

Teaching the Olympics in Cyberspace

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The ancient Olympic Games were interactive, sensory events: athletes perspired and grunted as they vied with each other for the victor's crown; trainers shouted advice to their charges; red blood flowed as priests offered sacrifices; spectators sweltered as they watched and cheered. Yet we attempt to teach the Games and to instill an appreciation for their rich complexity from books that offer little beyond black text on white pages and the occasional color photograph of a Greek vase painting.

Modern technology allows for so much more. Today's "textbook" should provide animated sequences depicting the athletic events, movie clips comparing ancient techniques with modern movements, voiced pronunciations of names and terms, as well as interactive maps and site plans. I am working on such a learning tool. It is interactive multimedia software that not only discusses the history of athletics in ancient Greece with descriptions of the major athletic festivals and the events they comprised, but it also allows the user to plot the location of Olympia on a map, read about the history of the site and of the games, hear a voice pronounce terms such as pankration and names such as Arrhachion. It also gives the user the opportunity to view animation depicting an ancient athlete throwing the discus and then compare the toss with a film clip of a modern athlete competing in the same event.

This presentation demonstrates this new "textbook," HyperSport: Athletics in Ancient Greece and Rome.