardized and stable as an inherent component of the Arabic alphabet, with the dot eventually being considered a part of a letter.

The adapted Nabatean alphabet did not represent vowels. The Arabic alphabet is thus considered to be a consonantal alphabet or an abjad (Daniels 1992). An abjad is a type of writing system where each symbol always (or usually always) stands for a consonant, leaving the reader to supply the appropriate vowels. This system was well suited to the Arabic root and its word pattern morphological structure (as outlined in the previous instalment), where the most basic semantic meaning is carried by the consonantal root and where vowel information may be recovered from the vocalic word pattern. Each of the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet (except aleph) represents a consonant. Three of the letters, ا و ي, are called حروف العلة *ħuruːf al-ʕilla* 'letters of defectiveness'. They serve as matres lectionis 'mothers of reading' and are used to represent the three Standard Arabic long vowels: high front /iː/, high back /uː/, and low /aː/, respectively. These three letters are also called حروف اللين والمد *ħuruːf al-liːn wal-madd* 'letters of softness and elongation' because, according to traditional views, they indicate the elongation of the preceding short vowel sound represented orthographically via a vowel mark (Versteegh 2007, p. 309).

The modern Arabic script is thus characterized by two sets of diacritics: the first set are letter-based graphological diacritics and consist of ʔiʕjaːm dots, which, as we saw above, are *compulsory* and are used for phonetic differentiation of letter consonants. The second set consists of diacritics that map sound-based phonological material. It does not include dots but rather, *optional* extra-linear taškiːl 'forming' marks that represent the short vowels of Arabic and other features of word articulation, including morpho-syntactic features. The fact that the Arabic writing system is corroborated by an optional system of diacritics that mark vocalizations results in two scripts: مشكول *maškuːl*, a vocalized (vowelized or voweled) and an unvocalized script. The majority of Arabic script is unvocalized. Indeed, taškiːl is commonly used only in religious texts, in children's literature, and sporadically in ordinary texts when an ambiguity of pronunciation might arise, because its main purpose is to function as a phonetic aid that indicates the correct pronunciation.

In the next installment, I will focus on the two sub-systems realized by the use of taškiːl (vowel and vocal marking); namely, the phonemic and morpho-syntactic.

References

Bateson, M. C. (2003). Arabic language handbook. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Daniels, P. T. (1992). The syllabic origin of writing and the segmental origin of the alphabet. In P. Downing, S. D. Lima, & M. Noonan (Eds.), The linguistics of literacy (pp. 83–110). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Versteegh, K. (2007). illa. In K. Versteegh (Ed.), The encyclopedia of Arabic language and linguistics (Vol. II, pp. 308–311). Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Thought-provoking quotations and observations [16]

A grass-style dictionary - shared by Geoffrey Sampson

One of the more unusual books on my shelves is a dictionary of *grass-style script*. Let me explain.

In East Asia, handwriting is a major art form, in a way that isn't so in the West. Western surveys of the arts would normally assign calligraphy at best a quite minor role relative to major visual arts such as painting or sculpture. In the East, handwriting is fully as aesthetically significant as painting, perhaps more so. The standard writing tool is not a stiff pen but a brush, the same tool as used for painting, and a painting is scarcely complete without an inscription, often quite lengthy. A room is as likely to be decorated with specimens of beautiful handwriting as with pictures. What's more, concepts of what makes script beautiful are sharply at odds. Western calligraphy tends to aspire to the regularity of print, and indeed 'fine printing' is itself a minor art form. In the East that would be a nonsensical idea. Beautiful handwriting is script that is alive, whereas print is dead. In his standard work *Chinese Calligraphy* (Methuen, 1938), Chiang Yee (perhaps better known under his pen name 'The Silent Traveller') wrote "The beauty of Chinese calligraphy is essentially the beauty of plastic movement, not of designed and motionless shape". Even a painted name on a shop fascia, say, which in Europe will be executed with as much neat regularity as the signpainter can achieve, will in China commonly be painted to resemble freehand script.

