The Reference Desk: Cataloging and Subject Indexing

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Challenges for foundational work

Access
- What is out there?
- “Chart the coastline”

Content
- What does it say?
- “Plumb the depths”
Create two aids for foundational work

1. Facilitating access: catalog the accessible sources
   - Exhaustive list of what we presently have access to
   - Both original texts and translations
   - Include all three Central Figures

2. Exploring content: thematic reconstructions
   - Multiple approaches possible
August 2019 Wilmette Institute Webinar: The Writings of the Báb
  ▶ http://wilmetteinstitute.org/overview-of-the-writings-of-the-bab/

February 2020 Wilmette Institute Webinar: The Writings of Bahá’u’lláh (and Abdu’-Bahá)
  ▶ https://wilmetteinstitute.org/overview-of-the-writings-of-bahaullah/
Challenges on the path of approach: The Writings of Bahá’u’lláh

- Access
  - Both original texts and translations are scattered, uncoordinated (beyond the BWC)
  - Majority of texts (>90%) are untranslated
  - For those wanting an exhaustive and systematic study: where do they begin and where do they end? And where can I find them?

- Content
  - Size: ~5 + 6 + 6 million words
    ~2,000 + 20,000 + 30,000 surviving works
  - Uncharted vastness discourages the approach
A “coordinate system” for the Bahá’í Writings

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<th>Longest</th>
<th>Shortest</th>
<th>Later additions</th>
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<td><strong>Utterances</strong></td>
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Results of the inventory

- Availability:
  - The Báb: ~25-30% in public domain in original languages
  - Bahá'u'lláh: ~75%
  - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: ~40%

- Reported utterances
  - A few thousand more (mostly ‘Abdu’l-Bahá)
Accessing the inventory (~50MB pdf)

- http://blog.loomofreality.org/
Parsing catalog entries

- Catalog ID
- Title
- Word Count
- Language
- First line (Ara/Per)
- Manuscripts (Ara/Per)
- Publications (Ara/Per)
- Translations (Eng only)
- First line in translation
- Musical interpretations
- Notes
- [Hyperlinks]

http://blog.loomofreality.org/
Some use cases

- Lookup from source reference (e.g., “GWB#050”)
  - Refer to bibliography for source code abbreviations
- Lookup from words/phrases in first line
- Systematic readthrough
  - Longest-to-shortest, shortest-to-longest
- Browse titles (from index)
- Browse questions (from index)
- Collation of original text from multiple manuscripts
  - May be useful when authorized text at Bahá’í Reference Library does not exist

http://blog.loomofreality.org/
Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason

- What can we know?
- What should we do?
- What may we hope?
Previous systems?
Adler’s “Syntopicon”
A classification scheme

What can we know?
- What are the ultimate things to know about?
- How do we know them? How does language function as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge?

What should we do?
- As individuals, in relation to ourselves, others, the Truth?
- As groups of individuals that need to both cooperate and compete?

What shall we hope?
- Where did we come from, and what kind of a world are we creating?
Classification: sub-categories

- Links to thematic compilations of extracts
- Shoghi Effendi, Universal House of Justice heavily referenced here