**NEWTON — Myths**

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**Myths on Maps**

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What we commonly refer to as ‘Greek myth’ was initially the product of local oral traditions that celebrated regional heroes and their adventures. The amalgamated texts passed on to us retain much of the sources’ geographical information, allowing us to geo-locate events and characters mentioned by the texts. The Myths on Maps project (http://myths.uvic.ca/) was started in 2009 by Dr. Laurel Bowman as an experimental geographical information system (GIS) with the expressed goal of presenting to a modern audience the geographical connections between people, places, and events that the original tellers and audiences found self-evident.

While projects exist to provide information on ancient places (e.g., Pleiades gazetteer of ancient places; http://pleiades.stoa.org/), and others make available repositories of searchable texts (e.g., Perseus Digital Library, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/), our aim is to bring text and geography together to produce a GIS tightly integrated with our growing collection of texts and standoff data.

**Technology**

Given the initial intent of describing relationships, Myths on Maps was originally conceived as a traditional SQL database, using PHP to query the database and render the online portion of the application. After nearly two years of frequent, iterative adjustments to the database schema, it became evident that the project needed to look at other, more flexible methods of storage and retrieval. At that point we settled on an XML/XQuery-based architecture, relying on the eXist XML database (http://exist-db.org/) to replace the cumbersome SQL system.

**The Application**

By creating three separate views of our texts and data, Myths on Maps provides users with the flexibility to scope inquiries rather than rely on proscribed discovery methods. The Reader view offers an unencumbered view of the text itself, but includes an interactive discovery layer that allows readers to explore characters, groups, places, and events as they progress through the text. The Data viewer allows users to quickly drill down to the character, place, or event they are looking for. Functionally speaking, the Map view is text-agnostic, focusing more on the standoff data. Searches of the map display the myths pertaining to a site, a character, the character’s relationships with other characters, journeys, the texts recording the myths, and relationships between the texts themselves.

**XML Collections**

The English texts used by the project were taken initially from the Perseus project and subjected to further XML encoding, connecting mentioned places, people, and events to our standoff data collection. At the time of writing, we have completed Apollodorus’ Library and Epitome, and are currently completing Homer’s *Iliad* (expected publication date, summer 2015). The project’s growing collection of standoff data consists of over 2,200 characters, nearly 600 places, more than 300 groups, and approximately 2,800 events. All textual data produced by the project is published under a Creative Commons license and is freely available to scholars for their own use.

**The Future**

So far, we have chosen particularly geographically dense texts, beginning with Apollodorus’ Library and continuing with Homer’s *Iliad*. Our next targets include Pausanias’ *Description of Greece*, followed by Pindar’s *Odes*, and *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*. The ultimate aim of the project is to map all major Greek and Roman myths, insofar as their geographic locations and that of their authors are known or noted.

Given the broad scope of the project, we also hope to be able to develop academic partnerships that will help expand the range of available texts through the contribution of texts encoded using project guidelines.

Planned features include more sophisticated search and filter functionality, the ability to visualize journeys, and greater user control over the creation and export of custom maps. We are also developing a responsive, mobile version of the site.