

Article

§ 1 Classicists have long been at the forefront of the Humanities in the use of computing for publishing, analysing, processing, and researching texts, objects, and data. This tendency can partly be explained with reference to two observations: (1) the complexity of the textual, historical, linguistic, material, and artistic sources that need to be considered in classical scholarship, and (2) the patchy coverage and fragmentary state of many of these same artefacts. We need to remind ourselves, however, that there is no paradox in this seemingly most traditional and old-fashioned of disciplines adopting the allegedly most modern and cutting edge of technologies.

§ 2 Like Mediaevalists, with whom they share many methodological and material interests, Classicists have always engaged in innovative and interdisciplinary research and methodologies, and this has included playing a leading role in the development and implementation of digital tools.

§ 3 In a response to a historical summary published in 1993 by Ted Brunner, ([Brunner 1993](#), 10-33) founder and then director of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* project, Greg Crane in 2004 ([Crane 2004](#), 46-55) argued that the time had come for Classicists to give up trying to create or use new technologies specific to the field. Rather, he argued, the tools for research and collaboration that Classicists need are just the same as those needed by all Humanities scholars and even, in large part, those used and developed by the sciences and other disciplines with better resources and funding than our own. What we should concentrate on are the ways in which Classics is uniquely positioned to offer disciplinary focus and high quality materials.

§ 4 This should not be taken, and of course Crane did not intend it, to mean that Classicists will not or should not continue to concern themselves with technological, methodological, and digital issues in their work. It is clear from all of the papers in this volume that scholars of the ancient world can and should and do concern themselves with digital issues, from innovative technologies and tools, to common standards and protocols.

§ 5 True "Digital Classics" can only come about via a collaboration between traditional Classical scholarship and genuine computing science. This collaboration may involve more than one person—an expert from each field, for example, or a domain expert from one and a research assistant from the other—or it may be instantiated in a single person, one of a growing breed of truly hybrid scholar who has expertise and qualification in both fields. In any case the point is that the Classical content is not addressed merely an excuse to use a "cool" new digital toy, and nor is the computing merely a dumb slave to the needs of the "real" academic research of the Classical scholar. The two disciplines should work hand-in-hand and be jointly responsible for the scholarly and innovative results achieved.

§ 6 We have no doubt that the papers presented in this volume, although they are coherently Classical in content, will be of equal interest to digital humanists and indeed to Mediaevalists in particular. There is much in common between the two disciplines, from the longevity of spoken and written Latin in Europe on the one hand to the philological and interdisciplinary interests of the scholars in both fields. The Digital Classicist and Digital Medievalist communities have had close ties ever since their inception (see editorial), and many scholars are members of both projects and discussion groups. The *Digital Medievalist* journal, with peer review and publication mechanisms in place, provided an excellent venue for the publication and dissemination of the first Digital Classicist seminar series, as well as a perfect opportunity to exemplify the collaborative and cross-disciplinary practice and potential of our communities.

§ 7 There is a long history of both Classical and Mediaeval projects that have helped to push the digital envelope. From the collaborative work of Busa and IBM on the *Index Thomisticus*, through the development of the [Thesaurus Linguae Graecae](#) (and the swathe of related text databases and libraries such as [Cornell Epigraphy Project](#), [Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri](#), [Perseus Project](#)), to the most recent and high-quality publications of ancient texts such as [Chicago Homer](#) and the [Suda Online](#), and primary sources in archaeological context including [Vindolanda Tablets Online](#), [Oxyrhynchus Papyri](#), and [Inscriptions of Aphrodisias](#).^[1] (Further Mediaeval projects of course need no rehearsal in this venue, and we would not be best qualified to offer one in any case.)

§ 8 The papers in this special volume of *Digital Medievalist* arise from the series of Work-in-Progress seminars in London run by the Digital Classicist and sponsored by the Institute for Classical Studies and the

Centre for Computing in the Humanities in the Summer of 2006.^[2] It turned out that many of the speakers in this series spoke on very speculative subjects; others either had very busy schedules or already had plans to publish their findings elsewhere, hence this volume contains just three of the ten papers presented in the series (plus Bodard's offering that was presented at another conference earlier in the year and Monella's that was not in the original programme).