It follows that beautiful handwriting tends to be cursive, often very cursive. The Chinese classify writing styles into three grades of cursiveness. *Kai shu*, 'regular style', is not far from printed forms. *Kai shu* can have its own beauty, and some admired calligraphers use it, but most of the handwriting seen as models of what the art aspires to is in the more cursive styles: *xing shu* 'running style', or, more extreme, *cao shu* 'grass style'. In running style, separate strokes fuse together and the tiniest features within printed forms melt away, but the reader can still just about see the regular printed form 'beneath' the livelier shape on the page. (At least, the reader can do this provided he knows the conventions for building up a graph from strokes in a set order – a Westerner who doesn't know in which order to write the strokes might not be able to copy even a printed graph so that it is legible to a Chinese.) In grass style, on the other hand, the printed forms are reduced to the meagrest hints, producing an outline which dances on the paper but has only a remote relationship to the printed form which underlies it.

As examples, compare the printed forms of two graphs, *yi* 'thought' and *sui* 'follow', with the grass-style forms to their right:
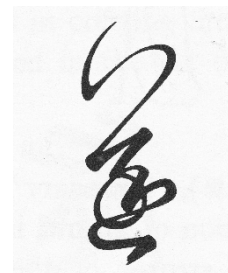
The grass-style *yi* was written by the famous 11th-century poet Su Dongpo (in the older romanization, Su Tung-p'o); and the grass-style *sui* by the greatest of all Chinese calligraphers, Wang Xizhi (Wang Hsi-chih, 4th century) – whom Chiang Yee describes as chiefly distinguished for his regular style, but great calligraphers did not always stick to one style.

The obvious problem with script as cursive as this, beautiful though it may be, is: how can anyone read it?   Grass-style writers did not supply 'translations' into regular style to help the reader.   And grass style is not confined to poetic inscriptions on landscape paintings, where the contents of the picture, and metre and rhyme, may give clues to decipherment.   My book *Writing Systems* (2nd edn Equinox, 2015) reproduces a page of grass-style script from a Japanese copybook of the 18th or early 19th century which was published as a model for official correspondence.   I can make out that the document reproduced is dated from the 20th of the 7th month, but after that I am totally lost.

This decipherment problem is what the book under discussion tries to help with.   Its title is 草書大字典, 'Great Grass-Style Dictionary', published by the 大倉書局 'Great Granary Bookshop' in Tokyo in the Japanese year Shōwa 10, which I believe corresponds to 1935.   Interestingly, the last page of my copy has a note in English: 'Reproduced by the Bureau of Engraving, Inc., Minneapolis, Minn'.   I bought the book when it was being thrown out by an American library in the 1960s; I suspect it was a reprint by the post-1945 American occupying forces, who I know were trying to get to grips with Japanese culture.

It is quite a big book, 992 pages.   It attempts to enable someone who can read Chinese script to look graphs up in two directions.   You can look up a graph by reference to its regular printed form, the same as using an ordinary Chinese dictionary (once you have learned how to do this, it is a straightforward process), and the book will show you how that graph has been written by various named grass-style calligraphers.   Or, a more heroic undertaking, you can look up a grass-style graph by reference to vague properties of its particular squiggles; if you manage to find it, the book will show you the printed form it has been used to stand for.   In sixty years of owning the book, I have occasionally used it the first way, but I have never yet been brave enough to try using it the second way.   The nearest I have ever come to that is guessing what graph a grass-style squiggle *might possibly* be intended to represent, and looking that graph up the first way to see if the squiggles offered seem anything like what I am looking at. Speed reading this is not!

Still, it is a delightful book to browse in. I am glad that, as a callow 21 year old, I had the sense to snap it up when I saw it going cheap.

Miscellaneous matters

Sundry information about related conferences, projects, etc.

