

Unique dictionary nears completion

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A page from the Dictionary of Medieval Latin

A huge number of students ranging from linguists to those studying coins and family ancestry are benefiting from a 100 year project to compile the world's most comprehensive dictionary of Medieval Latin.

Work started on the unique Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources 50 years ago but experts began collecting material early in the 20th century.

Now the initiative is nearing completion and Professor Tobias Reinhardt, Corpus Christi Professor of the Latin Language and Literature at Oxford University is responsible for seeing it through.

“It will be an achievement of international importance, serving as a primary and essential reference volume to a very wide range of scholars, students, and interested members of the public,” Professor Reinhardt, who is based in the Faculty of Classics says. “Bringing it to completion in the current difficult funding environment will be a symbol of the resilience of the humanities in Britain.”

The dictionary has drawn on the largest collection of literary and epigraphic sources of any similar project. [Words](#) used in Classical Latin and Late Latin – up to AD 600 – and the Middle Ages – from the sixth century to the 16th - are included. It details headwords – under which related entries appear – definitions, quotations and each word’s history. It follows the style of the Oxford English Dictionary.

Entries range from words used in high literature to those common in day to day speech, many of which did not appear in text for hundreds of years.

The dictionary also incorporates words from Greek, Celtic, Semitic, Germanic and Romance languages. “It is being used by students of philosophy, music, those studying names and even topography as well as language and literature students,” Professor Reinhardt adds.

The dictionary is due to be published fully online in 2014, a target he is confident will be met. The dictionary, which is a British Academy research project as well as a research project in the Faculty of Classics at Oxford, has recently won \$800,000 from the Packard Humanities Institute enabling its completion.

“People will be able to search for words online when they have an internet connection, using their iPhones and of course laptops. As a medieval Latin [dictionary](#) it is the leading publication in its field.”

Provided by Oxford University

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