

Classicists may study civilizations that are two and three millennia old, but during their training they have acquired skills that are valuable outside of academia in the new millennium. The term "information age" may be a cliché, but increasingly the kind of work that needs to be done in both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations is, in fact, the gathering, interpretation, and dissemination of information. Classicists do these tasks very well even when the information is hard to find, fragmented, and written in difficult languages. Put another way, a North American Classicist who has successfully translated a Pindaric ode will find very little written in English, however technical or obscure, that he or she cannot understand and clarify. In my own career, with nothing more than an allegedly impractical Ph.D. in Classics, I have, among other things, applied measures of statistical significance to fluctuations in foreign exchange rates, mastered double-entry bookkeeping, and written successful grant proposals for sociologists, anthropologists, and molecular biologists. There are other current APA members who are attorneys, consultants, development officers, and statisticians, to name just a few nonacademic fields they occupy.

Leaders of organizations outside of academia are beginning to recognize that they need a substantial number of employees who can work through a large amount of different kinds of complex data from many different sources: (http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/GlobalCentury_ExecSum_3.pdf; <http://www.sfu.ca/arts/articles/endorse.htm>). The most difficult obstacle is probably to be hired in the first place. Human resources officers may be slow to understand how our skills can solve their problems, but a Classicist who has done appropriate research into an organization's needs and can provide relevant examples of difficult information processing problems he or she has solved, has a chance to catch on with that organization. Not-for-profit organizations are probably more open to hiring candidates with unusual backgrounds, and there is no question that, without some specific credential outside of the field, a Classicist has to be prepared to start in a low level job. Once hired, however, a Classicist has an opportunity to become indispensable to the organization's processing of information and to advance in that organization.