advantage of their momentarily free time and talent by organizing an effort to work on the Voynich problem. The group studied the available scholarly material, discussed hypotheses, transcribed the VMS onto IBM cards, and disbanded.

Unknown are: the location of the archives of the FSG, the membership of the FSG, the current location of their IBM cards. It is possible that some of this material is in still-classified archives of the NSA. It is known that Frank Lewis (personal communication with James Gillogly, 1993) and Martin Joos (personal communication, ca. 1968) were in the right place at the right time to have been part of the FSG but Lewis was not attracted to the Voynich problem and Joos thought Friedman's approach was misguided, so neither participated.

The Friedman Collection's FSG materials are confined to printouts of IBM cards, alphabet sheets for transcribers, and worksheets; they contain no narrative or administrative material of the sort cited by D'Imperio. (Some of the worksheets, however, bear signatures, most of which must belong to FSG members.)

FSG Alphabet Sheets

Before they could start their main work of transcribing, the FSG had to pick a transcription alphabet. This involved two choices: they had to settle on what they thought the Voynich character set was, and they had to establish conventional letter or number equivalents for each Voynich character.

Of these two choices the first is the more critical, for it determines the level of detail, and the kinds of detail, with which the VMS will be transcribed. The kinds of mistakes that the wrong choice leads to can be imagined by supposing a future race of beings trying to decode our writing system. If they mistakenly assume that ''m'' and ''n'' are the same letter (because they don't believe the exact number of humps could be important) or that ''h'' and ''n'' are the same letter (because they differ only in length of a single stroke), or that ''n'' and ''u'' are the same (because they are rotated versions of each other) their analysis will be made harder. On the other hand, if they think that ''m'' and ''*m*'' are genuinely different letters, or that ''A'' is fundamentally different from ''a,'' their analysis might become bogged down with irrelevant minutiae.