

Two Textual Traditions

Loeb Classical Library 1.0

WHEN JAMES LOEB designed his soon-to-be-launched series of Greek and Roman texts at the turn of the twentieth century, he envisioned the production of volumes that could easily fit in readers' coat pockets. A century later, that compact format is still one of the collection's hallmarks. Beginning in September, however, the iconic books will be far handier than Loeb had hoped: users of the Loeb Classical Library (LCL) will have the entire collection at their fingertips. After five years of dedicated work on the part of the library's trustees and Harvard University Press (HUP), which has overseen LCL since its creator's death in 1933, the more than 520 volumes of literature that make up the series will be accessible online. Besides allowing users to browse the digitized volumes, which retain the unique side-by-side view of the original text and its English translation, the Digital Loeb Classical Library will enable readers to search for words and phrases across the entire corpus, to annotate content, to share notes and reading lists with others, and to create their own libraries using personal workspaces.

LCL managing editor Michael Sullivan, whose position was created earlier this year to supervise the virtual library, said that the digitization project is "a major leap forward in the history of the Loeb." According to HUP executive editor-at-large Sharmila Sen, the launch of the digital LCL marks "a moment of rebirth" for the historic collection. She explained that in the years preceding the library's 2011 centenary, the trustees and HUP administrators began to think about how to make the LCL "relevant to the twenty-first century." Even though online databases of Greek and Latin literature have existed for years, said the library's general editor, Jeffrey Henderson, a classics professor at Boston University, the digital Loeb will be unprecedented in its accessibility and scope: for the first time, readers without knowledge of Greek and Latin will be able to explore a vast range of the classical literary heritage online through high-quality, modern translations. He added that the project, which cost the LCL foundation more than \$1 mil-

lion, will serve as a model for the digitization of other HUP series, noting, "It's strange that the oldest literature becomes the model for the digital age."

Consolidating a vast literary corpus involving two different alphabets into an interconnected, elegant, and easy-to-use website required much behind-the-scenes work, Sen said. Designing the software for the digital library and transferring the data have concluded, she noted, but the project overseers view the current product—which will be available by subscription to institutions and individuals—as only a 1.0 version. The website will be a dynamic workspace, Henderson pointed out, adding that user feedback will help the editors increase its functionality.

According to LCL executive trustee Richard Thomas, Lane professor of the classics, the digital library will have a remarkable pedagogical function. Instructors, he explained, will be able to link the digital texts directly to their syllabi—a feature he expects to be particularly useful in his own Latin courses. Assistant professor of classics Paul Kosmin plans to use the virtual library for his survey course, "Classical Studies 97a: Greek Culture and Civilization," which attracts both students familiar with the ancient language and those who are not. Accessing the bilingual Loeb online during section, Kosmin explained, will equalize the learning experience. "It's going to be a wonderful, wonderful resource," he noted, adding that his students will be able to analyze texts together on the digital platform using the annotation feature. Emma Dench, professor of the classics and of history and a scholar of ancient Rome (see *Harvard Portrait*, March-April 2010, page 49), said the up-to-date online versions will replace out-of-copyright trans-

These articles were reported and written by Francesca Annicchiario '16, the magazine's inaugural Daniel Steiner Undergraduate Editorial Fellow.



The Loeb classics, newly available online

lations—which do not “read very nicely” and are less authoritative than the Loeb—that she has often had to use in the classroom. The virtual library, she added, will be especially valuable for instructors who teach courses that require many classical texts.

The impact of the digitization project will extend beyond classical studies, Thomas pointed out. The virtual library, he said, will be a “scholarly tool not just for classicists, but for those in English literature, Romance languages, philosophy, history, political science.” Cogan University Professor Stephen Greenblatt wrote in an e-mail to *Harvard Magazine* that he can imagine using the digital LCL to explore Shakespeare’s indebtedness to Roman authors like Plutarch, Ovid, and Cicero. “[The classics] remain, after thousands of years, a vital intellectual, scientific, cultural, and spiritual matrix,” he added. Bemis professor of international law Noah Feldman said the virtual library will be useful in his courses on constitutional law and legal theory. “I would far rather refer students to a good text,” he explained, “than have them wandering around on the Internet.” He added that the digital LCL will be particularly helpful for an undergraduate general-education course on power and constraint that he is now designing.

