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Special Report on Critical Text Project

In lieu of this year's first issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, a special report of the 20 October 2001 FARMS symposium on the Book of Mormon Critical Text Project will be mailed to FARMS subscribers with the next issue of the *Insights* newsletter.

Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon: History and Findings of the Critical Text Project features informative reports on the multi-pronged effort to determine as far as possible the original English translation of the Book of Mormon. Royal Skousen, the editor and principal investigator of the project, details the project's history and some

of the more significant findings. Robert Espinosa reviews his team's painstaking work of preserving and identifying remaining fragments of the original manuscript. Ron Romig narrates the investigation into the printer's manuscript, and Larry Draper explains how the press sheets for the 1830 edition reveal overlooked details of the printing process. In an insightful response, Daniel C. Peterson interpolates evidence from Skousen's research to show the divine manner in which the Book of Mormon came forth.

The issuance of this special report will give the new editors of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* needed time to effectively plan the next issue of the *Journal*. It is hoped that, in the meantime, FARMS subscribers will enjoy reading about the groundbreaking developments in the Critical Text Project. 

Brown Bag Report

On 10 April 2002 S. Kent Brown and Steve DeVore gave a brown bag presentation highlighting their work on two documentary films. Brown, a professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, traveled with DeVore, the films' producer, to Yemen in September of 2001 to shoot footage of the ancient Incense Trail. The Incense Trail, which ran down the west side of the Arabian Peninsula, was used to transport spices and other

goods from the Far East to the great empires of Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria. Brown believes that Lehi and his family shadowed this route as they moved deeper into Arabia prior to their arrival in Bountiful, from where they crossed the ocean to the promised land.

Brown and DeVore will use the footage shot last year, combined with future footage, to produce two films, one a documentary on the Incense Trail and the other an exploration of the proposed routes for Lehi's journey through the wilderness.

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its contents have been virtually ignored for long periods.

He examines how, in his words, this “most religiously influential, hotly contested, and, in the secular press at least, intellectually underinvestigated book in America” has been variously “understood, positioned, packaged, utilized, exploited, presented and represented by its detractors and by its proponents” (p. 6). This effort, he explains, is necessary

precisely because, “in spite of the book's unparalleled position in American religion and its changing meaning for apologists, critics, and theologians, no full-length study has attempted to present to the wider public a study of this book and its changing role in Mormonism and in American religion generally” (p. 6).

Givens shows that the story of the Book of Mormon's recovery and the fact of the book's existence fixed for the Latter-day Saints the prophetic authority of Joseph Smith and his successors. It is the book's role as a sacred sign—more than its teachings—that fuels the hostility of its critics as it