

1. In a nutshell, what are the rationales or aims for the proposed Global Education & Research Technology section at the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)?

This section aims to promote better understanding of new and potential technological advances in biblical studies, to facilitate inter-disciplinary critical research and respectful dialogue, and to further global access and dissemination of biblical scholarship for various research and educational purposes.

2. What areas do you think members of the B-Greek forum would be particularly interested in relation to the sessions and papers the Global Education & Research Technology (GERT) section expects to put together at future SBL Annual Meetings?

Two major areas that GERT expects to cover are the use of technology in the research of biblical Greek and biblical Hebrew. Some aspects we expect B-Greek forum members would be particularly interested in include innovative machine-assisted corpus linguistics analyses of the texts and/or language of biblical Greek, critical evaluation of both open-source and commercial digital tools and resources developed for the study or teaching of Greek, evaluation and fostering of initiatives that bring together scholarly tools, databases, networked writing, and peer-to-peer commentary to develop new Greek resources, and e-publishing of biblical Greek resources. We encourage B-Greek members to participate in our sessions and to submit their best paper proposals on the use of cutting-edge technology in the study/teaching/learning of biblical Greek in our planned future sessions at the SBL Annual Meetings.

3. For the uninitiated, what kind of organization is the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) and what is its mission?

As stated on the Society of Biblical Literature website (<http://www.sbl-site.org/aboutus.aspx>), the mission of SBL is to foster biblical scholarship:

As an international organization, the Society offers its members opportunities for mutual support, intellectual growth, and professional development through the following:

- Advancing academic study of biblical texts and their contexts as well as of the traditions and contexts of biblical interpretation
- Collaborating with educational institutions and other appropriate organizations to support biblical scholarship and teaching
- Developing resources for diverse audiences, including students, religious communities, and the general public
- Facilitating broad and open discussion from a variety of critical perspectives
- Organizing congresses for scholarly exchange
- Publishing biblical scholarship
- Promoting cooperation across global boundaries

#### 4. Why form the Global Education & Research Technology section at SBL?

On the one hand, many felt a void in the program at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting when the long-standing Computer-Assisted Research Group (CARG) was not renewed. To provide some background, CARG used to provide computer support to members of SBL in its early days. More importantly, it played a vital role in evaluating the relevance of cutting-edge information technology for various disciplines in biblical studies, particularly in terms of pedagogy and research. On the other hand, many felt the need to seek a new, expanded vision as well as a new mandate. Along with the expanding field of digital humanities in general, the use of technology in biblical studies, which we may summarize using the term “digital biblical studies,” has likewise evolved and diversified beyond easy tracking. This proposed new section aims to collaborate more actively and frequently with existing sections at SBL to explore the multi-faceted developments and potential contributions of cutting-edge information technology to disparate disciplines in biblical studies. In addition, this section aims to support the growing movement towards globalization and sustainability by encouraging exploration into how to expand access to affordable, quality biblical scholarship for various education and research purposes in the Majority World. Our intention is to organize and facilitate people of very different perspectives and expertise in various areas of digital biblical studies getting together to better learn where each other is coming from and what each other is doing, to dialogue, to evaluate and to help improve each other's work through feedback, and to potentially collaborate in common areas of interest.

#### 5. Who are the intended participants or target audience for this proposed Global Education and Research Technology section?

Given the interdisciplinary nature of using information technology in biblical studies, our intended participants and target audience is diverse. One general core group would be biblical scholars who innovate or use cutting-edge information technology in their various research and educational endeavors. Another general core group would be technology specialists interested in biblical studies who are innovating and building solutions that would interest and potentially help biblical scholars in various fields of endeavor. In addition, scholars, students, and the general public around the world who are looking for better technological solutions to help solve current issues or limitations they face in their disparate endeavors in biblical studies would find the work of this section useful and informative.

#### 6. Overall, what do you hope to achieve at SBL sessions organized by the Global Education and Research Technology section?

We believe that organizing sessions under the auspices of the Global Education and Research Technology section at SBL will help foster requisite research and dialogue to enable the development of more innovative frameworks, improved interaction designs, and more reliable

assessment methodologies that will allow us to create better technologies and to critically discuss and evaluate the different kinds of tools have been and will be developed. It will also provide a vital forum to facilitate the furthering of global access and dissemination of quality biblical scholarship for various research and educational purposes through critically evaluating, fostering, and supporting such well-designed technological tools and resources for biblical studies. At the same time, the section may foster more frequent and fruitful collaboration on a global scale by facilitating better understanding of the emerging landscape of digital biblical studies, respective epistemic traditions, and collaborative possibilities through critical research and respectful dialogue about visions, agendas, competencies, and research interests.