§ 9 Invited speakers at the Work-in-Progress series were given a fairly broad remit:

We should like to encourage presentations that introduce a broad audience to new topics, techniques, and technologies, and may have a pedagogical rather than a purely expository tone. The focus should of course include research topics of classical/historical/archaeological interest.

We are inviting both students and established researchers involved in the application of the Digital Humanities to the study of the ancient world to come and introduce their work. The focus of this seminar series is in line with that of the Digital Classicist as a whole, in that the aim is to bring together scholars to address issues of collaborative work and the new methodologies enabled and in some cases necessitated by the digital academy. As we know, these digital methods are far from being marginal to traditional classical scholarship; they offer new perspectives and new ways to approach essential research questions, thus both underpinning and becoming central to the advancement of our discipline.

§ 10 This led to a wide range of presentations covering several aspects of the Classical and Digital Humanities disciplines: work on software and protocol issues with special focus on Classical materials; studies of digital resources for Classics and how they have influenced the study of the ancient world; traditional Classical, philological, and archaeological studies making use of digital technologies. All of these presentations combined to exemplify most of the concerns expressed in the Digital Classicist's informal manifesto.

§ 11 The Digital Classicist was set up by and for practitioners interested in the application of Digital Humanities methodologies to the study of the ancient world. It provides a web-based focus for research in this rich, diverse, and multi-national field of scholarship. Cooperation and collaboration are central to the Digital Classicist's philosophy and we have established partnerships with other projects such as Digital Medievalist, [The Stoa Consortium](#), [Perseus Project](#), [Humanist](#), [Centre for Hellenic Studies](#), and the [Ancient World Mapping Center](#).^[3] We are especially concerned to address the needs of a variety of user groups ranging from the specialist to the beginner, supplying guides to practice and critical advice on technical issues along with links to further resources. This kind of material often constitutes research output from members of the community at large.

§ 12 Community venues and activities are meant to encourage the exchange and discussion of ideas and information about the creation and use of digital resources between experts in their respective fields. Many projects involving digital scholarship are collaborative and it is this sharing of ideas and research that drives knowledge creation. This openness and sharing are central to the Digital Classicist ethos and the reason that these types of collaborative projects are of such importance to the humanistic scholarly community. For this reason there is a lot of emphasis in the research community generally on open source tools and open access publication.

§ 13 The papers in this issue of DM span a wide if by no means comprehensive range of the interests of the Digital Classicist.

§ 14 [Bodard](#)'s chapter reports on a user's perspective coming from the *Inscriptions of Aphrodisias 2007* leading to theoretical discussion about electronic publication and implications for dissemination and research. Although focussing on publication of texts, this paper also discusses historical and archaeological sources, and highlights the value of digital publication methods as research technologies in addition to mere vectors of dissemination. The author's experience in digital as well as epigraphic scholarship serve the interdisciplinary ends of this publication.

§ 15 [Isaksen](#) uses network analysis of travel itineraries in the Roman province of Baetica to explore new approaches to historic transport geography. This work draws both on postgraduate research in ancient history,

and on the author's professional career as both an archaeologist and a programmer, dealing with processing and presentation of data, sensitive treatment of ancient evidence, and the standards and methodologies of digital scholarly communities.

§ 16 In Mahony's chapter (to be added shortly) the Digital Classicist wiki is used as an exemplar of how openness and collaboration can be used in a positive way to enhance and progress research; he also explores ways to instil this type of approach in up and coming scholars. This chapter therefore is both broadly speculative, and pragmatic in terms of pedagogical and developmental practice. As a Classical scholar and a teacher with many years experience of students at all levels, the author brings a range of expertise to this discussion.

