This is an excerpt from the CESTA Research Anthology 2022. To read the full Anthology, click here. To learn more about CESTA’s Anthology series and read editions from previous years, click here.
Working with The Alpheios Project, Ltd., a non-profit organization that develops digital tools for reading ancient languages, I am researching how undergraduates use technology in their first-year ancient language courses. Developed by the Alpheios project, the Alpheios reading tool (from here on, “Alpheios”) is a Chrome extension that allows students to double-click on any word in ancient Greek, classical Latin, or ancient Persian on any web page and receive a full analysis and definition, alongside other information. The tool also keeps track of the words a user clicks on and allows this list to be exported, along with definitions, directly to flashcards.

The goal of this research project is to determine to what extent Alpheios is an effective tool for undergraduate learners in first-year ancient language classrooms. A tool like Alpheios, which provides immediate information about the salient features of a word, can be an invaluable resource for students. This ease-of-access may also, however, enable a student to rely on the tool as a crutch rather than a scaffold. I ask students to complete a reading task in ancient Greek or Latin using a traditional paper dictionary, and one week later to complete a similar task using Alpheios. Students then take a short quiz that measures their reading comprehension and vocabulary retention. This experiment is scheduled to begin this fall after a rigorous year of background research and experiment approval.
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