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With new technologies come new opportunities and new challenges in the field of scholarship. This paper is part of a larger research project concerned with the use of wikis and blogs as a medium for cooperative working and here uses as an example the Digital Classicist Wiki which can be found at the temporary site: http://digitalclassicist.xwiki.com/xwiki/bin/view/Main/WebHome.

The Digital Classicist website (http://www.digitalclassicist.org/), set up by practitioners interested in the application of the digital humanities to the study of the ancient world, provides a web-based focus for research interest in this rich, diverse and multi-national field of scholarship. The aim of the site is to bring scholars together and addresses head-on the issues of collaborative working. Rather than being in competition with other projects the Digital Classicist has established partnerships with other sites including the Stoa Consortium, Digital Medievalist, the Centre for Hellenic Studies, and in so doing constructs a central hub linking these together and giving a central point of focus to scholarship in this diverse area.

Further, a great strength of this project is that it is grounded in a multilingual approach with, as a matter of principal, key sections translated (or summarised) into the major languages of European scholarship: e.g. English, French, German, and Italian.

The main website gives the opportunity to add to an annotated list of classical projects that use computing technology as well as links to freely available tools and web resources that might be of use to such projects. Central to this, as well as the dissemination of information, the Digital Classicist seeks to fill an important gap in the existing scholarly documentation by creating concise, reliable and critical guidance on crucial technical issues for scholars who may only be interested in a basic introduction to such issues with links to further resources if they wish. One notable point here is that relevant material is also drawn from leading specialists who are not necessarily active in classical scholarship (e.g. ‘Deciding whether Optical Character Recognition is feasible’; http://www.odi.ox.ac.uk/papers/OCRFeasibility_final.pdf, Simon Tanner (KDCS)).

Marginalia dating back many hundreds of years is evidence that ‘annotation’ has always been an important research technique and a legitimate area of scholarship in its own right along with mise en page and codicology. The ability to add the personal thoughts of a scholar to electronic texts or any other digital medium poses many challenges and is the subject of another paper (Jessop and Mahony, forthcoming). John Unsworth (2000) considers annotation to be one example of what he calls ‘scholarly primitives’, the basic building blocks of scholarship or fundamental operations that are performed during the research process. Tools to facilitate annotation of the many forms of electronic information used in the humanities are under development, and a key issue here is often not how to facilitate annotation but rather how to share these annotations between scholars in a way that is open but also secure from abuse or accidental damage.

In the case of the Digital Classicist the tools chosen were the weblog and the wiki. After an initial phase, to save duplication, the Digital Classicist Blog was joined with the Stoa Consortium (http://www.stoa.org/) and this paper will consider only the Digital Classicist Wiki. This wiki is set up as a collaborative tool and although freely viewable has a defined list of members and editorial team. As all wikis this one is fully searchable with an index which lists such things as projects, tools, members and events as well as who to contact for technical support. Central to this wiki is the FAQ list which provides the means for collaborative authoring of full-blown guides to practice, which should be considered as research outputs in themselves. In addition to this the FAQ list is a legitimate end in its own right as it answers useful questions that cover such
areas as Greek fonts and other typographical issues, making a digital publication useful, the nature of humanities computing, as well as addressing other user issues and research questions.

The emergence of digital scholarship in the humanities has had considerable impact on disciplines such as Classics and the study of the ancient world. The example of the Digital Classicist Wiki is used here to demonstrate the possibilities for collaborative authorship, the exchange of ideas, and the opportunities to add thoughts and comments in the form of annotation. This paper will: discuss the use of this wiki both in the areas of research and pedagogy; argue for both the value of the research output and the usefulness of the site itself as a research tool; show the teaching and learning potential of this type of collaborative authorship.

This paper addresses the specific conference themes with its research focus sited with the framework of cultural heritage, grounded in a multilingual approach, and concerned with aspects of humanities computing in a multinational sphere. Further it engages with the pedagogical as well as the research implications of this activity.

References


