

Google funds project investigating the geography of the ancient world

23 February 2012

A University of Southampton led project, exploring how people of antiquity viewed the geography of the ancient world, has been backed by \$50,000 of funding from Google, Inc. via its Digital Humanities Awards Program.

Google Ancient Places (GAP) is developing a Web application which allows users to choose a classical text or book (500BC - 500AD) and then search for references to ancient places within it, presenting the results in a user-friendly interface.

GAP uses specialist software to identify where and how often places are mentioned within a text, displaying references to the locations and plotting results on a map using an independent digital gazetteer (Pleiades).

Project leader, and Southampton Digital Humanities specialist, Dr Leif Isaksen explains, "A GAP user can not only see how an author's narrative moves from place-to-place, but also how a town or city's relative importance varies throughout a historical text. "We hope it will interest scholars and users with a general interest in antiquity alike."

GAP is an international collaborative research project between the University of Southampton (Dr Leif Isaksen), The Open University (Dr Elton Barker), the University of Edinburgh (Dr Kate Byrne), University of California, Berkeley (Dr Eric Kansa) and independent developer Nick Rabinowitz. This [Digital Humanities](#) Research Grant is the second round of funding GAP has received from the [Google](#) Research Awards Program, and will allow the team to expand their project to a wider variety of books and texts.

Dr Isaksen comments, "We intend to expand the scope of the material we are working with, increasing the volume of and variety of the texts, so not just factual texts but also poetry and fiction."

In addition, GAP is part of a larger network of open data on antiquity called Pelagios, which is made up of several similar online projects. By integrating GAP with this network, the researchers hope to give users access to more varied types of data, such as archaeological artefacts or historical documents.

Open University classicist, Dr Elton Barker says, "Previous projects have tended to be closed silos of information and that has reinforced barriers between disciplines. By linking our data to other archaeological and classical resources it becomes possible to navigate directly between them, making it easier to look at [ancient](#) texts and artefacts in their spatial, cultural and literary context."

More information: To explore Google Ancient Places, please visit: googleancientplaces.wordpress.com/gapvis/ using an up-to-date version of your browser.

Provided by University of Southampton

APA citation: Google funds project investigating the geography of the ancient world (2012, February 23) retrieved 29 November 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-02-google-funds-geography-ancient-world.html>

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