Letter From the President

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Dear Friends,

Which do you think will last longer: the book or the e-book? the live concert or digitally recorded music? the latest edifice erected on your campus or the Leaning Tower of Pisa? In *Antifragile* Nassim Taleb argues that history has been full of violent and unpredictable shocks and that anything that has been around for a long time has demonstrated the ability to withstand these shocks and even to thrive. He claims that the best predictor for how long something will last is how long it has been around. That tower in Pisa has been atilt for hundreds of years, but it’s still standing. If I were a gambling man and planned to live long enough to collect, I’d be willing to go with Taleb and put the Pisan structure against the shiniest new building in your town and bet the new one will come down first. I thought of this book when the W.E.B. Du Bois Library at UMass, in celebration of its 40th anniversary last year published a poster showing the library (famously the tallest library in the world when it was constructed) alongside the Tower of Pisa, the Eiffel Tower, the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty. This whole thing seemed a bit hubristic to me (and I say this as someone who has spent many happy hours working on the 23rd floor, from where I could watch from above as flocks of geese sported about the pond). We know there have been many clever and beautiful technological innovations in our lives, but we must also know that not many of them will last long. Facebook will not be around as long as the book.

And the Classics are not going away any time soon. A new academic year begins, and with it a year filled with promise and optimism. We can always be optimistic at the beginning of the year, hopeful that we will build on past successes and learn from past mistakes. And in our corner of the academy we can be confident that for all the attacks on them in the contemporary cul-

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT
ture, the Classics have staying power. They have proved it. Not only do we have the best books (as an after-dinner speaker at a long-ago CANE Banquet argued), but (as your jealous colleagues will assure you) we have the best students, and as we re-affirm every year at our Annual Meeting and Summer Institute, we have the best teachers. Well over 200 attendees at our March meeting at Noble and Greenough and almost 70 this summer at Brown affirmed yet again that CANE is unique among professional organizations in the camaraderie and mutual respect among college, university, high school and middle school faculty, and other lovers of the Classics.

As you begin your work this year, I hope you will keep in mind how CANE can help you and how you can connect with your colleagues through CANE. We have many scholarships and grants to support your own professional growth and your work with your students. The Resources tab on our caneweb.org website is the place to find out about all of these. Many deadlines are in December and January, so take a look now and apply for money this fall. We have money to support New England Classicists. Please help us use it well! Please also see this issue’s call for proposals for our Annual Meeting taking place on March 18-19, 2016 at Smith College. I look forward to hearing about your current work, whether you might like to present a paper or workshop.

If you teach middle school or high school, please have your students participate in the CANE Writing Contest this fall (see the Annual Events tab on our website as well as elsewhere in this issue for more information). This year’s topic is “Non Sum Qualis Eram: Change in the Ancient World.” The topic lends itself to a variety of approaches and I hope gives ample room for your students to use their imaginations. A highlight of every Annual Meeting is the presentation of the winning piece at our banquet. Perhaps this year your student will be the presenter.

With this message, I solicit nominations for our Association’s highest award, the Barlow-Beach Award for distinguished service to CANE and to the Classics in New England. I am the *ex officio* chair of the Award Committee this year, so please
forward to me (smithst@arps.org) the name of any member you believe is deserving of this award.

This summer’s passing of Burt Shavitz (of Burt’s Bees fame) reminded me of a story that reflects why I have so enjoyed and felt so lucky in my career teaching Latin. One day many years ago in my 7th grade Latin 1A class a student brought in a wrapper from a loaf of bread, excited to share the Ecce Panis label with her classmates. Inspired, another student the next day eagerly raised her hand. “Mr. Smith, Mr. Smith, look what I have!” She held aloft a small container. “It’s Burt’s Bees Hand Salve!” Her Latin pronunciation of the final word was impeccable, and after the laughter of the class subsided, we all learned a new English word and how it was related to the word the Romans used to greet each other.

*Salve* to each of you as your year begins. I hope you enjoy your students and I hope you get to read a good book.

Sean Smith,
President, Classical Association of New England