

Expanding Digital Epigraphy: developing a digital collation process

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The exponential development of tablet technology in the past few years has resulted in a significant increase in the utility of these devices for digital epigraphy. At the Epigraphic Survey, we began integrating digital tools into our drawing and photographic methods over ten years ago, however only recently has it become possible to expand these into the actual collation process. In 2017-2018, the first complete digital case study was done for a drawing of a coronation scene of Amenhotep III from Luxor Temple. This included a digital photograph (extracted as an orthomosaic image from a 3D model), a drawing that was penciled and inked digitally, and two epigraphic checks and a director's check fully done on an iPad. Since then, the Epigraphic Survey has continued to streamline our collation process while enhancing our levels of accuracy and consistency. This paper will review how we converted our analog collation (using blueprinting paper, a glue-stick, and pencils) into a digital process, and the lessons learned along the way. It will also cover the details our revised system, some of the issues that we have come across, and the variety of tools that we have tried so far. Finally there will be a short discussion of our future plans for the use of digital collation and our hopes for potential advancements in the technology.

Ariel is a PhD candidate at the University of Chicago, currently working on her dissertation, which is an examination of human anatomical terminology in ancient Egyptian texts. She is also an epigrapher at the Epigraphic Survey (aka Chicago House), based in Luxor, where she works primarily at Medinet Habu Temple, Luxor Temple, and the tomb of Nefersekeru. She has been focused in the past few years on developing the digital collation part of the digital epigraphy process, and helping to implement a digital workflow. Ariel has worked for the Demotic Dictionary for many years, the Greco-Egyptian Magical Formularies project, and the Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae online dictionary project; in the past she has also worked in the field at Edfu and the Anubis Catacombs in Saqqara.