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Writing on the Oppian

My title is ambiguous by design. Three types of writing on the Oppian will be discussed: the testimony of ancient authors relevant to the topography and history of the area, the ancient writing physically located on the site -- inscriptions discovered *in situ* or in the region but removed from their original setting, and the writing of modern scholars attempting to piece together these verbal sources with the archaeological and topographical data. The aim is to suggest how the interactive electronic tool FORTVNA can best exploit some of the possibilities afforded by the electronic medium of the internet (hyperlinks, encoded text, etc.) to help students of Roman topography understand the ancient sites and monuments of the city.

With textual sources, the concept of layers is important. Literary sources present two problems of layering: extraneous accretions and corruptions produced by the manuscript tradition by which they are transmitted must be peeled away to uncover the original text, and the reliability of the information preserved in the text itself must be assessed partly on the basis of its chronological proximity to the features it describes. For the first, the traditional *apparatus criticus* can be transformed via hyperlinks into a more accessible instrument, and parallel passages can be easily assembled and linked. For the second, encoding of individual testimonies will enable all those attesting any particular feature to be arranged in various useful ways, for example chronologically, by date of composition or by date of features described, at the press of a button.

Inscriptions present different challenges. Usually (but not always) they are contemporary with the features they document, but dating the inscriptions themselves is difficult. Here find-spot, including the stratigraphical level, is important. The same basic tools of hyperlinkage and encoding will enable inscriptions from the same period or from the same area to be assembled, with the various names assigned to the same locations at different periods (chronological layering) superimposed upon one another (e.g., via delle Terme di Traiano and via Mecenate = Sette Sale = *piscina thermae Traianae*).

Selected examples of literary and epigraphic texts relevant to the Oppian will illustrate these possibilities.