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In Memoriam, John L. Hilton

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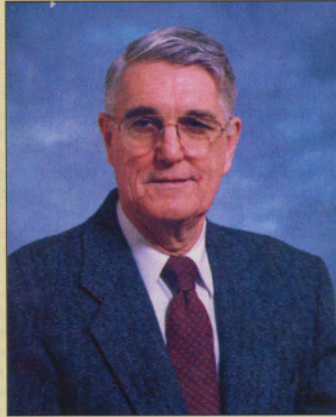
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Abstract In memory of John L. Hilton and his contribution to Book of Mormon word-print studies.



IN MEMORIAM JOHN L. HILTON

John L. Hilton, Adjunct Professor of Statistics at Brigham Young University, died 12 March 2000, in Provo at the age of seventy-two. He had served as a professor at the University of California at Berkeley. He and his wife moved to Provo following his retirement from the University of California.

His primary contribution to research on the Book of Mormon was in the development of wordprint studies. This body of work utilized a statistical technique to analyze the rate of use of noncontextual words by authors. He was a prime mover in developing computer programs and strategies that permitted identifying by computerized “stylometry,” a distinctive signature of word usage, for each author among a number of purported authors of texts. Of special interest was the demonstration by Professor Hilton and colleagues that it is statistically indefensible to propose Joseph Smith or Oliver Cowdery or Solomon Spaulding as the author of the 30,000 words from the Book of Mormon manuscript texts attributed to Nephi₁ and Alma.

At the time of his death John Hilton had in preparation an article for this journal that would have summarized the results of wordprint studies thus far in relation to the Book of Mormon. The best existing summary of the topic, which refers to other studies on this subject that he had published, constitutes chapter 9, “On Verifying Wordprint Studies: Book of Mormon Authorship,” in Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 225–53.