7. Given this emphasis on fostering collaboration, are there existing program units at SBL with whom this proposed Global Education and Research Technology section intends to collaborate?

Two existing SBL sections that cover a portion of the digital biblical studies landscape are the Blogger & Online Publication section (which supports publication on biblical studies online using blogs, social media sites, online journals, and other web-related vehicles) and the Bible in Ancient & Modern Media section (which includes experience of the Bible in electronic media as one of its three foci of interests). This proposed Global Education & Research Technology section aims to cover important aspects of digital biblical studies not usually encompassed by these two existing sections, most specifically ongoing technological work on the building of tools, infrastructure, standards, and collections, new initiatives that bring together scholarly tools, databases, networked writing, and peer-to-peer commentary outside the blogging community, as well as critical exploration of the dynamics of teaching and the unique opportunities and challenges of teaching biblical studies using digital or online technology. However, one area of mutual interest for the Blogger & Online Publication section and the Global Education & Research Technology section may be in initiatives that bring together scholarly tools, databases, networked writing, and peer-to-peer commentary that currently lie outside of the biblical studies blogging community. With the Bible in Ancient & Modern Media section, our respective interests may intersect in the use of technology and experience of the Bible in electronic media.

In the area of education and pedagogy, this proposed new section would share some areas of common interest with the Teaching Biblical Studies in an Undergraduate Liberal Arts Context section and the Academic Teaching & Biblical Studies section. While we would have a unique focus on teaching using digital or online technology specifically, as well as emphasis on global sustainability, it will be desirable to collaborate with these two sections to foster careful design and reflective analysis of digital or online tools for teaching biblical studies. Such cooperative dialogue would foster critical research into the dynamics of teaching within the context of pedagogical concerns, institutional goals and cultures, and specific digital/online classroom communities.

In terms of tools, infrastructure, standards, and collections constantly being developed, interdisciplinary collaboration and joint sponsorship of focused-theme sessions may be possible with

a wide-range of existing SBL sections. For example, with the Applied Linguistics for Biblical Languages, the Biblical Lexicography, the Bible Translation, and the Cognitive Linguistics sections, technological advances that bolster oral-aural learning, new tools that aid in the practical tasks of dictionary making, new resources that promote and support the work of Bible Translation, and technology-enhanced applications of cognitive linguistic analysis respectively may be of joint interest. The Biblical Greek Language & Linguistics and the Linguistics & Biblical Hebrew sections may find areas of mutual concern with this proposed new section in various forms of machine-assisted corpus linguistic analysis of biblical Greek and biblical Hebrew respectively.

The current landscape is multifaceted and the need for interdisciplinary critical research and collaborative dialogue is paramount. We look forward to possible collaboration with many, if not all, of the above groups in areas of mutual interest at future SBL Annual Meetings.

8. What is the current status of this proposed Global Education & Research Technology section?

We are in the process of finalizing a strong, diverse 6-member global steering committee, building a growing advisory board with diverse expertise and backgrounds, contacting related program units at SBL about possible collaboration, organizing our planned inaugural sessions for the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, Nov 23-26, 2013, and completing all the details of our official new program unit proposal documentation. The due date of completion of all these processes is February 1, 2013. We are then scheduled to have our application considered by the SBL program unit committee in early February. If our application meets with approval, we will be an official SBL section by early March 2013.

9. If one wishes to attend and participate, what are the dates and venues for upcoming Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) Annual Meetings?

The information provided at <http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/AnnualMeeting.aspx> is as follows:

Baltimore, MD November 23-26, 2013  
San Diego, CA November 22-25, 2014  
Atlanta, GA November 21-24, 2015  
San Antonio, TX November 19-22, 2016  
Boston, MA November 18-21, 2017  
Denver, CO November 17-20, 2018  
San Diego, CA November 23-26, 2019  
Boston, MA November 21-24, 2020  
San Antonio, TX November 20-23, 2021

Specific information on registering for each upcoming Annual Meeting typically appears at the above site at least nine months prior.

10. What are some specific aspects of the impact of technology on biblical studies that the Global Education & Research Technology section aims to highlight at the outset?

