

## Written language: a research guide

LIS 407

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### *About this guide*

This guide lists printed and online resources on the history of writing and on the alphabets, syllabaries, and other writing systems (referred to generically as ‘scripts’) that are (or were) used in the world’s languages. Resources that are particularly comprehensive or noteworthy are marked with a star (★).

### *A note on call numbers and subject headings*

For those who prefer to browse by call number on the shelf or in the library catalog, most of the categories below are followed by a range of classification codes in curly braces.

Searching by subject in the library catalog is generally a good way to obtain a narrowly focused list of books, so subject headings are provided (in square brackets [like this]) for most of the categories. There isn’t room to list every subject heading related to written language, but if you’re looking for information on a particular script, the heading you need to use probably follows one of the following patterns:

X language – Alphabet (X = the name of a language)

X language – Writing

X languages – Writing (X = the name of a family of languages)

X alphabet

X script

X writing (X = a kind of writing, e.g., Cuneiform)

Writing, X

***General works on writing*** {P 211–P 213}, {Z 40–Z 104.5} [Writing]

★ *The World’s Writing Systems* • **Ref.** P 211 .W714 1996

★ *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems* • **Ref.** Z 40 .C67 1996

★ *The Alphabet: a Key to the History of Mankind* • P 211 .D53 1968b

★ *Omniglot: a Guide to Written Language* • <http://www.omniglot.com/>

*The Story of Writing* • P 211 .R6 1999

*The Writing Systems of the World* • P 211 .C67 1989

*Visible Speech: the Diverse Oneness of Writing Systems* • P 211 .D36 1989

*Writing* • <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Writing>

***Theory and philosophy of writing and visual communication*** {P 211} [Writing – Philosophy],

[Graphemics], [Graphology]

*The Alphabet Versus the Goddess* • P 211.7 .S57 1998

*ABC: the Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* • P 211 .I45 1988

*Writing Systems: a Linguistic Introduction* • P 211 .S36 1985

*Signs of Writing* • P 211 .H353 1995

***Ancient scripts and the origins and development of writing*** [Writing – History], [Inscriptions],

[Cuneiform writing], [Hieroglyphics], [Paleography], [Manuscripts (Papyri)]

*The Origins of Writing* • P 211 .O75 1989

*Reading the Past: Ancient Writing from Cuneiform to the Alphabet* • P 211 .R37 1990

*A Study of Writing* • P 211 .G37 1963

*Lost Languages: The Enigma of the World's Undeciphered Scripts* • P 211 .R59 2002

*Voices in Stone: the Decipherment of Ancient Scripts and Writings* • P 211 .D613

*Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages* • **Ref.** P 371 .C357 2004

*Extinct Languages* • P 211 .F783 [delete?]

***History of the Roman alphabet*** [Alphabet]

*The Early Alphabet* • **Ref.** P 211 .H44 1991

*Language Visible: Unraveling the Mystery of the Alphabet* • P 211 .S32 2003

*The 26 Letters* • P 211 .O4

**Scripts of Asia and the Pacific** [Chinese language – Writing], [Japanese language – Writing], [Korean language – Writing], [Chinese characters], [Devanagari alphabet], [Rongorongo script]

*Chinese Script and Language* • <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/chinese.htm>

*Chinese Characters: A Genealogy and Dictionary* • PL 1171 .Z46 1998

*Ideogram : Chinese Characters and the Myth of Disembodied Meaning* • PL 1171 .U39 2004

*Japanese: Hiragana, Katakana, Kanji, Romaji* • <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/japanese.htm>

*Korean Alphabet and Pronunciation* • <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/korean.htm>

*Devanagari* • <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devanagari>

*How Old is Indian Writing?* • <http://www.sulekha.com/expressions/column.asp?cid=305897>

*The Rongorongo of Easter Island* • <http://www.rongorongo.org/>

*Mystery Scripts of the Philippines* • <http://www.bibingka.com/dahon/mystery/mystery.htm>

**Scripts of the Middle East** [Writing, Arabic], [Arabic alphabet], [Arabic language – Writing], [Hebrew language – Alphabet], [Hebrew language – Writing]

