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Changing the Center of Gravity: Transforming Classical Studies Through Cyberinfrastructure

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Acknowledgements and Dedications

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Abstract

This collection of essays represent a wide range of perspectives on the work being done in digital classics. It honors the life of Allen Ross Scaife, who was instrumental in advancing digital scholarship in the field of classics.

The essays presented in this collection emerge from a workshop on October 5, 2007, funded by the National Science Foundation and hosted by the University of Kentucky.^[1] The official topic of the workshop was Cyberinfrastructure for Classical Studies. We chose that particular time and location, however, because we wanted to show our admiration and our love for Allen Ross Scaife, who, not only by his own decade of work with Stoa.org but by his courage, his vision, and by his example as a human being, had done more than any one person to advance the field of classics in the decade that carried us from the twentieth to the twenty-first century.

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We cannot begin to give proper credit to all those who have made possible that work that we have been able to present here. David Packard, a generation ago, designed and built the Ibycus systems that brought the field of Classical Studies into the digital age — he pioneered textual analysis as a daily practice of scholarship and electronic publication as the standard method when these were radically new ideas. Born to resources that many princes would have envied, he developed his own mind as a scholar and as a system designer. He and his colleague William Johnson cleared the land in which classics could take root. The authors of this collection, who have sweated to plough and a bit to extend these fields can none of us fully appreciate what David, William and others accomplished but we depend each and every day on the lasting results of their earlier labors.

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The humanities in general and classics in particular suffered other losses as well in the year since we gathered to share our ideas and to celebrate our friend Ross. We take this opportunity to say farewell to the American Historian Roy Rosenzweig and the classicist Theodore Brunner. Each scholar tangibly shaped the ideas presented here.

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Roy Rosenzweig worked for decades on developing both content for and understanding of the digital world for the humanities. An American Historian, Roy pioneered and described foundational practices for all history in a digital age. His veteran confidence in human intelligence and his worldly optimism for the role of history in society sustained many of us far beyond his immediate field. One of the editors of this collection remembers well a dinner with Roy in the spring 2005 where Roy first described his most recent work analyzing the results of Wikipedia. The editor fancied himself a progressive thinker and believer in the intellectual life of society as a whole, but he had largely dismissed the notion of a community-driven encyclopedia out of hand. He simply could not in his heart believe that an unrefereed resource, produced by an intellectual laity without benefit of professional academics and with little, if any, central editorial support, could produced useful results. Roy had received similar professional training at the same institution, but Roy examined the assumptions of that education and, as so often, he looked at the evidence. He made it clear that Wikipedia was not only a useful resource but a concrete instance for a new form of intellectual production. The implications of that insight run throughout this collection. Roy always introduced ideas that had never occurred to us. Often these ideas completely upended cherished assumptions and, indeed, might have left us a bit red-faced. But Roy retained even to the end a

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boyish enthusiasm and lightness of heart that made it impossible to feel anything but pleasure at each keen insight, presented with such a light and joyful touch. Roy always saw how the world could become a better place. He certainly did more than observe, and the world is a better place because he was in it.

The historical record will keep the name of Theodore Brunner green for as long as humanity reads the words of Homer, Sophocles, Plato and a thousand other authors. Ted founded the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* in 1972 — there are full professors in 2008 who were not yet born when Ted began this journey. Only the most powerful historical imagination could now fully imagine the kind of vision that was needed to imagine the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. By the time Ted retired a quarter century later, he and his colleagues at the University of California at Irvine had converted virtually every classical Greek text into digital form — the TLG E Disk, published shortly after his retirement, is one of the great achievements in two and a half millennia of classical scholarship. Under the leadership of Ted Brunner, the TLG began distributing digital collections of Greek, first on magnetic tapes in the early 1980s and subsequently on the pioneering medium of CD ROM disks (with a then staggering capacity of half a gigabyte). The appearance of these texts began the field of digital classics. Dozens of classicists developed programming skills to work with this corpus. Every achievement reported in this collection depends, directly or indirectly, upon what Theodore Brunner imagined and accomplished. Several of the authors in this collection (Crane, Martin and Smith) fondly remember the hospitality of Ted Brunner and Luci Berkowitz, more than two decades ago. Those sunny days and balmy nights in southern California are long past, but we all remember the professionally produced presentation that Ted would show to his visitors. The voice familiar to American television audiences as Tony the Tiger (as Ted with delight informed his audience) would, quoting Thucydides, intone that the TLG was a possession for all time. So indeed it is and, indeed, even more — Ted created the DNA for classical Greek in a digital world.

Notes

[1] The publications in this collection were the production of a workshop, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, on the subject of Cyberinfrastructure in the Classics in September 2007 (National Science Foundation Grant number 0736476, “Changing the Center of Gravity in Classical Studies”). We gratefully acknowledge the support that we received from the University of Kentucky and the Department of Classics.



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