

Using Perseus (perseus.tufts.edu) in the Greek Classroom

This paper will present some exercises and in-class activities that use Perseus to bring students into a deeper engagement with Greek. Students practice skills indirectly related to digital resources, such as the use of dictionaries, grammars, commentaries, translations, and an apparatus criticus, as well as skills directly related to digital resources, such as how to assess the reliability of sources, and how to read critically materials available on the internet. For example, OCR errors can be adduced as a parallel to typical manuscript errors, introducing students to the logic of identifying errors. I use the Perseus parser to show a range of homomorphs, and we speculate about the statistical choice made by the parser, comparing that with the process by which we select the right form. We also "vote" on the correct choice when we are reasonably certain we know it, in this way participating in curating texts through "crowd-sourcing." The exercises foreground both strengths and weaknesses of Perseus as a tool for learning Greek. I introduce students to the possibilities of digital projects and the excitement of creating them, as well as the problems that beset them, such as their endemic incompleteness. It is a way of putting the study of Greek in the context of current humanities issues, where enormous amounts of information are available, but where students need help navigating and assessing it. Working with the Perseus resource refines a number of eminently transferable skills for students in the digital age.