Artificial Intelligence in Neo-Latin Studies: Prospects and Concerns

A roundtable discussion

Dear colleagues,

The Committee for Digital Resources of the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies is pleased to invite you to an online roundtable discussion entitled ***Artificial Intelligence and Neo-Latin Studies: Prospects and Concerns***.

The session will bring together scholars interested in exploring how recent developments in artificial intelligence are reshaping the study, editing, interpretation, and teaching of Neo-Latin texts. We aim for a lively and inclusive exchange across disciplines and career stages.

Format

The roundtable will begin with a series of **5-minute introductory talks** by six speakers, each presenting a focused idea, project, or challenge at the intersection of AI and Neo-Latin Studies. These short interventions will be followed by an **open discussion**, encouraging questions, reflections, and broader conversation among all participants.

Time and place

🗓 **Friday, 20 February 2026**

⏰ **2:00-3:30PM CET**

📍 **Online via Zoom** (the link will be sent in due course)

The abstracts of the talks can be found below.

Whether you are actively using AI tools in your research or are simply curious about their implications for Neo-Latin Studies, we warmly welcome your participation.

To help us with planning, we kindly ask those interested in attending to complete a short form here.

Please feel free to share this invitation with your colleagues.

We hope you can join us for what promises to be a stimulating and forward-looking discussion.

With best regards,

IANLS Committee for Digital Resources

Introductory talks abstracts

William Barton (University of Innsbruck)

Media evolution and the long Latin story

In this lightning talk, I attempt to take a step back from the sometimes-fraught contemporary debate around AI to adopt a wider historical perspective, thereby proposing to place the arrival of AI in a broader account of Latin and media evolution. In doing so, I invite discussants to consider the (perhaps advantageous) position of the perspectives of Neo-Latin scholars in theoretical reflection about generative AI, and about large language models in particular. The lessons of our historical field on questions of authorship, for example, and the 'democratization' of knowledge at moments of media transformation could be here, I propose, instructive.

Marco Cristini (University of Florence)

Studying 21st-century Neo-Latin Poetry in the Age of AI

Artificial Intelligence can assist scholars working on present-day Neo-Latin poetry in a wide range of tasks. While many are familiar with tools like Gemini or ChatGPT for proofreading academic papers and identifying factual errors, AI can also proofread Latin texts, spotting not only grammatical mistakes but also typos and inconsistencies. Moreover, it can transcribe long lists of poetry from indices, provide complex statistical data, analyze the meter of a poem, gather information about poet biographies, and identify title repetitions. Consequently, researching large volumes of Latin verses is now quicker, easier, and more efficient than in previous years.

Lev Shadrin (University of Innsbruck)

LLMs and HTR: Competition or Integration?

The recent advancements in multimodal large language model (LLM) performance have prompted a reassessment of existing approaches to handwritten text recognition (HTR) for historical documents. LLMs now achieve good zero-shot results when processing handwritten historical sources, in some cases competitive with specialised HTR pipelines. However, their outputs remain difficult to control, reproduce, and systematically evaluate, particularly for documents containing overlapping lines, marginal annotations, and the lexical variation typical of Latin and Greek sources. Drawing on insights gained from the LAGOOS project's work on a New Ancient Greek private diary, this brief talk examines the respective advantages and limitations of current HTR and LLM-based tools, and seeks to initiate a discussion about their reliability, scalability, and applicability across different research use cases, including exploratory reading, post-correction, and end-to-end text recognition.

Patrick Burns (New York University)

The Role of Computational Agents in Establishing Neo-Latin Text Collections

In a recent article on machine learning and philological practice, Mirjam Kotwick and Johannes Haubold state that "while machines may make interesting suggestions, only human philologists can ultimate adjudicate philological problems." And yet some urgent problems with respect to the digitization of errorful texts are clearly beyond human scale and, I would argue, require computational adjudication, perhaps even approaches involving agentic AI. In this lightning talk, I discuss my recent work on analyzing the Latin content of open-access LLM training data repositories and my current thinking on philological correction at computational scale. The concerns described above are most pronounced for Neo-Latin which represents the bulk of open-access LLM-based Latin content according to available metadata. If successful, agentic philology could lead to a massive increase in the number of digitized Neo-Latin texts and a considerable improvement in their text condition.

Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (Aarhus University)

The Nearness of the Past

AI is making all texts accessible in translation, at least in versions that are good enough for most purposes. For Neo-Latin, this is no different, and there is an opportunity to bring the important cultural and literary history of European countries closer to the vast majority of students who don't read Neo-Latin. However, access without effort goes against a long-standing principle of education, so where should new kinds of friction be introduced?

Sarah Lang (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin)

LLMs and the Lure of Plausibility

This statement addresses the lure of plausibility in Large Language Models (LLMs), arguing that while LLMs offer promising potential for scholars, they also impose an additional burden of verification. They appear to increase accessibility, for instance, enabling non-programmers to write code or allowing those with limited Latin to engage with Neo-Latin texts. However, it is precisely these users who are most at risk of being misled by the plausible surface of LLM outputs. Unlike earlier OCR results, where recognition errors (and thus limitation of the machine) were immediately visible due to messy artifacts, LLM outputs often appear convincing even to experts, unless examined closely. I therefore urge caution in using these tools. This caution does not negate their potential but highlights that they are especially powerful in the hands of experts or in contexts where exact precision is not critical.