

Scholastic colloquia are didactic works from the 15th and 16th centuries designed to teach Latin to younger students through interactive listening and speaking. Accordingly, many of the colloquia deal with the everyday life of school children, enabling them to speak in ordinary situations using proper Latin. These dialogues, generally short and written with many idiomatic constructions, were simple enough for beginners who already possessed a basic knowledge of Latin grammar. A mastery of *sermo quotidianus* was considered an excellent means of reaching the stage where one thinks directly in Latin rather than translating from a native language. Moreover, students who learned idiomatic Latin then read classical texts with greater facility, and their own written style improved. Writers such as Petrus Mosellanus assert that colloquia offered the means for the learner to master the cultivated but familiar speech found in Cicero's letters or Terence's plays, but applied to subject matter and thoughts never treated by Cicero or Terence. Erasmus thought his contemporaries could learn the best Latin style for contemporary use not only by reading the best authors, but also by imitating the Latin conversation of those who "spoke just as the best authors wrote."

A few examples of dialogues-as-teaching-material survive from before the Renaissance, but not until the Early Modern period did the *colloquium scholasticum* become a really popular genre. Humanists began their return to pure classical Latin with the help of simple phrase-books containing Latin sentences often excerpted from Cicero or Terence. Gradually these lists of idioms or colloquialisms evolved into short dialogues, which had the advantage of putting useful Latin expressions into a context that would make them easier for students to memorize. The *Colloquia Familiaria* of Erasmus offer an excellent example of this transition, as he begins with lists of formulaic Latin expressions, then proceeds to the composition of lively, amusing dialogues particularly appealing to young students.

Over the past three years, a team of scholars based at the University of Kentucky has directed its efforts toward revitalization of this neglected genre. We have identified more than two-dozen authors, and we have begun to publish TEI-conformant XML editions of their forlorn texts, sometimes still in the form of *incunabula*. These texts (over 650 so far, more than 620,000 words) are readily available to all on an Open Access basis via the server of the Stoa Consortium (www.stoa.org), with lemmatized searching, morphological parsing, dictionary lookups, and automatic concordances enabled by the Perseus hopper. We have also freely disseminated some of the texts as podcasts and text movies for the listening pleasure of anyone interested.