



Medusa



## Julian's report

**This informal report has been written for members of the CIRCE Project who could not attend and for some of those who did attend and help make the day a success.**

Welcome to the CIRCE Manual

CIRCE – a Classics & ICT Resource Course for Europe

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The venue, it appeared, was not only in the HQ building of IBM UK. It was the IBM UK Boardroom! A truly fantastic room, with a view directly onto the river Thames below. It was quite an amazing place to be and I think everyone there felt that.

The IBM people were exceptionally helpful - I need to write and thank so many people after this event. Jane Cockayne brought everyone along with a smile, gave them tea and coffee, biscuits, lunch, afternoon tea, looked after everything - couldn't have been more helpful. The main PR person, Vincent Smith, was there for a lot of the day and was clearly happy with what was going on - very impressed in particular that we had so much interest from the national press.

Veerle and Jens arrived on time, with the books - thanks again, guys - and all the other free stuff arrived on time to be inserted into the IBM bags. I gave everyone there a single copy of my Pompeii software and the Cambridge School Classics Project gave everyone a copy of the Pocket Oxford Latin Dictionary. There were other handouts from various sources.

The politician, Boris Johnson, arrived on his bicycle and spoke very, very well for about 15 minutes, as arranged. He was extremely funny, speaking about the silliness of Brussels, mentioning some new legislation about short people needing booster cushions in cars, and saying thank goodness for the fact that the EU had actually spent some of its money on Classics. He suggested that he thought every European child should be made to study classical literature and said his preferred text would be Aeneid book IV.

I then introduced the project in a few sentences, before Veerle did a more in-depth look, with some photos taken during the project's life. We saw some pictures taken at various of the meetings, which was a very good way to showcase the work we have done, I thought. Boris stayed for this and then had to leave, as arranged beforehand. You cannot expect a busy politician to be at something like this for a whole day.

Will Griffiths then did a talk on the Cambridge Latin Course, in all its aspects. He spoke very well and very clearly, showing the whole range of the CSCP stuff. The course has an awful lot of users out there and I think it was important that we should hear about the electronic materials in particular. We were treated to a look at the website and at the new DVD of Book I.

Then we had a second member of parliament, Michael Fallon, who spoke about a cross-party parliamentary committee which looks at issues to do with Classics. He explained that normally they are contacted when something is going wrong and said how pleased he was to be able to come to something where Classics was being so well promoted. He obviously enjoyed it because he stayed for much of the afternoon too.

Lunch was excellent, a large buffet of foodstuffs, all provided by the generosity of IBM. The people there - about 50 of them - seemed very happy indeed and there was a lot of informal conversation. The journalists were quite clearly getting to work at this point: there were three of them there, all from national newspapers. I am not remotely sure which aspects of the day they will cover - as I said in Clemont-Ferrand, you simply cannot control what the press will do - all you can do is try to get them there and then hope for the best. I am expecting articles in the Times Educational Supplement, the Daily Mail and the Independent, and the education correspondent from the Telegraph has also indicated he will give us a mention in his column, though he wasn't able to attend in person.

In the afternoon, Hannah Sisk from the British Council spoke about the global gateway, which was obviously listened to with interest by several people there. My own headmaster (and also the chairman of governors of my school) was there and he took some real interest at this point. He is not a classicist, nor is our chairman of governors, so I was doubly delighted that they both came and found something they were really interested in beyond the CIRCE materials.

Next came Steffan Griffiths from Eton College. Earlier in the day, Will Griffiths had spoken about privilege and elitism, and in my introduction, I referred to the fact that you don't get much more elitist than Eton, but that these guys are running a project at their own expense for the greater good of Classics. Tony Smith took over from Steffan and demonstrated the online materials for supporting Greek language work. There is a huge amount of online support for students of Greek on the Eton College website.

I did a slot on Latin Vocab Drill and Latin Flash Drill, which obviously went down well. I focused on the programs and their proven ability to raise standards of learning. I used a student of mine to demonstrate the software, so I didn't have to work the keyboard myself. In a venue like this one, it was good not to have to try to do several things at the same time. Matthew Betts worked the computer for me for pretty much the whole day and did an excellent job, I thought.

Then Arran Johnston, an ex-student of mine, currently in his third year at Edinburgh University, spoke about using Perseus. Normally I just do a talk on this myself and it was quite fascinating for me to hear him do it, especially as we hadn't discussed it in any detail. The point he made about his fellow-students is one I often make about teachers - that by *\*not\** using the system, they get themselves into what becomes almost a trap. They spend so much more time preparing and working on texts, that it makes it less easy for them to enjoy the literature per se. And the longer this goes on, the more reluctant they are to change their modus operandi. He often goes to classes where time is spent on language, which could be spent on interpretation. Arran said it was because of using the system at school that he feels so well able to cope with the course at university, where others may be struggling. A lot of people were clearly impressed, not just with what he said but also with his manner and confidence.

I then shared a session with Tony Smith, where we looked at Words, Pocket Oxford Latin Dictionary and Collatinus. We used a short paragraph from Tacitus Annals XV, 38, to illustrate the processes and I used the CIRCE website to access the links to Words and Collatinus, the first from Websites in the UK (English), the latter from Sites Utiles (Français). This was so I could look to the future, and raise the spectre of software still to be written, speaking about the need to be really careful about what will happen. If systems such as Collatinus end up doing all the work for kids in schools, what will be left for them to enjoy?

In my summing up, I thanked everyone - at least, I hope I did - and especially any who hadn't been mentioned during the day but who had contributed to the project. There are a lot of these people. I finished up by saying that the CIRCE Project isn't really about computers at all, but about the future survival of Classics - that's what's important.

Lessons to learn?

- The venue was spectacular and this really did lift the bar.
- Having a celebrity - in fact, two, since we had two national politicians there - really helps in terms of press interest.
- Having people speak about different case studies was the best way forward, I thought. Our problem, perhaps, was that the case studies chosen were all UK based. Then again, this was the UK launch - there is a balance to be found and I think we found it. I used the website and people have seen how the different languages work in the system as well as the new multilingual pages.
- I felt it was important to have representation not just from teachers, but from associations, examining bodies, publishers, supporters of Classics. This really did work well. I think about half of the people there were teachers and the other half not.
- I had four of my current students there and two ex-students. They said they had really enjoyed the day, and although only two of them were involved in the presentations, all of them got benefit, I thought. Also, the fact that my headmaster was there was a real bonus, for the students and for me.
- It is really important to think about who gets what out of a day like this. The response I got from Bob Betts, the IBM UK Sales Director, and from Vincent Smith, the PR man, was that IBM had definitely got benefit from helping us, in terms of the event's high profile and the press attendance. I am told I can use the venue again: it doesn't get any better than that.