**Very good**

**Kalvesmaki:**

**Developing a Protocol for the Study of Ancient Translations**

The proposal is for funding for a two-day workshop that will bring together scholars from a range of disciplines to discuss the linguistic and technological challenges of creating a resource of aligned ancient texts/translations in two languages (in the initial venture, Greek and Syriac). The major issues to be addressed will be the protocols for mark-up and the technical requirements of the databases and user interface. The project will standardize protocols for comparative study not only of Greek and Syriac but for other similar ancient materials. It begins this effort on the right foot by bringing together experts in these ancient languages, computational linguists and experts in creating resources in the digital humanities. The initial effort will be limited to four Greek texts and their Syriac translations.

I do not have the expertise to judge whether the alignment programs mentioned in the proposal are adequate when translations have been made that do not allow for the matching, for example, of one unit of contiguous words in the source with a similar set of contiguous words in the target. In these cases it is not a question of complex versus simple morphology or alignment of LTR with RTL texts. Rather, it is a question of the relative "tightness" of the translation and the possibility of selecting contiguous units of textual material in the source and target files that are semantically congruous. Of course questions such as these are ones that can best be resolved through multidisciplinary face-to-face discussions such as those which will result if this project is funded.

Although I am not familiar with the status of work being done on Greek and Syriac texts; I am poorly acquainted with the Perseus Digital Library, which does have online parsing functionality and dictionary look-up for Greek. The PI mentions support from the Perseus Project and Syriaca.org and the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts for Syriac. Unfortunately only only a "representative letter from Syriaca.org" is included so the extent of the Perseus collaboration is not clear.

In one sense, given that this proposal is to bring together researchers to resolve issues in creating an online resource of aligned ancient texts/translations in Greek and Syriac it would be unfair to expect solutions to be presented at this preliminary stage. However, it would have been edifying to see a bit more discussion of the problems that might emerge and possible solutions, issues that will be addressed in the workshop. Also, a clearer example of what the project hopes to produce would have been helpful. Thus the diagram (bottom of first page of narrative) of pairs of text-translations could have presented actual data as an example. The statement that "someone starting with the morphological data of one text could study patterns in the morphological data of the other" leaves certain questions unanswered: (1) with the user then be able to search through the corpus for identical morphemes in other contexts and generate a list (with metadata of source, author, etc.) that will show variation in the relation between source and target language data? (2) will the user be able to shift into a context (KWIC) view and compare contexts for each selected morpheme (including roots)?; (3) are the existing tools for parsing Greek (and Syriac) adequate for the task at hand or will it be necessary to develop software for this purpose?

I think that the project could be improved by greater attention to some preliminary issues/problems that have been encountered as well as their possible solutions (even if just to say that new software must be developed). Likewise, such a proposal could more clearly mention the viability of using tools (such as a Greek parser) that already exist.

Overview

Intellectual significance: The PI makes a strong case of the importance of developing a digital library of Greek/Syriac or Syriac texts, particularly given that some original texts in Greek have been lost and have survived only in their Syriac translations.

Impact on research and technology: The project fills in a gap in the existing online material of ancient texts and proposes a project that will collaborate with those projects already underway.

Innovation: Greater attention could have been paid to the potential problems of alignment of parallel texts in which the freeness of the translation might make alignment at a clause/sentence level problematic.

Proposal development: The proposal is well presented and argued. Some additional specifics might have been beneficial.

Feasibility: The greatest concern is of alignment; probably this can be resolved but greater attention to detail in this regard would have been helpful. Also, perhaps given the facility of internet conferencing more preliminary work to set up an agenda prior to meeting would have been desirable.

Qualifications: As the invitees are not listed it is hard to evaluate the qualifications of potential workshop attendees. But by targeting experts in various disciplines (ancient texts [Greek and Syriac], computational linguistics, digital humanities) the proposal should be able to cover the development of the desired protocols.