PARAGRAPHOI

This section publishes short essays exploring topics of interest to the profession. Submissions should run to no more than 1200 words. Diverse opinions and spirited exchanges are welcome. Contributions will be evaluated by the editor.

The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* and Classical Scholarship in the 21st Century: Five Perspectives

INTRODUCTION

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THE APA MOUNTED A PANEL ON THE *THESAURUS LINGUAE LATINAE* in Chicago in 1991. We are now in a new millennium, and firmly in the digital age. The electronic search-tools that we take for granted were still a novelty then; the Thesaurus in Munich was just becoming computerized, and a complete CD-ROM/DVD of the published fascicles of the *TLL* was still more than a decade in the future (published by K. G. Saur in 2004, entirely independent of the Thesaurus itself, which does not have the staff for such an undertaking).[1] In the intervening years, the APA has continued to send an annual Fellow to Munich; in 2005–06 the 22nd APA Fellow became the first person in the history of the project to work on a word beginning with R.

The intervening years have also witnessed increasing momentum in several trends within classical scholarship: intertextuality and new historicism have taken root; reception studies have burgeoned; the book, the body, spectacle, ethnic identity—all these have come under the microscope. Where amongst all these themes and approaches does the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* fit? Is the entire project obsolete? Is there a role for traditional philology any more? If the *TLL* is to reach completion, will it be because of digitization, or in spite

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[1] Distinguishing between Thesaurus (the institution) and *TLL* (the lexicon).

of it? For a young American scholar is there anything to be gained in spend-
ing a year at Housman's *ergastulum* in Munich learning the esoteric art of
lexicography (Housman lv–lvi)? For the rest of us, is there any reason to take
the *TLL* off the shelf, or even to broach the digital version?

These were questions fielded at the APA meeting in 2006 by a panel of
scholars whose papers, printed here, seek to provoke consideration of what
can, and cannot, be known about the Latin language, and how we can set about
acquiring and testing that knowledge. The *TLL*, defined by the *Encyclopaedia
Britannica* as "probably the most scholarly dictionary in the world,"[2] emerges
as above all a human creation: a product of great learning and industry; in
perpetual evolution, holding up a mirror to trends in scholarship at large; and
potentially fallible, as is the lot of all human endeavors. As Anthony Corbeill
(APA Fellow 1990–91) demonstrates below, its treasury has the potential to
enrich every branch of study in the Roman world, and engage the interest
of anyone who seeks to understand in the smallest degree how the Romans
expressed themselves and took possession of their environment.

A digital tool for a digital age: if the process of compiling what remains
(N and Q–Z) is both helped and hindered by the availability of digital re-
sources, as argued below by Michael Hillen, one of the team of editors at the
Thesaurus—what, then, of the user seeking to access the published fascicles
(A–M, O, most of P, and separate *Onomastica* for C–D)? How do digital search
capabilities both help and hinder productive use of the *TLL*? For the scholar
wanting to know how a particular occurrence is classified, the computer can
deliver the information instantaneously, although with this instant gratifica-
tion comes the ever-increasing temptation to focus upon a particular tree at
the expense of the whole wood. The *TLL* has the capacity to reveal the entire,
complex personality of a word, although not through citation-specific search-
ing, which is of necessity precise and, therefore, limited—and not necessarily
successful, given that not every attestation of an unexceptional usage may be
included in every article.

In another way, however, the full picture is greatly enhanced by the re-
sources of the digital version, since it is now possible to call up the *dispositio*
of any word at all, whereas in the print edition a *dispositio* is only available
for longer (and more recent) articles. Hence it is now possible to study the
structure of every article, as well as perform detailed searches in all por-
tions of it, including the preliminary section, where information is collected
about ancient and modern theories (often revealingly divergent) concerning

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[2] *Encyclopaedia Britannica* s.v. Dictionary: scholarly dictionaries (http://www.britan-
nica.com/eb/article-31964/dictionary).

the etymology of the word, and about its spelling, gender, forms, prosody, chronological spread, etc. The scope of this deeply informative preliminary section, too often overlooked by users of the print edition, should now become a standard resource for anyone attempting to trace features such as orthographical trends in inscriptions or instability in grammatical gender.

That the methods determining the structure and approach of the articles have evolved since the Thesaurus was founded more than a century ago is eloquently demonstrated below by Gregory Hays (APA Fellow 1996–97). So, too, the evolution of the digital version charts a process of constant experimentation and refinement.[3] Two landmark publications from 1990 are included in the electronic *TLL*: the *Praemonenda*, and the second edition of the *Index librorum scriptorum inscriptionum ex quibus exempla afferuntur*. Both are indispensable, the one for understanding how to read an article and decode its complex system of signs and abbreviations, and the other for tracing the ancient authors cited (most of them well outside the traditional canon) and the editions on which the citations are based. Since the lexicon itself is written in Latin, the decision to accompany the *Praemonenda* with translations into several modern languages[4] is a major step towards increasing the efficient use of the entire resource.

The increased sensitivity to the freight of language that is gained from the experience of contributing to the project is described below by Yelena Baraz (APA Fellow 2004–05). Part of that sensitivity can be engendered by constant, absorbing exposure to the verbal portraits that emerge from the columns of the *TLL*, even for those of us (the majority, after all) who will never have the chance to coax a three-dimensional picture out of a pile of slips compiled in the eighteen-nineties. Moreover, as we are reminded by Julia Haig Gaisser, President of the APA in 2000, our philological inheritance binds us to the Roman authors who used the resources of the Latin language to communicate the human faculty of thought. Some of them were sophisticated literary giants, others mere ghosts hovering behind barely literate inscriptions. The papers collected here demonstrate how, in our digitized century, the *TLL* affords us unique access to what they were trying to say.

[3] Two historical moments in this evolution, marked by the publication of the first and third electronic editions, are captured by Lükhen and Heslin.

[4] German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Russian. A Japanese version is published separately.

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