

Classical Philology Goes Digital. Working on Textual Phenomena of Ancient Texts  
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## Inscriptions of Israel/Palestine

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The Inscriptions of Israel/Palestine project seeks to collect and make accessible over the web inscriptions from Israel/Palestine that date roughly from the Persian period through the Islamic conquest. There are about 10,000 relevant texts, written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin, by Jews, Christians, Greeks, and Romans. Their number and variety provide us with a fascinating window into the ancient world. **[SLIDE 2]**

Despite their importance for historical and linguistic investigation, these inscriptions have been published for the most part individually or in small *corpora*: our project aims to provide an accessible tool for searching and analyzing them **[SLIDE 3]**. Both the time span covered by this material and its variety raise various challenges. **[SLIDE 4]**.

As part of their addition to the database, the texts are extensively marked-up using the Epidoc schema. The metadata, specified with great detail to allow for database-like searching, is found in the Header. Individual sections present the diplomatic and edited transcription of the texts, followed by an English translation. Each inscription is entered as a separate XML file using standard XML editing software. The bibliographic references currently reside in a separate database in Zotero: each has its own unique ID, referenced by the inscription file. Inscriptions may be accessed via an API. An inscription from Beth Shean is presented here as example. **[SLIDE 5]**

The work with linked data that has been carried out so far involved mainly textual derived information, and specifically geographical names and controlled vocabularies. **[SLIDE 6]**

Working with Pleiades was mutually beneficial: we linked our material to the Gazetteer, but also contributed a fair amount of new places to it. We haven't used external authority files for place names because they are not a closed list. While we might consider creating a better way to reconcile names now that we have a larger corpus, we would likely integrate Pleiades as our authority list and continue to contribute new locations as we encounter them. **[SLIDE 7]**

The metadata vocabularies for inscriptions are not yet standardized: we have been looking into lists developed by EAGLE and the Getty Museum as ways of moving toward standardization. External authority files are used for object types, genres and materials. This makes encoding much easier and less prone to error, as it provides encoders with values to choose from. The closed list of values also lends itself better to faceted searching and makes adding a new value a more considered decision. **[SLIDE 8]**

This conference accelerated the move to a second phase, in which we began thinking more closely about the inscriptions' content and about a more extensive linking that involves also their lexical component, using in particular NLP and topic modelling. In this respect, several issues are magnified by the very nature of the corpus we are dealing with. **[SLIDES 9-10]**