

## Vacancy

The Eep Talstra Centre for Bible and Computer (ETCBC) and the Computational Lexicology and Terminology Lab (CLTL) of the Faculty of Arts have a vacancy for a

### 2 Academy Assistants (5 months, 0.2 rte)

for the project *Polemics Visualized. A Computational Analysis of the Polemics of Ephrem the Syrian (4th cent.) against Bardaisan of Edessa (2nd cent.)*

#### Project description

In the formative process of early Christianity, polemic literature was an important device in the demarcation of its boundaries, to draw the line between 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy'.

We focus on comparing the polemics of **Ephrem the Syrian** (4th cent.) against his predecessor **Bardaisan** (3rd cent.). There is a discrepancy between Ephrem's depiction of Bardaisan's ideas, and Bardaisan's only surviving work, the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*. This discrepancy led to heated scholarly debates in the 1960s but a consensus was never reached, leaving the debate in a deadlock. New text analysis techniques enable us to rekindle this debate.

For *Polemics Visualised*, we will conduct a computational comparative analysis of Ephrem's writings against Bardaisan and those attributed to Bardaisan, in relation to Ephrem's entire oeuvre. We envision a collaboration between an academy assistant with a background in computer or information science and an academy assistant with a background in Syriac Studies or Eastern Christianity.

#### Requirements

For both positions the following requirements apply:

- Enrolment as MA or MSc student during the period of the project.
- Strong communication skills
- Interest in visual analytics.

To the tasks of both positions belong:

- Working together with the supervisors and the other Academy Assistant during the project.
- Contributing to the project deliverables: conference presentation and toolbox.

Specific requirements for the two positions include:

#### Position 1:

Project-specific requirements:

- Background in computer or information science (Text Mining, Data Mining and/or Information Retrieval)

Project-specific tasks:

- Analysis of current text analysis tools and adapt them to Syriac.
- Discuss results and refine tools and methods on the basis of the input of Academy Assistant 2.

## **Position 2:**

Project-specific requirements:

- Knowledge of at least one Semitic language, preferably including Syriac.

Project-specific tasks:

- Provide input on what data the automated tools could use
- Devise an evaluation methodology of the computational tools
- Investigate the boundaries of the applied tools in the domain of Syriac / Early Christian studies.

## **Further information**

For more information see the project description <hier de PDF hangen>. If you have further questions contact Prof. W.T. van Peursen [w.t.van.peursen@vu.nl](mailto:w.t.van.peursen@vu.nl) (ETCBC; especially for questions related to position 2) or Dr Marieke van Erp [marieke.van.erp@vu.nl](mailto:marieke.van.erp@vu.nl) (CLTL, especially for specific questions related to position 1).

## **Applications**

Applications should include a letter of motivation, a CV and a letter of recommendation and should be sent by email to [w.t.van.peursen@vu.nl](mailto:w.t.van.peursen@vu.nl) before **14 June 2014**.