

DHQ: Digital Humanities Quarterly

Changing the Center of Gravity: Transforming Classical Studies Through Cyberinfrastructure

2009

Volume 3 Number 1

Foreword

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Abstract

A brief remembrance of Ross Scaife.

This is a book about the future, not about Ross Scaife. That's the way it should be, and that's the way he would have wanted it. 1

For Ross was a scholar and teacher who knew in his bones that the steady, thoughtful consideration of the human past is a tool of unmatched power for informing humankind's ability to imagine and enact futures worthy of the intelligence and dignity of its every member. To honor him best, we should share in that conviction and learn from the resourcefulness and persistence of his practice. 2

Ross's career flourished in the twin decades of the information revolution. Whatever the globalized society we share may now experience, we live ineluctably in an information society. What we invent now, what we do now will entail living out the implications of a transformation that has already happened. Through the too few years that Ross was given to shape his vision and share it with others, he kept his eye clearly on ways to make sure that the revolution in knowing will serve his profession and through it his society. 3

His convictions were clear and luminous. The best that we can know about the past needs to be preserved and disseminated by the most powerful media available to the widest audience possible. The Stoa consortium that he led gave example repeatedly to the force of those convictions and their power to change for the better the ways we learn and think and teach. 4

We both learned from, were inspired by, and benefited from Ross's friendship. We feel the ache of his loss deeply, but we are delighted to see in this volume an exactly appropriate response to loss: innovation, optimism, and the commitment of teachers and scholars to receiving, interpreting, and transmitting the heritage of humankind's pasts to its present and future. Ross, we think, would be glad to read this book, and then soon enough impatient to get beyond its insights to the next stage. He reminds us of another Kentuckyan of yore, Daniel Boone, who made it to the frontier ahead of the rest, and then kept uprooting and moving further west, always seeing and seizing opportunity, always staying at the leading edge. We owe him the tribute of emulation. 5



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