

REPORT OF THE 1997-98 *TLL* FELLOW

Since my predecessor, Dr. Gregory Hays, so well described the importance of the *TLL* and its inner workings as an institution (*APA Newsletter*, Feb. '98), I would like to use the space allotted to me in this report to concentrate on the benefits to the *TLL* Fellow from a year's work at the *Thesaurus*. While it is not possible to list all the advantages the *TLL* fellow enjoys – they are simply too many and varied – I hope my comments will give an idea of the tremendous value of this experience for anyone working in Classics or Classics-related fields. In my own case I can say without reservation that the brief year I spent at the *TLL* was decisive for my professional development, both as teacher as well as researcher.

I have on occasion been asked what one does at the *Thesaurus*. The simple answer is that the *TLL* fellow works for one year – with some generous vacation time – as a lexicographer, or more precisely, as an 'intern' lexicographer. The terms 'lexicographer' and 'lexicography,' however, are unfortunate. They too often conjure up the idea that the *TLL* fellow has been out of circulation from the real world of American academe to pursue some remote and esoteric line of research. Just the opposite is, in fact, the case. Almost every aspect of the work at the *TLL* has direct application to the skills and knowledge that any American classicist will use throughout an entire career, regardless of whether that career tends to be teaching or research intensive.

The peace, focus, and quiet intensity of the *TLL* may not much resemble the sometimes frantic pace of an American college or university, but what the *TLL* fellow learns and practices is exactly what a busy professor needs. On a daily basis the *TLL* fellow must choose reliable texts, evaluate variant readings, work with reference grammars, commentaries, and, of course, the *TLL* itself. This sort of practice encourages good scholarly habits and consolidates the skills and knowledge acquired during graduate study. For a recent Ph.D. I can scarcely imagine a better transition to a professorship than a year at the *TLL*.

And lest so much benefit to one's professional development begin to sound medicinal, I would hasten to add that the work at the *TLL* is very enjoyable. First, there is the pleasure of sampling the breadth of Latin literature. When the *TLL* fellow is assigned a word, the first order of business is to read through the passages in which the word occurs. These passages (or references to the passages) are written on slips contained in a smallish, square box – or in boxes, if the word has many occurrences. The slips are arranged in chronological order, and so each word offers a kind of survey of Latin literature. The particular authors one reads with each word vary, but most words, even those with fewer slips, usually cover a broad swath of Latin literature, often from early inscriptions to later ecclesiastical authors. The organic link is, of course, the word itself, and there is no end of fascination in tracking a word's development through its long and often surprising history.

Besides the enjoyment of sweeping through the breadth of Latin literature, there is almost always the fun of discovering some peculiarity or surprise with a particular word. As I worked on *prodisco* I was compelled to rethink completely my understanding of capital trials in Livy and a related passage in Cicero's *de domo*. The word *profligare*, which I had understood in primarily moral terms, turned out to have an important technical use in military contexts. After I was assigned the word *professor*, I was quite surprised to discover that the first reference was in Valerius Maximus, a rather late start for a word that has had such a productive career.

Quite frequently the particular word I was working on led me to authors I had either heard of but never read or to authors I had never even heard of. As I worked on the word *professor*, I looked up a passage in Censorinus that described how various physicians used music to alter the state of the mind and body. This reference was for me a particularly lucky find since I have long been interested in ancient views on the effects of music. (Censorinus also reports that Pythagoras used to play the lyre and sing before going to bed.) Thus, in the process of doing my *Thesaurus* work, I collected material that will form the basis for any number of future papers, articles, lectures, and Latin reading courses.

The most challenging aspect of work at the *TLL* is writing the actual *Thesaurus* article. The *TLL* article is a remarkable scholarly tool, but it takes some getting used to, so it may be worthwhile to say a bit more about it. A *Thesaurus* article is more like an elaborate outline (or flow-chart, as Dr. Hays put it)

with explanatory headings at the various levels. The goal of a *TLL* article is not to list all the passages where a word occurs, but instead to describe and illustrate as clearly and concisely as possible the various usages of that word. At each level of this outline the reader who is looking for a particular word meaning has only a few choices (ideally two) between various characterizations of the word. If, for example, the word in question seems to belong to the category under point B of the outline, then the possibilities listed under point A may simply be bypassed. The genius of this arrangement is especially apparent in longer words. A simple listing of word meanings gives the reader very little help in finding a particular usage. By following the ‘flow-chart’ of a *TLL* article the reader not only can find a particular meaning – even an obscure or rare meaning – more efficiently but also gets a sense of the word’s history and development along the way.

Creating the *TLL* article will likely seem to be the most esoteric part of the *TLL* fellow’s work – the article is, after all, written in Latin! Curiously enough, it is this very activity that has so far had the greatest practical effect on my work as a classicist, especially in teaching beginning language. In developing a *TLL* article one must set aside preconceived notions about what a word means and observe what its syntax, context, etymology, and historical development says it must mean. As I wrestled with the distinction and disposition of word usages in my various articles, I had to think much more concretely and consciously about what one does when one reads and understands a text. These considerations, in turn, have profoundly influenced how I teach first-year language courses.

For beginning Latin students (Greek students too, of course) learning to read a passage according to context and grammar is perhaps their single greatest challenge. (They are tempted instead to swap out prefabricated English meanings and to treat the instructor’s glosses on a text as some kind of infallible Delphic utterance.) As I have developed texts and exercises to teach my students to read and not simply decode, I see how much my approach to language instruction owes to the experience I gained grappling with word usage in my *Thesaurus* articles. Thus, the ‘esoteric’ work of the *TLL* has turned out to be very practical training for what I am doing right now with my undergraduates.

