Numen - The Latin Lexicon: A New Approach to Online Latin Dictionaries

This presentation will introduce Latin teachers and students to a new online dictionary, nicknamed *Numen*, built from the ground up to address the questions and issues outlined below. The purpose of this dictionary is to create a transparent user experience – in other words, the user comes first. *Numen* does this primarily by using the most recent advances in internet browser technology to accelerate the process of looking up words, yet without diminishing the quality of definitions or citations. Moreover, *Numen* provides tools for students and teachers including customizable flashcard decks, a flashcard viewing tool, a morphology tool and complete paradigm tables. For researchers, it offers a broad range of information relevant to Latinists and linguists. Most importantly, *Numen* is committed to the ideals of open information and knowledge sharing through the inclusion of feedback from the Latin learning community.

Here are some of the questions about *Numen* that this presentation will answer: *How fast is it? Are the definitions in an accessible and visually appealing format? Where are the irregular words? What is the proper idiom for a certain English phrase? Is the web application reliable and stable? Can this online dictionary help me learn Latin faster or more efficiently than I can with a paper dictionary? What if there's a mistake in the database and I want to help correct it?*

This new dictionary differs from the norm by responding to current needs. Paper Latin dictionaries have been successfully used by generations of Latin learners, but recent shifts in technology, especially on the internet, have created a new digital environment for learning. In this digital age, students want dictionaries that can be used on computing devices. They expect them to be interactive, intelligent, and multivalent. But traditional dictionaries, by design, exhibit many difficult traits that are throwbacks from an earlier era. Paper dictionaries are always organized for a specific purpose: pocket ones are simplified, but lack etymology, while unabridged ones offer many shades of meaning, but defy use for quick definitions. Their English to Latin sections (when they exist) often contain archaic English idioms, such as *lest*, and *whither*. Finally, there has been a gigantic leap in linguistic theory that reflects a more modern understanding of language. In short, paper dictionaries are out of date, but the effort involved in modernizing them is a daunting, expensive task. A few projects have tried to correct this by adapting paper dictionaries to digital formats—for example, Perseus, Whittaker's Words and the word lists of Lynn Nelson. However, simply transferring the written page to the computer screen is not adequate because computer users expect creative interfaces that produce qualities of usability, simplicity and transparency.

Latin teachers are always trying to find new and innovative ways to teach the language. Yet the study of Latin tends to hold on to the past, so in order for it to remain relevant, its language learning tools and references must be adapted to meet the educational standards of modern users. This online dictionary is prepared to do that by utilizing smart innovations in technology and by meeting the expectations of people who embrace that technology. In this presentation, *Numen* will be demonstrated as one step in the process of modernizing Latin learning and research tools.