19th International Conference on the Processing of East Asian Languages (ICPEAL)
South China Normal University, Guangzhou, China; 12-14 May 2025
https://icpeal2025.scnu.edu.cn/

Reading Visual Devices in Early Books
Turku, Finland; 22-24 May 2025
https://blogit.utu.fi/emodgral/events/

SSSR Thirty Second Annual Conference
Calgary, Canada; 16-19 July 2025
https://blogit.utu.fi/emodgral/events/

NSP-SCD: A corpus construction protocol for child directed print in understudied languages
This is an ongoing project that aims to support understudied languages (and their orthographies) with print corpus approaches.
The following link is to a blog entry that outlines the important project.
https://talktogetherproject.blogspot.com/2024/06/supporting-all-children-to-thrive.html
A fuller description is provided in Nag, John, and Agrawal (2024) in their BRM article (see below for citation details and DOI).

Sheffield Uni Needs East Asian Studies!
Campaign request to sign a petition to the Vice-Chancellor, The University of Sheffield
https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/sheffield-uni-needs-east-asian-studies?source=rawlink&utm_source=rawlink&share=e4570223-609d-48e6-b75d-182065ab3a66

Hieroglyphs: Studies in Ancient Hieroglyphic Writing
Peer-reviewed, open access e-journal about hieroglyphic writing systems launched Dec. 2023.
http://www.hieroglyphs-journal.org/

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Recent publications by AWLL core community members
As customary, the *Miscellaneous matters* section concludes with a list of recent publications (i.e., since the last newsletter) by AWLL community members, which is followed by 'mini-flyers' for 3 recent books.
[Editor note: Reflecting the longer interval since the last newsletter, naturally, the list is more extensive, but I fear it may fail to include all member publications of the period]

AWLL mailing list is open to anyone interested in receiving occasional information emails, but the core community is based primarily on participation at AWLL workshops. Participants at the three most recent workshops (AWLL11 in 2017, AWLL12 in 2019 and AWLL13 in 2021) are eligible to have a brief member profile at the community page of the AWLL website and to also have recent publications included under this section of future newsletters (for further information, go to http://faculty-sgs.tama.ac.jp/terry/awll/community.html).

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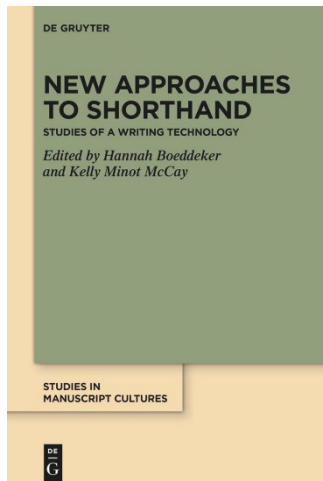
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Variously identified as an art, a technology, and a professional prerequisite, forms of shorthand have been in use from Antiquity to the modern day.   Far from a niche corner in manuscript studies, shorthand represents an almost global phenomenon that has touched upon many aspects of everyday life and of scholarship.   Due to its immediate illegibility, however, and the daunting task of decipherment, shorthand has long been neglected as a research object in its own right.   The immense quantity of extant and unread shorthand manuscripts has been downplayed, as has the technology's place in cultures of learning, religious devotion, court practice, parliamentary procedure, authorial composition, corporate life, public and private writing, and the academy.   As the first ever peer-reviewed volume on the subject, this book presents a much-needed introduction to shorthand, its history, and its disparate historiography, alongside eight contributions by shorthand specialists that showcase some of the many lines of inquiry that shorthand inspires across a range of disciplinary and methodological perspectives. For readers with a vested interest in shorthand, this volume provides a range of approaches to shorthand in the Latin West, from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, upon which to orient, substantiate, and inform their own work.   For general readers, this publication invites scholars to consider ways in which historically overlooked or underestimated forms of writing facilitated a variety of writing cultures in different contexts, periods, and languages.
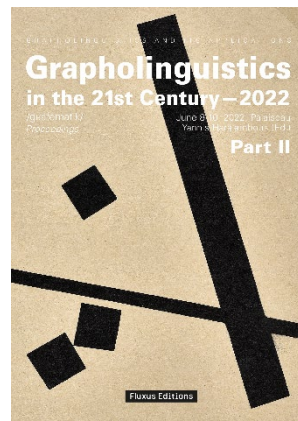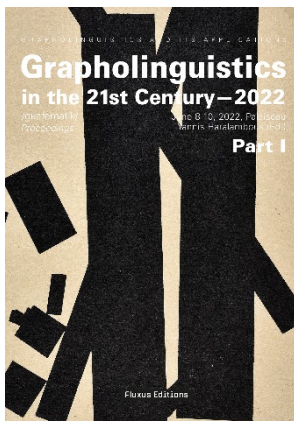
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[Editor note: In lieu of the normal practice of pasting in the publisher's book description (which is in German), Martin Neef has kindly provided an extended outline; one that aptly captures the dictionary's relevance for AWLL]