While the *TLL*’s archive certainly justifies designating the *Thesaurus* as a ‘treasure house,’ I am inclined to think that the personnel of the institution is at least as great an asset. Limitations of space do not permit me to name all those at the *TLL* who so generously gave of their time and expertise. Suffice it to say that I learned not only from my editors, but also from the permanent *TLL* Mitarbeiter and my fellow Stipendiaten. I hope the many individuals whom I cannot mention here will still sense my thankfulness for all they contributed to my stay at the *TLL*.

I would, however, be remiss if I did not at least mention those at the *Thesaurus* who exercised the greatest influence on my day-to-day work. First and foremost, I am indebted to my editor, Drs. Cornelis van Leijenhorst. My thanks fall short for his generous expenditure of time, careful explanations of *Thesaurus* procedure, and endless patience with my many questions. Discussion of my articles with Drs. van Leijenhorst was an education in itself, and through his constant emphasis on a clear, well-supported, and elegant disposition of the material, I began to understand the tremendous amount of philological skill that is brought to bear on each *Thesaurus* article.

The learning experience of writing a *Thesaurus* article was further enhanced by contact, both direct and indirect, with Dr. Hugo Beikircher. After I had written and discussed an article with Drs. van Leijenhorst, the article then went to Dr. Beikircher who read and commented on it. His commentaries were models of precision and insight, and his solutions to problems of meaning and article disposition were not only compellingly logical but elegantly clear.

Like my predecessor, I had the good fortune to share an office with Dr. Ilse Reinecke. Her speed and acuity in writing *TLL* articles were a constant example to me; watching her work and discussing the complexities of various words was invaluable for my own understanding of the process. On occasion I read published *TLL* articles as models for my own, and it was a regular occurrence that I would come to the end of an article I particularly admired and find the name Reinecke. From my first day at the *TLL*, Dr. Reinecke made me feel quite at home as her new office mate, and I am much indebted to her for a relaxed work environment and many enjoyable conversations. (Classical music was often our topic of discussion,

and I should at least mention that for the music lover Munich offers countless opportunities to hear outstanding recitals, concerts and opera.)

While I did not work directly with the General Editor of the *Thesaurus*, Dr. Peter Flury, I nevertheless benefitted greatly from occasional conversations with him about the work of the *TLL*. Dr. Flury's command of Latin literature is so complete and his experience in lexicography so vast that even his brief or casual remarks never failed to illuminate some point of *Thesaurus* theory or practice. It may come as something of a surprise that a man of such formidable abilities is at the same time so down-to-earth and approachable. The pleasantness of the working environment at the *Thesaurus* is, I think, owed in great part to Dr. Flury, and I, like many before me, felt deep appreciation for his genuine concern for the well-being of the *Thesaurus* fellows.

Finally, a word of thanks is due to those who worked so hard to ensure that my time at the *TLL* would run as efficiently and smoothly as possible. Professor Patrick Sinclair provided an invaluable orientation to the work of the *TLL* in the Spring before I left for Munich and saved me weeks of learning by trial and error what he explained so well in advance. Dr. Dietfried Krömer, business director of the *Thesaurus*, and Dr. Manfred Flieger, Wissenschaftlicher Sekretär were in contact with me well before my departure for Munich and at my arrival went out of their way to make me feel welcome and at home at the *TLL*. In addition, Dr. Flieger and Frau Margarete Bernhard were always of assistance with any practical questions or difficulties that arose during my stay.

As positive as my experiences in Munich were, this report would not be complete if I did not mention what I have come to see as somewhat of a weakness of the *TLL* Fellowship. One year at the *Thesaurus* is in many ways simply not enough. Writing a *Thesaurus* article is a challenging and complicated activity and there is much to learn in the process. It is probably only toward the end of the first year that the 'intern lexicographer' begins to feel comfortable and somewhat competent in the work. It is precisely at this point when the American Fellow is distracted by all the pressing arrangements of moving back from a foreign country, taking up a new job, and bringing some kind of closure to a year rich in experiences and friendships. A second year would allow the American Fellow – and the *Thesaurus* – to see a fuller harvest of what has been so painstakingly brought to fruition.

The rules prescribing a one-year tenure of the *TLL* Fellowship are quite understandable. Offering the fellowship to a different recipient each year allows the greatest number of Americans possible the opportunity to work at the *Thesaurus*. After experiencing first hand the benefits of even a single year, I would hesitate to suggest any solution that decreased the number of fellowship recipients. If funds were available, however, I would suggest supporting two American fellows for two years each but staggering their terms in Munich. Practically, that would mean that each year one *TLL* fellow would be chosen, and when the new fellow arrived, the previous fellow would be half way through his/her two-year term. This would, I think, make the succession of *TLL* fellows run more smoothly for both those arriving as well as for those leaving.

My predecessor, Dr. Gregory Hays, was tremendously helpful in easing my transition into the new environment, though my need of help came at a time hardly convenient for him. In turn, I too attempted to be helpful to my successor, Dr. David Banta. Our stays in Munich overlapped somewhat, and that allowed me to be of assistance in ways that would have been impossible had our terms been strictly consecutive. Even so, there was much I wished to do but could not because I was so occupied with my own departure. For the fellow, a single year at the *Thesaurus* will pay dividends for an entire career, but it seems only natural to wish to return a bit more to the institution that in time and teaching invests so much in its Stipendiaten.

As I think back over my year in Munich – and not without considerable *Sehnsucht* – I wish my successor, Dr. David Banta, an equally happy and beneficial year. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the APA's *TLL* Committee for selecting me for this honor and to the NEH and APA for their financial support in making the *TLL* Fellowship possible.

Respectfully Submitted,
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