The VRoma Project: Initially funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities “Teaching with Technology” grant, VRoma is both an on-line “place,” modeled upon the ancient city of Rome, where students and instructors can interact live, hold courses and lectures, and share resources for the study of the ancient world, and a collection of internet resources. These extendible and customizable resources, including texts, commentaries, images, maps and other materials, are accessible in a variety of formats. The VRoma community facilitates collaborative planning and implementation of many different types of joint projects for the teaching and learning of Classics. Suzanne Bonefas and Barbara McManus co-direct the project; the other original VRoma directors were Steve Nimis, Michael Arnush, and Kenny Morrell. For more information about this project, visit the VRoma Home Page at <http://www.vroma.org/>.

MOO/Web Interface: The VRoma Project provides a major interactive site for anyone interested in Roman civilization and culture and the Latin language. The VRoma MOO (“Multi-user Dimension, Object Oriented”) combines an interactive, real-time telnet connection with a Web interface to create an online “place,” modeled on ancient Rome, where people from different locations can interact live. Besides enabling real-time typed “conversations” similar to those available in a chat room, the MOO provides an imaginative setting enriched by images, historical locations, and various types of interactive objects. This interactive environment, a virtual “city,” contains historical places (a simulation of the city of Rome circa 150 C.E.) and nonhistorical places (simulations of various types of spaces that imaginatively evoke ancient life). Telnet and a web browser (preferably a java-enabled browser such as Netscape or Microsoft Explorer) are the only equipment necessary to make this fascinating visit into the past.

Workshops: The NEH grant funded three intensive summer workshops for college and high school Classics faculty to provide training in using the technology, to develop teaching materials and collaborative courses, and to foster community among classicists teaching at all levels. The 1997 workshop was held at Rhodes College in Memphis, with the 1998 and 1999 workshops at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. VRoma has also sponsored numerous smaller presentations and workshops across the country, and the project is actively seeking opportunities for other workshops. Contact Barbara McManus <bmcmanus@ix.netcom.com> if you are interested in offering a workshop in your area.

Ways to Participate: You can visit the VRoma MOO as a guest or via the anonymous browser by going to the Web Gateway <http://www.colleges.org:7878> and following instructions posted there. Like any good Internet project, VRoma is continuously under development, and we welcome volunteers who would like to lend their services. We particularly need people who have some expertise in Roman topography or MOO programming or who are interested in using VRoma resources in their teaching. A form for joining the VRoma community and requesting your own VRoma character is available at <http://www.vroma.org/volunteer.html>. See the attached pages for examples of the kinds of teaching and learning made possible by the unique resources of VRoma.
Students can meet fellow students from their own or other institutions to work together on texts using on-line dictionaries and commentaries that can be tailored to various levels and interests.

On-line courses can be conducted in the MOO in which one teacher holds classes for students from many institutions or two or more teachers from different schools collaborate on a course that alternates joint on-line sessions with individual classes held on each teacher’s home campus.
Teachers can bring whole classes for a virtual tour of the ancient city or a more in-depth look at specific sites. They can use these spaces for various types of role-playing, re-enactments of historical events, or guest lectures in which the class can meet and interact with other professors.

Students can use the resources of VRoma for various types of research assignments, or they can participate in building projects conducted in the private spaces of VRoma. All VRoma public spaces, aiming to be as authentic as possible, will be constructed by Classics faculty. Contributors to the VRoma community, however, may obtain building permits for private insulae in which they and their students may construct buildings, create objects, and carry out various teaching/learning activities. Contributors may also work their way up the cursus honorum of the VRoma community.

VRoma is designed for students of Roman history and civilization as well as students of the Latin language. In the screenshot below, for example, Scintilla has conducted a conversation with the emperor Antoninus Pius (an English-speaking robot) and is examining some cultural information about Roman chariot racing in a pop-up window.