The focus of this proposed new section is not only on the development and use of tools, simulations, and social media for global research and education in the wide-ranging disciplines in the field of biblical studies, but also the design frameworks, the development, the deployment, the assessment, and the dissemination of innovative technology for wider user groups in academia, society, and religious communities. We seek to explore how such tools may extend existing scholarship into digital domains or may introduce new methodologies, novel research questions, and new areas of inquiry. For example, we are interested not only in how to develop databases, but also about how to apply databases in such a way that it helps to stimulate methodological debate on biblical interpretation and potentially open up new or alternative avenues of research. In addition, we are interested in stimulating thinking about how theories of learning (Hebrew and Greek Language, OT and NT Literature) can be influenced and improved by technology.

11. Can you identify some examples of how technology is or could be impacting biblical interpretation or pedagogy in biblical studies?

In terms of grammatical and lexicographical research, the increasing availability of richly annotated corpuses of both the Greek New Testament and Hebrew Old Testament allows for more efficient gathering and evaluation of grammatical patterns and collocation information in a comprehensive and systematic manner. There is an unprecedented opportunity to build new comprehensive grammars and lexicons of biblical Greek and biblical Hebrew with the help of these machine-readable annotated corpuses. With the movement towards building databases and tools that increasingly allow for meaning-based searches, biblical interpretation of even specific passages could be enriched and enhanced more and more by developing technology. We need to foster more research and dialogue to enable the development of more innovative frameworks, improved interaction designs, and more reliable assessment methodologies that will allow us to create better technologies and to critically discuss and evaluate how to apply the different kinds of tools that have been and will be developed to varied practical tasks in diverse disciplines in biblical studies.

In terms of the teaching of biblical Hebrew and Greek, the introduction of technology has often been associated with a tools approach, which has fundamentally different assumptions and expectations about student learning than an approach that emphasizes fluency in reading or ability to decipher and translate the Hebrew and Greek with little or no aids. Technology can indeed be a powerful tool that advances a tools-approach agenda to equip a greater number of students in less time with better tools than previously available. However, critical evaluation and constructive dialogue about the benefits and limitations of both technological tools and a tools-based agenda are necessary. Moreover, when used discerningly, technology can also be a powerful ally in approaches that aim for fluency in reading or ability to decipher and translate the Hebrew and Greek with little or no aids. More critical research into and dialogue about the dynamics of teaching within the

context of pedagogical concerns, institutional goals and cultures, and specific digital or online classroom communities are needed.

12. Will the Global Education and Research Technology section have an official call for papers for the 2013 and 2014 SBL Annual Meetings?

SBL's Call for Papers <http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/AnnualMeeting.aspx> opens on 12/15/2012 and closes on 3/1/2013. Because the Global Education and Research Technology section is a proposed new section that still needs to be approved by the SBL Annual Meeting Program Committee, we will not participate in the call for papers from 12/15/2012-3/1/2013. As part of our official new program unit application documentation, we are asked to provide projected topics for the first two years, including the names and preliminary paper topics of any invited participants. We are in the process of organizing these sessions by private invitation and expect to complete the process by early January. However, we would be very happy to consider worthy paper proposals for either 2013 or 2014 (though mainly for 2014) in any area of educational or research technology, if they are submitted to us by January 6, 2013. So, please contact us at [GERTSBL@gmail.com](mailto:GERTSBL@gmail.com) with your best paper proposal for consideration for either our 2013 or 2014 sessions. (Proposals submitted for 2013 may be offered acceptance for 2014 if they are considered worthy, but do not fit into the limited slots remaining for 2013. If we receive an abundance of worthy proposals, we may consider sponsoring an additional session.)

13. What the requirements for making a paper proposal?

Besides the projected title of your paper and your personal contact information, proposals must include an abstract of between 200-300 words. If your paper proposal is accepted, expect to be allotted 20-25 minutes to present at the session, with 5-10 minutes for discussion of your paper. You need to be/become an SBL member and register for the Annual Meeting at which you will be presenting.

14. When will one know if an accepted paper proposal or invitation to present at the Global Education and Research Technology section for the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Baltimore, MD Nov 23-26, 2013 is confirmed?

If you submit a paper proposal to [GERTSBL@gmail.com](mailto:GERTSBL@gmail.com), preliminary acceptance/rejection confirmation will be given by mid-January 2013 as we finalize the papers we include in our official new program unit application documentation. Confirmation both that the section is approved and that any accepted or invited paper is going to be on SBL's official program will come in early March 2013 when the SBL Annual Meeting Program Committee has completed its review of our application. We fully expect approval. However, we call on any and all who are interested in the use of technology in biblical studies to help make our inaugural launch a smashing success by attending and participating in our sessions in Baltimore, MD, Nov 23-26, 2013.