Review of The database of Classical bibliography. Volume 1, edited by D.L. Clayman

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Response to this review by Dee Clayman

When classicists count their blessings, *L'Année philologique* (= APh) is -- or should be -- near the top of everyone's list. For close to 70 uninterrupted years, it has provided an annual guide to bibliography in the classics (far beyond traditional philologie) which aims to be complete. And now a team of collaborators has taken the trouble of starting to place this venerable resource on CD-ROM and designing search software to match. The twenty-first century classicist is sure to give thanks. For all its excellent features, APh has never been all that friendly to information searches: subject index there is none. That means, for instance, that the present-day historian who wants to research a general Roman topic usually has to look under the APh rubrics "Épigraphie grecque", "Épigraphie latine", "Histoire romaine", "Monde romain et byzantin", "Civilisation romaine" and "Droit romain" as well as a few author headings, for each and every year, as far back in time as he or she can stand -- and hope not to blink too often while doing so. It is a bit less work to collect bibliography on a particular ancient author (easily located within each APh volume), or on an antique person or place (for those there are usually indices). But forget about compiling a full list of a modern author's publications: reviews are not included under one's name in the relevant APh index. And thumbing through a new volume of APh in the hope of a chance find is not getting any easier. Thanks to the rapid rise of the personal computer, in recent years there has been more scholarship and thus more of APh than ever. The last two installments of APh available at the time of this review (62 [1991] and 63 [1992]) each have contents topping the thousand page mark -- the largest in the series' history. The strain seems to be showing: the latter of these hefty volumes omits the customary "Index geographicus", robbing the researcher of a vital roadmap to its approximately 16,000 entries. That comes despite the fact that APh is making a renewed effort to trim its coverage of archaeology, while adding cuts in numismatics and law (see 61 [1990] pp. vii-viii with 47 [1976] pp. v-vi).

Then there is the perennial -- indeed, with a project of APh's size and scope, practically unavoidable -- problem of the time lag. (For a behind-the-scenes glimpse at how APh is put together, see BMCRev 5.3 [1994] pp. 264-269.) A new issue of APh generally is plonked down on American library shelves a good two and a half years after the calendar date it covers. So next spring or summer, when I first gaze at the (doubtlessly thick) spine of APh 64 for 1993, I will find it hard not to fret also about the upwards of 20,000 individual items on Greek and Roman antiquity -- excluding reviews -- which will have appeared since that volume's cut-off date. For those who do need to know whether one's next article has already been written, the Internet is helping a bit. The roster of major journal holdings (from 1992 on) continually updated on Toronto's TOCS-IN [ftp://ftp.epas.utoronto.ca/pub/toecs-in/Search.html] is a real boon. For IBM
(and Power Macintosh) users, Jürgen Malitz and Gnomon have created a continuing Bibliographische Datenbank on disk -- soon to be at 174,000 items -- and have also started constructing an on-line version [http://www.ub.ku-eichstaett.de/Gnomon/]. Other more specialized electronic bibliographic resources are quickly emerging (e.g. DIOTIMA for gender studies [http://www.uky.edu/ArtsSciences/Classics/gender.html]). Print alternatives to APh are developing, too. Roman historians now have three volumes of the wonderfully revitalized Strasbourg Bulletin analytique d'histoire romaine, reporting publications from 1990 into 1994. Though the Bulletin does not attempt to cover Roman law, and contains no notices of books or book reviews, at least one can quickly find what seems relevant. That is largely because it abandons the APh-style abstracts in favor of strings of keywords under each item, which in turn are exhaustively indexed. If other subfields have bibliographic guides as helpful as this, I should like to hear about them.  

But all those new aids help to melt only a very small tip of an extremely large (and scarily expanding) iceberg. This is where the Database of Classical Bibliography (DCB) comes in. For the weary page turner, it seems almost too good to be true: 12 relatively recent volumes of APh (1976 through 1987) packed onto one CD-ROM, with the promise of an annual update adding three to five additional numbers each time. The retrieval software ("DCB CompLex") allows searching (even in Greek font, if need be) through eighteen different indexes, ranging from the old "APh Rubrics" to "Greek genre" to the startlingly useful "Full Text". With a little bit of ingenuity -- and the 122 page Manual which accompanies the disk provides excellent general and detailed guidance -- one finally can attack those long-elusive subject searches, and a lot more besides. Imagine scrolling through the contents of Latomus or Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt for the relevant years, without having to budge the actual (heavy) volumes from their shelves. I managed that task within minutes of first getting the DCB into the CD-ROM drive, and then moved on with equal success to more exacting searches. DCB CompLex is that easy to use. It's also fast: results flash onto the screen (in color-coded text) within two or three seconds. In the case of periodical articles and reviews the corresponding journal title appears in full. A special cross-referencing feature allows the user to leap instantly from the notice of a book review to the principal citation of the actual book; the same goes for articles belonging to composite volumes. So-called "Wildcard searching" can drag in all forms of a desired keyword (plurals, compounds, etc.) in a given language, as well as some foreign cognates. Traditional Boolean operators and some sophisticated filter functions can be brought to bear if an individual search balloons too large. And you can copy, print or store that data, whatever the quantity, once generated. Downloading even massive files (say, 400 items) onto a hard drive takes only a few minutes. There is even a choice of formats (Chicago B, MLA, and "tagged") for screen display and output alike.