§ 17 [Monella](#)'s chapter discusses the concept of "paratext" (texts that appear alongside a text or its edition—ancient scholia, modern footnotes, etc.) and proposes strategies for handling these texts in an XML-tagged digital critical edition. This paper is both practical and concrete in as much as it discusses and documents usage of TEI XML and the publication of critical texts, and broadly theoretical in its handling of philological issues which potentially extend into all branches of the Digital Humanities.

§ 18 [Smith et al.](#) discuss the use of the Virtual Lightbox for Museums and Archives, a new tool that allows users to collect together and re-use online content from participating museums and archive datasets, as a research and teaching tool. As well as a report on a specific and newly developed technological tool (of the kind that some would have us borrow from the sciences rather than develop ourselves), this chapter uses the considerable experience of all three authors in the use of standards and protocols in the sharing of resources and the use of services to join existing collections into coherent corpora for scholarship and pedagogy.

§ 19 The selection of papers in this volume therefore cover a range of areas within the study of the ancient world: literature and text ([Monella](#)), history and historical sources ([Bodard](#), [Isaksen](#)), and archaeology and material culture ([Smith](#)), as well as a general sweep across the field of Classics as a whole (Mahony). Several aspects of Digital Humanities are also touched upon, including: text markup and electronic publication ([Bodard](#), [Monella](#)), geotagging and network analysis ([Isaksen](#)), and semantic web/social networking technologies (Mahony, [Smith](#)); visualization and relational database tools are touched on in [Isaksen](#)'s work, but neither is the focus of his paper. Such topics and several others (collaborative research, data mining, metadata standards, agent modelling, to touch only the surface of this rich inter-discipline) could and clearly should form part of future presentations in this seminar.

§ 20 In terms of the background of the papers, [Bodard](#) and [Isaksen](#) present work based on or leading to traditional classical (or archaeological) research; Mahony and [Monella](#) (and to some extent [Bodard](#)) discuss theoretical and methodological aspects of digital research; [Smith](#) presents a tool and the protocols developed with it. Pedagogical topics, while partially addressed by Mahony and [Smith](#), remain the most under-represented area in this collection, although the Digital Classicist community as a whole is strong in this area. Contextually, some of the papers are reports on completed work ([Bodard](#), [Isaksen](#), [Smith](#)), while others are more speculative or proposals (Mahony, [Monella](#)).

§ 21 We should further like to explore research questions both of the traditional and more innovative kind with a focus on the ancient world that use computational approaches, particularly those which encourage the sharing of methodologies and resources with other disciplines. The great strength of the Digital Humanities approach is precisely this ability to cross academic disciplines and traditional barriers, re-purpose methodologies from one area to another, and bring together scholars from philological and engineering backgrounds to create new research questions and areas of study. This is collaborative working at its best.

§ 22 There is no shortage of classical material and digital work in our field, and the excellence we have seen can only be enhanced by stepping up collaboration, sharing of materials, tools, and experiences, and the kind of fertile communication that takes place in conferences and seminars. Following the success of the 2006 seminar series the Digital Classicist ran two panels at the Classical Association Annual Conference in 2007 which was held in Birmingham. The Digital Classicist ran a second Work-in-Progress seminar series at the Institute of Classical Studies in the Summer of 2007. The programme for 2008 is being drawn up and it is clear that this seminar series will now become a regular annual event at the Institute for Classical Studies, bringing together students, practitioners, and researchers. ^[4]

Notes

[1]. See further [Brunner 1993](#) and [Crane 2004](#); [Busa 1980](#) (and see <http://www.corpusthomaticum.org/>); [Bowman, Thomas et al. 2003](#); [Reynolds, Roueché, Bodard 2007](#), especially “Technical Preface”.

[2]. See <http://www.digitalclassicist.org/wip/wip2006.html> for the programme.

[3]. For a full list see the Digital Classicist members page at <http://wiki.digitalclassicist.org/Members>.

[4]. All these and other Digital Classicist events past and future are listed on the Digital Classicist events page at <http://www.digitalclassicist.org/wip/>.

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