

A digital periegesis: annotating, mapping and linking Pausanias's Description of Greece

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Annotation is as old as writing itself. Among the first texts to be written down, Homer's oral poems survive thanks first to Hellenistic scholars, whose comments and explanations formed the editions that come down to us, and then to later manuscript technology, which enabled the painstaking copying of both the texts and the notes associated with them. Just as the manuscript medium provided affordances for annotation, so too the digital revolution, which we are currently experiencing in our everyday life and research, has the potential to radically transform what and how (even why) we annotate.

In this presentation we reflect on the role and use of annotation in the Digital Humanities by focusing on two on-going initiatives. While various methods for, as well as kinds of, annotation can be applied to a digital document, Pelagios has established a process that uses semantic annotation of place references to connect heterogeneous materials and resources, and built a tool, Recogito, that enables the subject specialist to semantically enrich their documents without needing to know how to code. Using Recogito to identify, trace and explore the spatial form of, and the forms of space within, the second-century CE Description of Greece by Pausanias, the Digital Periegesis analyses that "thick" description and shows how Pausanias takes his reader on a virtual pilgrimage through an imaginary Greece, which exists not on the ground but in the text, in the memories and myths of local landscape(s).