"Although the DCB preserves every shred of information in the printed volumes of the Année Philologique, searching the database is not exactly the same experience as reading the printed volumes" (DCB Manual, p. 117). Here the editor is talking about the ups and downs of trawling through the old-style APh rubrics. But the truth is, leaving aside the software gee-whizzery, DCB Vol. 1 is actually a bit shoddier than its "primary source" (Manual, p. xxi), APh for 1976-1987. There are a lot of uncorrected typos, especially in foreign titles: e.g. a quick search in "Full Text" shows 'Aufsteig' 29 separate times, and 'Niedergand' eight. As everyone knows by now, that type of sloppiness is particularly serious in the electronic medium (though here once an error is detected, it is easily corrected throughout). A much more serious defect is that the DCB has made no systematic effort to check the data in APh vols. 47-58 against the
actual journals and books published in the relevant period. The upshot is that this CD-ROM contains almost all the errors of detail which bedevil APh, while (perhaps inevitably) introducing those of its own.

It is instructive (and not all that time-consuming) to compare, say, Classical Quarterly (= CQ) n.s. 26-37 (1976-1987) with its coverage in APh and DCB respectively. One worrying feature is what happens to the abstracts. Every article (save one) listed in APh for CQ 26 (1976) through 33 (1983) gets a summary. However for CQ 34 (1984) through 37 (1987) almost two dozen have to go without: nine articles in 37 (1987) alone. But the inexorable flow of scholarship evidently started taking its toll on APh even before 1984. Starting in 1980, it completely fails to report (even by title) quite a few individual items in CQ -- especially short notes, but articles, too. You can be excused for not knowing that the following publications exist: in CQ 30 (1980), D.M. Macdowell, "Aristophanes, Lysistrate 277-80" (pp. 294-295); P. Murgatroyd, "Horace's Xanthias and Phyllis" (p. 540); C.E. Gillies, "Alcaeus Fr. Ni Helen (Lobel-Page), 15 F. (p. 541); A.S. Hollis, "The New Gallus, 8-9" (pp. 541-542). CQ 31 (1981): J. Dillon, "Ganymede as the Logos" (pp. 183-185); R. Renehan, "Symphonius 42.1" (p. 471), "Anthologia Latina 24 Riese" (pp. 471-472), and "Luxorius on the Art of Self-Defence" (p. 472). CQ 32 (1982): W.V. Harris, "The theoretical possibility of extensive infanticide in the Graeco-Roman world" (pp. 114-116); A.S. Hollis, "Teuthis and Callimachus, Aetia book 1 (pp. 117-120); A. Sheppard, "Proclus' attitude to theurgy" (pp. 212-224). CQ 33 (1983): A.B. Bosworth, "Arrian at the Caspian Gates" (pp. 265-276). CQ 34 (1984): "On the manuscripts and texts of Euripides, Medea: II. The text" (pp. 50-65); D. Braund, "Anth. Pal. 9.235" (pp. 175-178).

The DCB omits all 14 of these pieces as well. It evidently is taking APh entirely on trust, for the disk repeats also the mistakes which are visible on the pages of the paper edition. A full list of errors shared by both APh and DCB in reporting just this one (important) journal makes for tedious reading, but may be worth offering so that scholars know the sort of things that can happen. For CQ 28 (1978), both bibliographic guides give separate articles by W. Heckel and A. Sommerstein the same page citation ('377-382'). An article by Jenny Strauss Clay in CQ 30 (1980) is attributed to "J.S. Caly", one by Averil Cameron in that same number of CQ ("The Career of Corippus Again") is transferred mistakenly to "A.S. Hollis". Thanks to a typo, the note "Metal Polish" by R. Shaw-Smith in CQ 31 (1981) 469 lands in Classical Outlook (CO) for that same year. There is no notice of A.J. Holladay as co-author with J.C.F. Poole of "Thucydides and the Plague" in CQ 32 (1982) 235-236. (In reporting that same number, DCB further laps off C.J.F. Williams as third co-author of a piece on Plato's Theaetetus.) If you are searching for Denis Feeney's "The Taciturnity of Aeneas" in CQ 33 (1983), you might want to look under 'Feeny'. When it comes to CQ 35 (1985), the page citations for two separate articles -- those of J.D. Morgan and M.J. O'Brien -- are far off the mark, and N.M. Smerdlow has fallen out as joint author of "Technical chronology and astrological history" with Anthony Grafton.