*Writing Arabic : a Practical Introduction to Ruq‘ah Script* • PJ 6321 .M5 1978

*Let's Write Arabic* • PJ 6123 .D4313 1987

*The Book of Hebrew Script* • PJ 4589 .Y263 1997

**Scripts of Africa** [African languages – Alphabet]

*Afrikan Alphabets: The Story of Writing in Afrika* • PL 8007 .M34 2004

**Scripts of the Americas** [Mayan languages – Writing]

*Breaking the Maya Code* • F1435.3.W75 C64 1999

*Epigraphy (ancient writing of Mexico and Central America)* • F 1219.3.W94 E65 1992

**Scripts of Europe** [Greek language – Alphabet], [Greek language, Modern – Written Greek], [Writing, Armenian], [Ogham alphabet]

*Greek Scripts: an Illustrated Introduction* • PA 273 .G74 2001

*Greek Writing from Knossos to Homer* • PA 273 .W66 1997

*Armenian Alphabet* • <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/armenian.htm>

*Celtic Tree Mysteries : Secrets of the Ogham* • BF 1622.C45 B55 1997

*A guide to Ogam* • PB1217 .M38 1991

### ***Runes, secret writing, and mystical aspects of writing***

*Forgotten Scripts: a Book of Runes* • <http://www.afternight.com/runes/>

*Greek Qabalah: Alphabetic Mysticism & Numerology in the Ancient World* • BF 1623.P9 B397 1999

*Theban Alphabet* • <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/theban.htm>

### ***Scripts created on philosophical principles*** [Pasigraphy]

*International Picture Language: the First Rules of Isotype* • PM 8999 .N48

*Real Character* • <http://reliant.teknowledge.com/Wilkins/>

### ***Shorthand***

*Shorthand Systems of the World* • Z 53 .G55 1959

### ***Writing systems for persons with disabilities*** [Braille], [Blind – Printing and writing systems], [People with disabilities – Printing and writing systems]

*Working with Braille: a Study of Braille as a Medium of Communication* • HV 1669 .H35 1981

*Instruction Manual for Braille Transcribing* • HV 1669 .D63 1984

*Blyssymbolics* • <http://www.blissymbolics.org/bliss.shtml>

*Moon Alphabet* • <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/moon.htm>

### ***Other invented scripts***

★ *Tolkien's Middle-Earth Alphabets* • <http://ring-lord.tripod.com/alpha.html>

★ *Codex Seraphinianus* • PN 6381 .S4 1983

*The Shaw Alphabet* • <http://www.foolswisdom.com/~sbett/shaw.htm>

**Calligraphy** {Z 43}, {NK 3600–NK 3639} [Calligraphy], [Islamic calligraphy]; [Calligraphy, Arabic], [Calligraphy, Japanese], *etc.*, [Penmanship], [Lettering]

*Treasury of Calligraphy: 219 Great Examples, 1522-1840* • Z 43 .S3613 1984

*Brocade of the Pen: the Art of Islamic Writing* • NK 3636.5.A2 B76 1991

*Traces of the Brush: The Art of Japanese Calligraphy* • NK 3637.A3 B6813 2003

*An Illustrated History of Writing and Lettering* • P 211 .T72

**Printing and typefaces** {Z 116–Z 265} [Printing], [Graphic design (Typography)], [Type and type-founding], [Computer fonts], [Unicode (Computer character set)]

*Books and Printing: a Treasury for Typophiles* • Z 116.A3 B58 1990

*A History of Graphic Design* • Z 246 .M43 1998

*Web Designer's Guide to Typography* • TK 5105.888 .L43 1997

★ *Typeface* • <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typeface>

★ *Fonts in cyberspace: a guide to finding language fonts* • <http://www.sil.org/computing/fonts/>

*Unicode* • [http://scripts.sil.org/cms/scripts/page.php?site\\_id=nrsi&cat\\_id=Unicode](http://scripts.sil.org/cms/scripts/page.php?site_id=nrsi&cat_id=Unicode)

**Other forms of written language** [Graffiti], [Picture-writing], [Phonetic alphabet]

★ *Graffiti* • <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graffiti>

★ *Pictogram* • <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pictogram>

*International Phonetic Alphabet* • [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Phonetic\\_Alphabet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Phonetic_Alphabet)

*Phonetic symbol guide* • **Ref.** P 226 .P851 1996