



automatically produced the result that we saw in Figure 5 (itself subsequently trimmed down to yield Figure 1).

The exercise just described illustrates how, by searching on the definitions (rather than on the headwords) in the electronic version of a dictionary, one can extract, for a given sense-field, a glossary consisting of all of the headwords for that sense-field, together with their associated dictionary entries. Alternatively, by entering the code for a particular author as the search-term, one can quickly provide a handy vocabulary-list customized to help with understanding that particular writer, since only the entries for words used by him will be returned by the machine. Recently, the present writer was able to help an informal evening-class for adult learners of Latin by furnishing them with just such a list, as they had chosen to study a passage from Adomnán, a key writer in the DMLCS corpus. Again, by looking not just for individual authors but for collocations of authors, there is scope for seeing what words they had in common; this may help to clarify the stemmata of various Medieval Latin texts, particularly where there has been cross-contamination between the branches. Indeed, from the point of view of primary research, this latter application may prove the most fruitful of those outlined; but space does not permit its further discussion here. Instead, it seems appropriate to conclude with an observation that reminds us that, however much computers may be used as tools to expedite its activities, lexicography is in the end a human activity, conducted by and for the members of our race. Just now I mentioned having been able to help an evening class for retired people who wanted to learn Latin for the first time. The members of the class had come from all sorts of backgrounds — and one of them was none other than Jack Smith, the Computer Science professor who had first proposed the digitization of the DMLCS project exactly thirty years before.

### Summary

At the end of 2005 Brepols published the first constituent volume of the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources* (DMLCS). The present paper takes a narrative approach to explaining the lexicographical decisions that had to be made in the compilation of the lexicon. It describes how it was that DMLCS processes came to be computerized from the start (not excluding the difficulties), and the methodological





differences that this made to the work. It outlines the major advantage of basing a dictionary upon a full-text database (namely the exhaustiveness it offers to the excerpting task), as well as the major challenge it poses (overwhelming the lexicographer with the sheer number of examples offered). It examines how DMLCS attempted to turn the situation to scholarly advantage in defining its objectives. The paper also describes the project's plan to combine the database with an electronic version of the dictionary as a self-interpreting compendium of Celtic Latinity. Finally, it looks at ways in which an electronic lexicon can answer questions that cannot be demanded of a conventional dictionary in book form.

