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Bible Software

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Bible Software

Bible software has come of age. The superior search capabilities, extensive databases, and helpful interfaces we have come to expect in computer applications of all kinds are also available in Bible software.

Many kinds of Bible software are available. Bible reference works often have electronic versions enabling nearly instantaneous searching. What would have taken many minutes of cross referencing indices across printed volumes can now be done with a carefully crafted search in a comfortable interface with printed results. Examples: Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology.

Studies in archaeology benefit particularly from the integration of text and images. Both more popular and more scholarly resources are available. Examples: Ilumina, Perseus, and publications of archaeological societies.

Dozens of versions of scripture are available in electronic form in English and other languages. Numerous versions with attendant search capabilities are regular fare in commercial, shareware, and free computer programs for Bible study. Computer programs provide for searching with complexities not easily replicated in print resources, if at all. One feature of the venerated print concordances which has been carefully preserved and utilized in computer products is the numbering sequence which Strong applied to the Hebrew and Greek vocabulary of the original text. Access to Strong's numbers provides a connection to the exact words of the original texts even for those without proficiency in the Biblical languages. Examples: QuickVerse, PC study Bible.

What of the texts of scripture in the original languages and alphabets? The review literature allows for the possibility that the best program for Bible language studies is Accordance, a Macintosh® program by the Gramcord Institute. The extensive difference in the operating systems of Macintosh® and Windows® plus the fervent provincialism of the adherents to either the Macintosh® or Windows® operating systems makes comparison difficult. This author has access only to Windows® products, so the remainder of this article will be limited to three Windows® based programs available for sale on cdrom or dvd, specifically Gramcord, Logos, and Bibleworks.

Since this article deals with the capabilities of Bible software to handle the original texts in their original languages, a word about Biblical languages resources. A seminary professor affirmed the importance of twelve books in the form of three groups of four: a text, a lexicon, a grammar, and a concordance for the Hebrew Scriptures, for the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament), and for the Greek New Testament. All of those without his remarkable prowess with the languages would quickly add various English translations to the list of essentials, but initial work with the Biblical languages, before expanding into Bible reference works, would center on these twelve resources.

Original language texts are represented in Gramcord, Logos Original Languages library, and BibleWorks with standard works. Each provides no less than *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Rahlf's, and Nestle-Aland 27th edition as the current texts for Hebrew Old Testament, Septuagint, and Greek New Testament. Each provides a dozen or more English versions. BibleWorks provides sixty-nine versions of scripture in twenty-three languages other than English.

None of the three programs provides the text of a concordance but each provides extensive search capabilities. All provide Strong's numbers in one or more texts.

All provide lexicons at least minimally adequate for work in the Hebrew Old Testament, the Greek New Testament, and the Septuagint: Brown Driver Briggs for Hebrew, USB Greek English Lexicon and Louw-Nida *Greek New Testament lexicon based on semantic domains* for the Greek New Testament, and usually one of the abridged forms of Liddell and Scott for

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ABSTRACT:

This article is a statement of unbridled praise for the present state of software available for Bible studies, particularly in the use of the Biblical text in its original languages and alphabets. After giving examples of various products related to Bible study, the article turns to descriptions and comparisons of three programs, Gramcord, Logos, and BibleWorks.

What would have taken many minutes of cross referencing indices across printed volumes can now be done with a carefully crafted search in a comfortable interface with printed results.

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Septuagint studies. Additional lexical tools are available for purchase, such as Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament.*

The weakest representation of the twelve language tools among all these products is grammars. Gramcord offers minimal grammars for Hebrew and Greek New Testament but nothing for the Septuagint. BibleWorks includes *Basic Hebrew for Bible study*, and Conybeare and Stock for Septuagint, but *Greek Grammar beyond the basics* by Daniel Wallace is an additional purchase. Logos has helpful titles for Hebrew and Greek New Testament, but nothing for Septuagint. Each makes additional language reference titles available for purchase.

Now some notes about individual products. One strength of Gramcord, relative to Logos and BibleWorks, is price. Gramcord is a `dot org' not a `dot com' and that is reflected in the price. The price for Gramcord Bonus Bundle is $225 on sale for $195. This product includes their palm/pocket pc version. (Retrieved June 8, 2006, from www.gramcord.org.)

Another strength of Gramcord is its chart for setting up a search. The search chart allows for amazing intricacy and precision with relative ease. Part of speech, specific word, proximity, specific form of word such as gender number case for nouns, all in any combination can be specified, or not, in this search screen. One could produce a list of verbs used with the Greek pronoun meaning `these,' the appearances of

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the Greek word meaning `one another,' or the scripture references wherein Abraham was called Abram before God changed his name. This chart for setting up a search has an easy learning curve and the potential for great strength, flexibility, and variety of searches.

Logos Original Languages Library is $415.95. (Retrieved from www.logos.com June 8, 2006.) The clear advantage of Logos is the number of resources accompanying the software. The Original Languages package from Logos/Libronix Digital Library has the texts and Biblical languages resources for the original languages. Numerous other resources come as a part of the package; not all of them are language tools but include general Bible reference works such as dictionaries and commentaries as well as study guides. Logos has many more references than either Gramcord or BibleWorks, but not more of the current editions of Biblical language tools. Each of the three has sufficient Biblical language tools to do serious research.

The strengths of BibleWorks include the total number of versions of the scriptures provided in the package: scores of versions in dozens of languages. The Graphical Search Engine, called the Advanced Search Engine in version 6, is challenging to learn but incredibly powerful. The report generator can produce a list of all the Greek words which appear in a particular book of the Bible or a statistical analysis of the appearances of a word across scripture and many other functions. BibleWorks 7 is $349 (Retrieved June 8, 2006, from www.bibleworks.com.)

The review literature on these products is unabashedly positive. It is hard to find a critical comment. Reviews take the form of description of capabilities followed by unbridled praise and appreciation for the product. These products are not perfect, but they all do what they claim to do, namely, provide the student and scholar of the scriptures with powerful and versatile tools for study and research.

Parunak (p. 495) is right when he says "there is no bad choice." Bible software has come of age. Any of these packages will serve student and scholar in the study of the scriptures in the Biblical languages. ✝