The evolution of writing systems: Empirical and cross-linguistic approaches
Theme session at the 42nd annual conference of the German Linguistics Society (DGfS)

Organizers: Jessica Nowak, University of Mainz
Lisa Dücker, University of Bamberg
Stefan Hartmann, University of Bamberg
Renata Szczepaniak, University of Bamberg

Recent years have seen an increased interest in the investigation of graphemic systems both from a linguistic point of view and in a decidedly interdisciplinary perspective (e.g. Morin et al. 2018, Condorelli & Rutkowska in prep.). In particular, various projects have set out to investigate how graphic codes emerge, how they change over time, and to what degree the development of writing systems can give clues to the cognitive principles underlying language. This workshop aims at bringing together researchers who investigate the emergence and change of graphemic systems – including ongoing changes – using corpus-based and/or experimental approaches. Apart from empirical studies investigating the writing system of one specific language or variety, we particularly welcome contributions taking a cross-linguistic perspective by comparing the dynamics of spelling principles and the evolution of graphemic codes in different languages and/or across different scripts. Questions to be discussed include – but are not limited to – the following:

- (How) can we detect cross-linguistically widespread principles of graphemic change? – For instance, the diachronic development of sentence-internal capitalization seems to follow similar patterns across different languages (Nowak forthc.).
- Do the same or similar principles influence graphemic change in contemporary informal writing in computer-mediated communication? And how do contextual factors (e.g. public vs. private communication) influence graphemic variability?
- How do different (partly conflicting) spelling principles interact in writing systems, and how does the division of labor between these principles change over time?
- Which factors (e.g. medium, mediality; graphical, grammatical, textual, socio-pragmatic, cultural factors) influence the development of writing systems and how do they interact?

We invite abstracts for 30-minute oral presentations (~20 minutes presentation time + discussion) relevant to the theme session. Abstracts should clearly state the research question(s), the methodological approach, and the (expected) results, and they should not be much longer than 500 words. Please send your abstracts to **stefan1.hartmann[at]uni-bamberg.de** and **nowakj[at]uni-mainz.de** by **August 15, 2019**. Notifications of acceptance/rejection can be expected in early September.

References

Condorelli, Marco & Hanna Rutkowska. in prep. *Handbook of Historical Orthography.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Morin, Olivier, Piers Kelly & James Winters. 2018. Writing, Graphic Codes, and Asynchronous Communication. *Topics in Cognitive Science.* doi:10.1111/tops.12386.

Nowak, Jessica. forthc. Zur satzinternen Großschreibung im Kontrast: Deutsch – Englisch – Niederländisch. Erscheint in: Lisa Dücker, Stefan Hartmann & Renata Szczepaniak (eds.), *Historische Korpuslinguistik.* (Jahrbuch für Germanistische Sprachgeschichte 10.) Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.