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### **Letter of Support for the NFDI-Initiative Text+; Language- and text-based Research Data Infrastructure**

Epigraphical texts have a most prominent place among the sources of our knowledge of the ancient world. Inscriptions are written on different supports of a large variety of material, such as stone, wood, clay, etc. As concerns contents, it seems as if anything imaginable could be and was inscribed – from monumental honorary inscriptions, official documents, religious dedications, curses, funerary inscriptions to graffiti. Inscriptions are a treasure of resources not only for the science of Antiquity (ancient history, classical philology and archaeology), and the historical sciences, but also for linguistics, religious studies, and many other disciplines. The yearly increase in the number of new documents is bigger than that of any other category of written historical sources of the ancient world.

Already in the early 19th cent. (1815) the Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften had planned to collect and publish first the Greek and then the Latin inscriptions, and to complete these geographically or systematically organized collections with commentaries, indexes and concordances. To this day these are the tasks of the two projects in the **Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities**: the „*Inscriptiones Graecae*“ (IG) and the „*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*“ (CIL). Their editions are world-renowned, first-class reference works, which represent an indispensable repository of ancient sources.

A long time ago, these two epigraphical international projects have begun to complement the printed versions of the Corpus-volumes with open-access-available data bases of texts and images. The aim is to make digitally available not only the commented edited inscriptions, but also the related archive-material (cards, paper-squeezes, photographs, etc.). Going back to the early 19th century, these archives provide not only more than 100.000 (IG) and 15.000 (CIL) paper squeezes of inscriptions which often do not longer exist or are badly damaged, but also numerous photographs (partly glass plates), travel diaries, letters and manuscripts.

In a conference (Sept. 2.-4. 2019) the epigraphy-projects of the Berlin Academy together with other German and Austrian Academies have discussed the foundations of a possible common digital strategy. The aim is to develop a framework which may play a central role in the digital epigraphy of the future on an international level. This framework should bring about a rendering of the book-format into a digital data model, and should allow to incorporate not only the necessary Metadata and the

texts of the inscriptions, but also the remaining (very extensive and highly structured) scientific data – descriptive and commented texts in the inscriptions-catalogue of the corpora, as well as the related introductions, appendixes and indexes. In the digital context it will be also possible to overcome the previous limitation of the printed corpora arranged according to subjects, regions and periods, and to create a repository unconstrained by thematic, geographical or chronological limits. This will facilitate the access to inscriptions across times, language and spatial limits.

For the **two epigraphical projects of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (CIL und IG)** a close collaboration with the planned NFDI consortium Text+ is an unique opportunity to implement fully and effectively the digitalisation strategy outlined in the previous section, and in this way to contribute to a standardisation in the field of epigraphy that extends beyond national borders. For all this, we expressly welcome the initiative Text+ and declare very emphatically our willingness to take part in this consortium.

Looking forward to a successful cooperation and with best regards



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