After 20 years in preparation, the terminology dictionary *Schriftlinguistik* 'grapholinguistics' was published in October 2024.   Edited by Martin Neef (TU Braunschweig, Germany) with Said Sahel and Rüdiger Weingarten (University of Bielefeld, Germany), this dictionary is part of de Gruyter's *Dictionaries of Linguistics and Communication Studies* series.   Each volume of the series, conceived and founded by Stefan Schierholz and Herbert Ernst Wiegandt, is an alphabetically-organized, bilingual technical dictionary and, thus, are categorized as reference dictionaries for academic study.   *Schriftlinguistik* has been compiled for students and teachers in the areas of philology and linguistics both within Germany and abroad, as well as for any researchers interested in grapholinguistics.   The dictionary articles aid the comprehension of scientific texts, provide specialist information and aid in translating technical terms and knowledge.

Schriftlinguistik consists of almost 1,000 pages with approximately 2,300 headword entries. Almost half of the entries on specific grapholinguistics terms are styled as 'individual articles', which range from quarter-page to full-page treatments.   In format, these articles consist of a definition, bibliographical references, and further explanations that appropriately illustrate a particular term, such as with examples, historical context, elucidating its specific relevance or through images.   While around 100 articles are 'short articles', without further explanations, in contrast, approximately 50 'synopsis articles' are considerably longer.   Those articles are more characteristics of handbook entries that contextualize sub-sections of the dictionary's subject matter. The longest synopsis article at six and a half pages in length is on SCHRIFTGESCHICHTE 'history of scripts'. The rest are 'reference articles', meaning cross-references to either synonymous terms (e.g. ABC 'Abc' refers to ALPHABET 'alphabet') or to the headword of multi-part terms (e.g. PRINZIP, MORPHOLOGISCHES 'principle, morphological' refers to MORPHOLOGISCHES PRINZIP 'morphological principle'), such that, for example, all 58 multi-parts terms ending in 'principle'

are listed together.

Although the dictionary articles are mostly written in German, certain entry elements are also provided in English, such that each term has at least one English equivalent and English translates are also given for German-language definitions.   This is intended to aid the comprehension of specialist texts written in English, but it can also facilitate comprehension in the opposite direction, dependent on a reader's English proficiency.   In principle, the dictionary's headwords reflect both German- and English-language terminology on the topic, but some terms were coined as translation equivalents in both directions.   The dictionary's articles have been written by about 90 experts on grapholinguistics, ranging from established scholars to a considerable number of young researchers.   Most of the authors work in Germany, Austria or Switzerland, but some work in the Netherlands, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, Hungary or Malta; five are AWLL core community members.

In addition to the main entries section, the dictionary features several indices and explanatory texts.   There is also a 'systematic introduction to grapholinguistics', spanning about 80 pages, which can be read as a stand-alone text.   It discusses the topic of grapholinguistics across 36 paragraphs that are organized under the following 6 chapters:

1. Basic concepts of written linguistics
2. Typology and history of writing systems
3. Units of written linguistics
4. Theories with a focus on sound-letter relationships
5. The orthography of German
6. Aspects of reading and writing

In this way, the dictionary aims to establish the field of grapholinguistics as one of the core sub-disciplines of linguistics in general.

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