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EGYPTOLOGY MEETS DIGITAL HUMANITIES: THE BOOK OF THE DEAD (PATRICK SAHLE AND ULRIKE HENNY)

The Egyptian “Book of the Dead” has been the object of study in a long term research project of the North Rhine-Westfalian Academy of Science and the Arts, operated at the University of Bonn (early 1990s - 2012). The “Book” is a corpus of c. 200 spells in the form of texts and/or illustrations (vignettes) and witnessed in varying order and completeness by c. 3000 objects. Within the digitization efforts of the academy, in 2011, the Cologne Center for eHumanities (CCeH) was commissioned to transform the internal research database and the image archive into a digital research platform. It is built on a project specific data model for object descriptions and a contextual knowledge base. Regarding data standards and techniques, the digital environment resides completely in the X-world: underlying XML data, an eXist database as backbone and XQuery, XSLT and XForms as processing methods to create the user interface. The archive provides several browse & search facilities allowing to explore the textual and visual witnesses. New information can be added by input interfaces, and various indices and visualizations have been prepared to support scholars in finding answers to their research questions. In addition to a general overview on the project and its achievements, three particular issues will be addressed: practical and theoretical implications of data visualization, the integration of the archive into the research community by technical interfaces, and the question of a sustainable information resource beyond the funding period.
