

Joint Statement on Digital Publication

The following statement was prepared by the Joint Task Force on Electronic Publishing of the American Philological Association (APA) and the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), Donald J. Mastronarde, Chair, and was adopted by the APA's Board of Directors on September 9, 2006 and the AIA's Executive Committee on September 26, 2006.

For a number of years, university presses and scholars in many disciplines have been concerned about the problems facing dissemination of scholarly writing. At the same time that more universities and colleges are making the publication of one, or even two, monograph-length works of scholarship an indispensable prerequisite for tenure, the market for monographs in the Humanities has been drastically reduced by the loss of purchasing power of university library budgets and the proliferation of competing demands on that smaller budget. Although the field of Classical Studies has perhaps not suffered as much as some other disciplines in the Humanities, there is undeniably a negative trend, and one that disproportionately affects highly-specialized and technical works and works involving large numbers of illustrations, plans, and the like.

As has been recognized in other disciplines, especially the sciences, digital formats have matured to a degree that they offer a realistic alternative by which scholars can continue to communicate their specialized research despite the economic trends affecting book publication and library purchases. At the same time, the internet is creating unprecedented levels of access to primary sources and published research. Scholars in Classical Studies have long been among the leaders in the Humanities in the development and exploitation of computing and digitized information. Several peer-reviewed internet journals with no print form are already widely used and respected. As time goes by, the profession can expect to see an ever-widening use of digital monographs and web sites for the presentation of complex data, primary sources, and scholarly interpretation, as well as continuing refinement and expansion of the use of digital tools in important institutional activities such as peer review, grant applications, and proposal submissions.

Job candidates, faculty, administrators, personnel review committees, and professional societies have been discussing the issues raised by new formats of publication and scholarly productivity for over a decade. Through this document, the American Philological Association and the Archaeological Institute of America intend to emphasize to all these constituencies

that the ongoing changes in scholarly communication present a significant opportunity for improved dissemination of and access to important material in our disciplines, an opportunity that merits the investment of effort and resources on the part of individuals and institutions;

that hiring and review bodies have an obligation to take careful account of contributions to and in digital formats, always regarding the quality of the work and its actual or potential influence on the present and future course of scholarship and teaching as decisive criteria, irrespective of format.

While increased reliance upon digital formats cannot solve all the complex problems arising from the trends outlined above, institutional and personal receptivity to digital modes of communication may alleviate some of the resulting pressure on scholars, especially junior scholars, and result in wider public awareness of developments in our fields.

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