Then there are the mistakes exclusive to DCB. For a start, it plays havoc with a few CQ page citations which APh gets right: C. Osborne in 33 (1983) 401-411 (which comes out as '401-4117') plus D.R. Shackleton Bailey in 34 (1984) 445-451 (‘425-463’). In two instances the DCB shifts a CQ article correctly reported in APh to an entirely different journal. James N. O'Sullivan, "On Herodotus 7.183: Three Sound Ships for Salamis", CQ 27 (1977) 92-94 somehow lands in StudPap 16 for 1977 (with same page number); a simple transposition of letters places Mary Whitby's article "Paul the Silentiary and Claudian", CQ 35 (1985) 507-516 in the journal 'QC'. We have seen that this latter type of error is not foreign to APh. However the graphics of the DCB are so visually compelling -- as I mentioned, journal name is spelled out in full,
in color to boot -- that you just might find yourself in a long and fruitless correspondence with the loan office of a library that does stock QC, i.e. Quaderni Catanesi di studi classici e medievali. But what is particularly worrying is that this CD-ROM fails to report two articles from CQ 36 (1986) which do turn up in APh: J.T. Hooker, "A residual problem in Iliad 24" (pp. 32-37), and A.W. James, "The meaning of PANAW/RIOS as applied to Achilles" (pp. 527-529). With a little detective work, one discovers that the DCB has missed not only these pieces on Homer, but indeed all 28 of the entries on pages 146-147 of APh vol. 57. One certainly hopes that this type of carelessness is not too widespread.

The real news, of course, is that APh itself managed to miss or mess up so many items in the first place. And it seems that the case of Classical Quarterly may not be that unusual. A not particularly rigorous comparison of APh and DCB with the hard copies of Classical Review, Phoenix, Classical Philology, and TAPA reveals more missing items. I finally decided to check thoroughly the contents of APh and DCB against three other leading journals, one each from Germany, the United States and France: Rheinisches Museum (= RhM), American Journal of Philology (= AJPh), and Revue d'Etudes Anciennes (= REA). (My rationale was partly to see how the APh collaborating offices of Heidelberg and Chapel Hill stack up against the main editorial headquarters in Paris.) RhM does not fare too badly. APh and DCB omit three of its articles on the history of classical scholarship: Calder and Funke as well as Keipert in RhM 122 (1979), and Calder again in 130 (1987). If that is because of local Heidelberg policy, it is to be regretted, since APh has a rubric for this category. Otherwise, only one other expected item has fallen out (H.A. Freeman, "Critical notes on some passages in Juvenal", in RhM 127 (1984) 344-350), and one minor error has wormed its way in (for that same number, K.R. Walters the surname 'Walter').

AJPh is somewhat less lucky in its APh (and hence DCB) coverage. Here omissions are too numerous to list except by author. AJPh 99 (1978): article by Calder and reviews by French, Krotkoff, Minton, Oliver (on Follet), Rivet, Schmiel, Sider, Sumner and Vlastos. AJPh 100 (1979): article by Treggiari. AJPh 101 (1980): articles by Badian, Flory, Hamp (2), Knoepfler, Konishi, Pack, Rahe, Wiseman and reviews by Abricka, Bagnall, De Lacy, Dietrich, Imholtz, Luck (2), Oliver (!), Ruck, Tatum, Westerink and Zetzlel. AJPh 102 (1981): articles by Browne, Sheets, Tadmor and Yardley ("Propertius 4.7.94") and reviews by Billigmeier, Solomon and Wells. AJPh 103 (1982): article by Shackleton Bailey and review by Romer. AJPh 104 (1983): article by Yardley. AJPh 105 (1984): reviews by Garland, Linderski (on Sordi) and Mattingly. AJPh 106 (1985): article by Arnott and review by Hall. AJPh 107 (1986): article by Schork and reviews by van Nortwick, Raubitschek and Snyder. AJPh 108 (1987): article by Calder and review by Lupher. The sum total amounts to 20 articles and 36 reviews, by some of the most distinguished names in the discipline. There might have been a few more missing, had someone not taken notice: for instance, an article by G. Giangrande in AJPh 101 (1980) which should have made its way into APh for the corresponding year gets its abstract (in French!) only in APh 58 (1987) [no. 1396]. Then there are actual errors. Some are common to APh and DCB (e.g. both report Roland Mayer in AJPh 99 (1978) as 'Meyer' and Robert Penella in AJPh 106 (1985) as 'Panella', place a review by A.E. Gordon in AJPh 107 (1986) into AJA for that same year, and attribute Eric Turner's book The Typology of the Early Codex -- as reviewed in AJPh 100 (1979) and a few other journals that same year -- to 'C. Tristano'). Others the DCB introduces on its own: most curiously, an article by Frances Muecke in AJPh 104 (1983) is transferred to 'Walter Moskalew'.