Teaching aside, scholars and authors plan to use the digital library to conduct research. Kosmin, whose work on the Hellenistic period involves visiting archaeological sites and exploring the itineraries of ancient monarchs, will no longer need to carry all the relevant Loeb volumes with him during his travels. Wien professor of drama and of English and comparative lit-

erature Martin Puchner (see *Harvard Portrait*, May-June 2013, page 50) said that the Loeb website will facilitate his research for a book about the history of world literature that will feature several classical authors. “I use [the Loeb series] to engage classical texts whose original language I know but not as fluently as I would like to,” he noted. Beyond the Harvard community, British novelist and historian Tom Holland said that he will browse the digital library to inform his forthcoming book about the Julio-Claudian dynasty, instead of paging through several printed volumes from beginning to end.

According to editors and faculty mem-

bers, the digitization project will not endanger the familiar red- or green-covered volumes. But keeping the print series, which will continue and expand, in sync with the online version will present new challenges, noted Henderson. “It’s important that people don’t get the idea that the print library is obsolete or that the most recent version is online,” he explained, “so we’re going to revise each in tandem.” Henderson added that he does not believe that the availability of the series online will harm print sales because the two libraries serve different purposes. Dench pointed out, “There is for me a limit to how much I actually want to read a book

cover-to-cover on the Internet.” She suggested that the launch of the website may even increase print sales as more people become aware of the collection.

Digitizing the Loeb will help preserve a literary heritage that, Sen noted, “has survived many technological upgrades” since antiquity. According to Feldman, the online project has a larger importance. “The commitment that the University and Harvard University Press have to these volumes is symbolic of our commitment to humanistic knowledge and education,” he suggested. “It’s wonderful and hugely important that that commitment not be seen as something archaic, but as something that’s alive.”

Tibetan Literature, Digitized

THIS SUMMER, Harvard Library has begun to upload onto its digital storage system 10 million pages of Tibetan literature that survived China’s convulsive Cultural Revolution, the movement between 1966 and 1976 that led to the destruction of countless Chinese and Tibetan literary texts. The project is the result of a partnership between Harvard Library and the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC), a nonprofit organization based in Harvard Square that has been acquiring, scanning, and digitally preserving Tibetan volumes since its founding in 1999.

Leonard van der Kuijp, professor of Tibetan and Himalayan studies at Harvard and president of the center’s board of directors, explained that an enormous number of Tibetan texts disappeared during the Cultural Revolution, which affected the Tibetan plateau as much as it did the rest of China. “But many books were somehow saved by local Tibetans, monks and laypeople who buried the books, put them in boxes, wrapped them in cloth, and buried them in the ground,” he added. “And now, slowly, these books are coming out.”

TBRC developed from the vision of Gene Smith, a librarian and Tibetologist who started his private collection of Tibetan books while serving at the New Delhi field office of the Library of Congress between 1968 and 1985. With van der Kuijp’s help, Smith established TBRC at the turn of the millennium in order to catalog, preserve,

and make available the Tibetan literary heritage. After scanning and cataloging Smith’s 12,000-volume collection, the center began its continuing search for more Tibetan texts to preserve. TBRC has so far digitally preserved approximately 20,000 volumes dating from the eighth century to the twentieth, covering subjects ranging from Buddhist teachings and theories to philosophy, history, poetry, architecture, and medicine.

Wallman and Richard Lesage, the Harvard librarian for South and South-East Asia who has helped spearhead the collaboration, said that it would take approximately a year to upload the files onto Harvard Library’s Digital Repository System (DRS), a digital storage service that will serve as a backup for TBRC’s own digital files. The DRS represents a “safe haven” for the digitized Tibetan texts, commented associate librarian for collection development Dan Hazen, who has helped coordinate the project. Harvard Library will also incorporate the TBRC catalog into the HOLLIS catalog,

making the Tibetan texts available to the library’s users. (HOLLIS will not provide access to TBRC’s collections directly, but will redirect users to the TBRC database.) Hazen defined the collaboration with TBRC as one of Harvard Library’s “hallmark projects” since its recent administrative and organizational restructuring.

Despite all the *political* tensions that have arisen concerning China’s governance of the Tibetan region and people, the climate in China is now particularly favorable to the preservation of the Tibetan *literary* heritage. The government has recently passed a law protecting the Tibetan language, said Greg Beier, the center’s director of sustainability. “This is an ideal time for really getting involved with looking for the texts and making them available to the world.”

For a complete report, see harvardmag.com/tibetan-14.



Tibetan texts on loan, awaiting scanning, and a Tibetan Buddhist woodblock (below), also recorded digitally

