Student, Scholar, Teacher, Software Developer: Working Together to Build Software for

Engaging with Classics

We have developed software tools for learning, research and pedagogy in Classics using a collaborative process involving teachers, scholars, students and software developers. This collaboration was driven by a spirit of innovation, curiosity and the need for tools that could serve specific differing, but compatible needs, on the part of all of the participants.

This paper will focus on the experience of developing and enhancing software tools for treebanking and translation alignment and a platform for collaborative annotation and editing of primary source documents in Classics. Spurred by interest from professors and scholars, we undertook an effort to integrate and enhance these tools so that they could be used by students of Latin and Greek to learn the language, while at the same time producing annotations that can be used for advanced scholarly research into the texts. Working together, we designed the tools so that they could support a wide variety of classroom workflows as well as single, expert scholarly needs for working with primary source texts.

In commercial environments, software tools of this scope and complexity often have entire teams of product designers, testers and developers behind them, a luxury that is not available when building free tools for academic use. In our model, scholars, professors and students filled some of these roles, providing design requirements and feedback, testing early releases of the software, identifying bugs, and verifying bug fixes.

This novel process presented significant challenges and opportunities for all who contributed. The resulting tools are versatile and robust enough to support a wide variety of pedagogical and research needs, but also highly tuned to the requirements of the community of

participants. The degree of competence and comfort with new and changing technology on the part of the participants also increased significantly as a result of the collaboration.

This paper reviews the details of the design and implementation process and its outcomes, including specifics of the features which were collaboratively developed and how they can serve the Classics community. It will also discuss some of the challenges involved in sustaining these tools into the future.