But the coverage of REA takes the cake. For REA 76 (1974) [1975-1976] and REA 77 (1975) [1977], about two dozen expected entries (out of a total of 350) are missing --
not too bad. Henceforth, however, APh seems not even to have tried to list all this journal's contents. There are 118 reviews (all but one concerning publications which show up in APh) and articles in REA 78-79 (1976-1977) [1978]. Of these items, only 43 get a notice. To judge from the DCB alone (by this time I became tired of leafing through APh in search of lost items), subsequent years treated REA no better. At this point we are in the realm of percentages: DCB cites approximately 56% of the relevant holdings of REA 80 (1978), 53% of 81 (1979), 35% of 82 (1980), 50% of 83 (1981), 48% of 84 (1982), a mere 32% of 85 (1983) but 82% of 86 (1984). The irony, of course, is that the office which is supposed to report this journal also oversees the final editing of APh. Given this overall track record for REA, one shudders to think what APh makes of *Eikasmos, Listy filologické* or *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* -- not to mention how it will cope when electronic -- only journals start expecting attention. So APh evidently misreports the contents of some leading journals. Its notices of reviews and short notes are particularly lacunose; but it also consigns some substantial articles to bibliographical oblivion. As for the massive number of items which APh does list, errors all too frequently creep into places both expected (page citations, journal abbreviations) and not (the identity of authors). To judge from the small sample discussed above, these problems (to say nothing of individual article abstracts) seem to grow much worse starting around 1980. And so goes the DCB. Since it follows APh entirely on faith, the DCB reproduces all of APh's omissions and errors, as well as throwing in a few of its own.

What is to be done -- if anything? The overwhelming majority of the DCB's 180,000-odd entries are doubtless accurate, and thanks to the excellent *CompLex* program, a lot more accessible than their equivalent in the paper APh. It is a heroic enough task to have transferred all that information onto a CD-ROM, with the promise of so much more to come. Surely few classicists are at present begging for more things to read. Can we really expect the DCB to reproduce as well as correct and supplement all those volumes of APh as it proceeds? Probably not. Even as it stands, the DCB Vol. 1 is a marvelous tool. At this point -- after less than two months' ownership of the CD-ROM -- I cannot imagine tackling my own research and teaching without this disk; indeed, I urge all who read this review to make sure at least their institution gets one. Few will fault the DCB if future "Volumes" merely continue to copy the relevant portions of APh without doing all its work over again (though a sentence or two in subsequent editions of the Manual should warn users of APh's deficiencies).

In the long term, however, there is little point to a "Database of Classical Bibliography" that omits major articles from well-known journals, or passes over so many informed book reviews. On a minimalist interpretation, it simply is not fair to the scholars who wrote those items. There is little reason to hope that APh itself will go back over old terrain, at a time when it clearly is having trouble processing new material as it appears. So perhaps the DCB project can include among its ultimate goals the thorough revision of APh. The electronic medium makes checking the accuracy of APh against the publications it reports easy. If the DCB indeed can offer us a bibliography of the Greek and Roman world which is not just readily searchable but also truly exhaustive -- in other words, to make the ideal of comprehensive coverage put forth by APh into reality -- it is sure to be recognized as one of the greatest American contributions to the study of classics.

**NOTES**
[1] Windows requirements: IBM or fully compatible PC with 80386, 80486 or Pentium processor; 4 or more Mb of RAM; VGA monitor or better; MS-DOS 3.1 or more recent version; Microsoft Windows 3.1 or more recent version. Macintosh requirements: Macintosh LC 475 or better [Mac II SI or LC for less than optimal performance]; 3.5 Mb of available RAM; Macintosh System 7 or higher.

[2] I thank especially William A. Johnson for responding to this call when it first appeared in the on-line BMCREv, and informing me of the electronic Bibliographie Papyrologique 2.0 (for the years 1976-1994), available from Scholars Press.