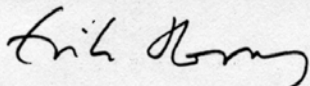Deborah Anderson, Ph.D.
UC Berkeley

Unicode

Dear Dr. Anderson,

Thank you for your e-mail which has reached me via the Seminar.
Encoding Egyptian into Unicode would need much preliminary
work since we still have no real sign list (I am working on
one since many years). Since Gardiner is a set for typography,
he often gives the same sign with different numbers (formal
variants), and he is mainly concerned with the 18th dynasty.
But of course the Gardiner List is still much used and would
be a first preliminary step to enclude Egyptian.

With all best wishes,

Erik Hornung

Lisa Moore
Chair, Unicode Technical Committee
The Unicode Consortium
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Dear Ms. Moore,

   I am writing in response to the recent reports in the Ancient Near East Discussion Group concerning Egyptian hieroglyphs and Unicode.

   I am an Egyptologist who works both with art and with texts. In either case, it is important that the actual hieroglyphs be faithfully represented to convey the nuances inherent in such a writing system. The final glyphs of most words are ideographic or pictorgraphic signs known as determinatives. Since these can often be a fairly faithful representation of a specific object or deity, pharaonic hieroglyphic writing is an almost infinitely flexible system. In the 1920s glyph fonts were created with about 700 characters, sufficient for teaching most students the language but not for publication of the many idiosyncratic inscriptions from provincial centres. In the 1990s, different systems were created such as Inscribe and WinGlyph, but all were flawed. Matters are further confused by the great number of countries in which Egyptology is studied: these include China, Japan, Argentina, Uruguay, South Africa, Australia and virtually every European and North American country, as well as Egypt itself. I believe that putting Egyptian hieroglyphs in Unicode would be a great service to the large international and multilingual community of scholars that comprises Egyptology, and to the related disciplines, such as Biblical Literature and ancient Near Eastern history.

     Thank you for your attention,
      Dr. Lyn Green