

Web Review

by Suzanne M. Estelle-Holmer

ETANA: Electronic Tools and Ancient Near Eastern Archives

<http://www.ETANA.org/>

ETANA, hosted by Vanderbilt University with grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Science Foundation, is composed of several cooperative projects supported by the American Oriental Society, the American Schools of Oriental Research, Case Western Reserve University, the Cobb Institute of Archaeology at Mississippi State University, the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University, the International Association for Assyriology, the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, the Society of Biblical Literature, the Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Vanderbilt University, and Virginia Polytechnic and State University. The site offers access to an expanding set of electronic resources for the study of the ancient Near East (ANE), including a collection of digitized books and reports, primary sources in English translation, and a collection of links to open access web resources. There is also a repository and archive for archaeological data that is under development.

ETANA currently is composed of five sections built upon the rich portal *ABZU*, launched in 1994 and originally hosted by the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. Since then *ABZU* has been edited by Charles E. Jones, now Head Librarian at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University. The site migrated to *ETANA* in 2001 and there are plans “to extract all the content from these Web pages to populate a database of resources relevant to the field of ANE.” It is difficult to ascertain how much progress has been made in this direction, as many dead links still remain. The site nevertheless serves as a central point of access for a diverse universe of specialized information—evocative of the *ABZU*, the watery subterranean abode of Ea, the Babylonian god of wisdom.

The outstanding feature of *ETANA* is the collection of digital “core texts” published before 1925, which are now freely available online for the purpose of teaching and research. These include excavation reports, autograph copies of cuneiform tablets and hieroglyphic inscriptions, translations, and monographs. These texts are fundamental to the study of Egyptology, Assyriology, and Hittitology and continue to “have significant value for scholarly research.” Only a few libraries own all the print volumes, and they often are in fragile condition, due to acidic paper and handling by successive generations of students and scholars. The digitized books now available on *ETANA* in (Adobe) PDF format are easy to download. Although full text keyword searching is not available across all the documents, some texts may be individually searchable within the PDF format.

All the textual components of *ETANA* can be retrieved from the *ABZU* search interface. The layout is simple and intuitive. It is possible to browse all resources by author and to browse the *ETANA* core texts by title, as well as to carry out keyword, subject, title, and author searches.

This site is highly recommended because ongoing editing, maintenance, and development ensure that all entries are reliable and high quality. *ETANA* is most likely to be used by students and researchers in the specialized disciplines it serves. However, to the extent that the study of the ANE and the ancient Mediterranean world are an essential component of Biblical Studies, the site will also be useful to graduate students and researchers in theological and seminary libraries.



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