

The evolution of writing systems: Empirical and cross-linguistic approach

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Workshop description

Recent years have seen an increased interest in the investigation of graphemic systems both from a linguistic point of view and in a decidedly interdisciplinary perspective. In particular, various projects have set out to investigate how graphic codes emerge, how they change over time, and to what degree the diachronic development of writing systems can give clues to the cognitive principles underlying language. This workshop aims at bringing together researchers who investigate the emergence and diachronic change of graphemic systems using corpus-based and/or experimental approaches. Apart from empirical studies investigating the writing system of one specific language, we particularly welcome contributions taking a cross-linguistic perspective by comparing the dynamics of spelling principles and the evolution of graphemic codes in different languages and/or across different scripts. Questions to be discussed include – but are not limited to – the following:

- (How) does the emergence and/or standardization of written language influence the development of natural language?
- Can we detect cross-linguistically widespread principles of graphemic change?
- How do different (partly conflicting) spelling principles interact in writing systems, and how does the division of labor between these principles change over time?
- Which factors (e.g. grammatical, cultural, socio-pragmatic) influence the development of writing systems?