

Bringing Special Collections into the Classroom through Digital Media

The nature of special collections limits its access to most students and researchers. The proliferation of digital archives has aided in manuscript research and saved lots of time on critical editions. In this paper, I will present possible ways that special collections can reach a broad range of students and pedagogical approaches through their digital archives. The paper takes its start from a recent instructional collaboration between classes of two universities. Beginning and intermediate Latin students from both universities learned about the material aspects of a late medieval manuscript of Cicero through images displayed at both campuses through Zoom. The students likewise received grammatical instruction through ligatures, scribal mistakes, and even possible emendations in a highly graphic, collaborative environment. After describing this experience, I will propose possible methods and means for future pedagogical projects, with a focus on material culture and intermediate philological instruction through the use of special collections.

The ultimate goal of the paper is to help educators learn to use documents and materials that seem inaccessible as the opposite: an exciting on-ramp into language and material culture.