



Accessing Antiquity

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Classical studies and computerization are far from strange bedfellows. Classicists have been in the business of information retrieval and dissemination ever since Hellenistic scholars in Alexandria collected texts of Homer and the Athenian dramatists. Latin and Greek texts have been written on stone, clay, papyrus, parchment, and paper. It is no surprise that they are now appearing in electronic form.

In ACCESSING ANTIQUITY eight Classical scholars offer a history of the computer in Classical studies and describe the following electronic projects in which they have participated. The THESAURUS LINGVAE GRAECAE is a comprehensive machine-readable databank of ancient Greek texts. The DUKE DATA BANK OF DOCUMENTARY PAPYRI catalogs all known texts found on the fragmentary papyri of ancient Egypt. The COMPUTER INDEX OF THE U.S. CENTER OF THE LEXICON ICONOGRAPHICUM MYTHOLOGIAE CLASSICAE is a catalog of ancient artifacts depicting mythological characters or scenes. AMPHORAS, a computer-assisted study of ancient wine jars, gathers information on the ubiquitous storage jars of antiquity. Only a computer could gather together information on 150,000 different jars in a usable way. The DATABASE OF CLASSICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY deals with approximately 500,000 citations which have appeared in ANNEE PHILOLOGIQUE, the basic bibliographic journal of the Classical world. The PERSEUS PROJECT brings together a variety of materials, including texts and translations of major ancient texts, an atlas, an encyclopedia, a Greek dictionary, plans of archaeological sites, and several hundred images of ancient sculpture, coins and other artifacts. STORYSPACE, a new interactive text and writing program, encourages scholars to rethink the relationship between text and commentary.

Some of these projects, such as the THESAURUS LINGVAE GRAECAE, are essentially completed and are already in use. Others, like the bibliography and amphora databases, are still in the process of development. The authors of these essays not only outline the goals and scope of their projects but also address some of the technical challenges they faced in performing these tasks electronically.

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