

PLINY

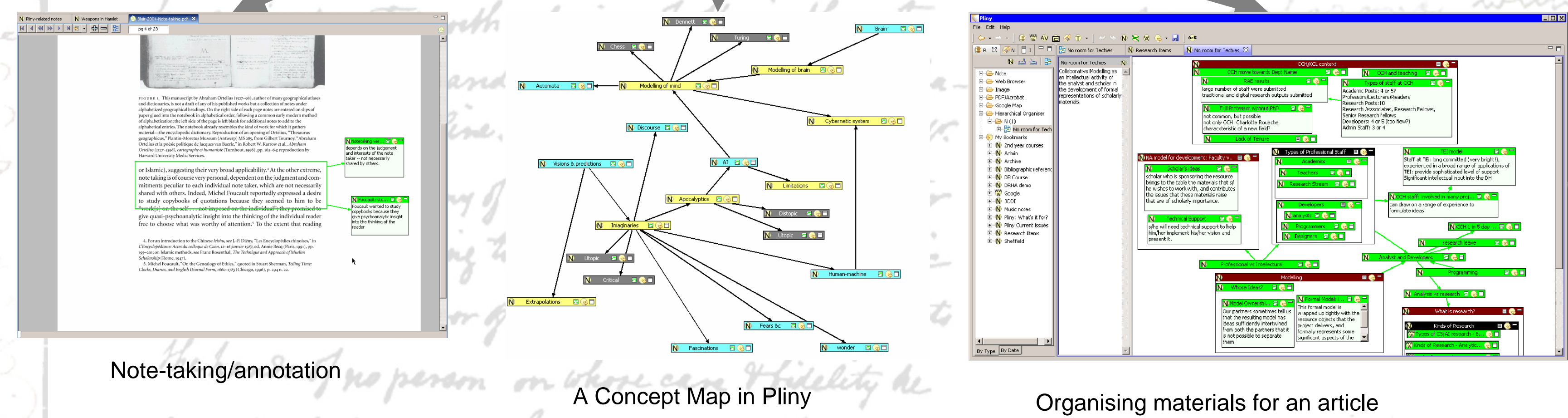
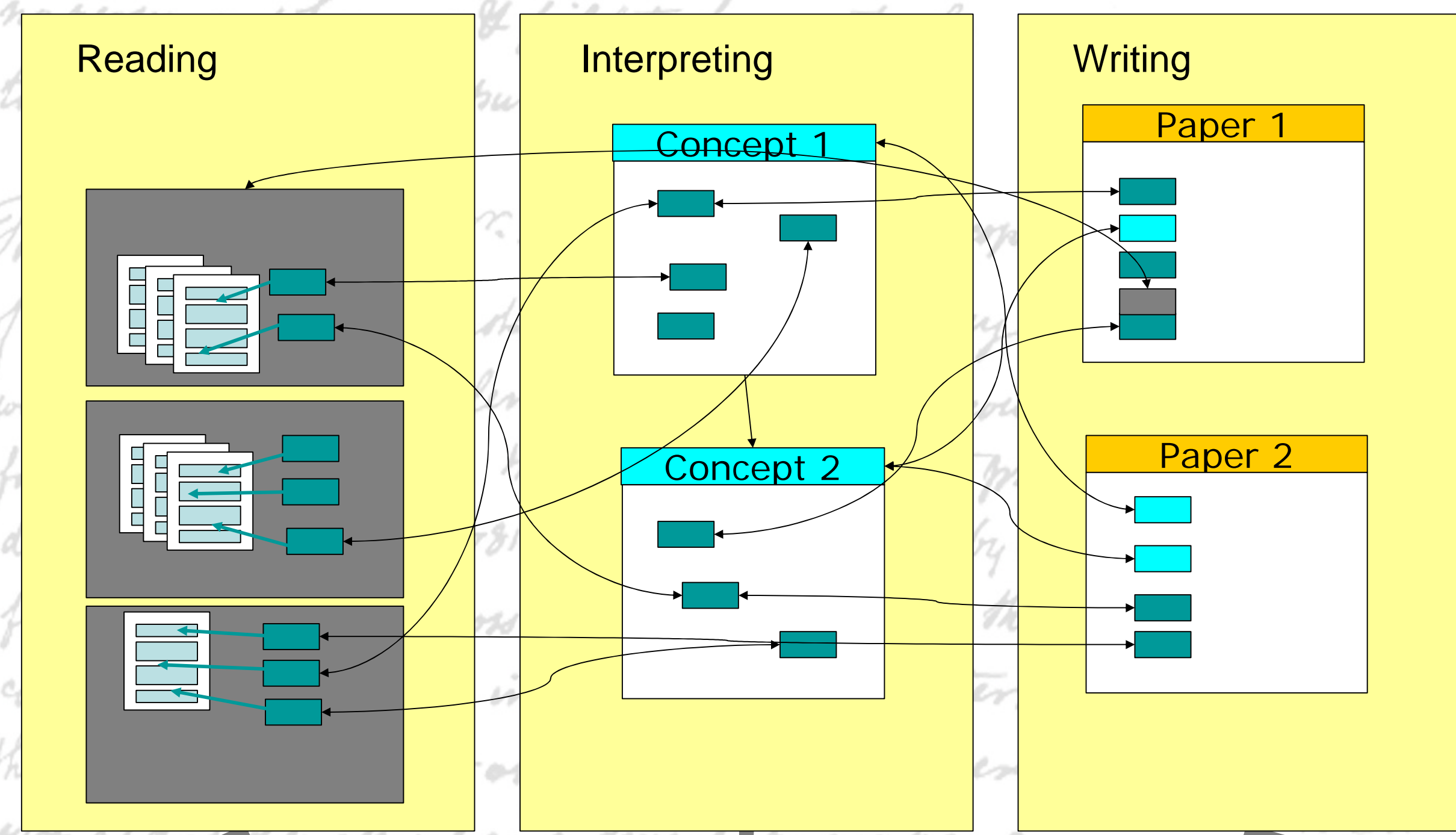
Can Pliny be one of the muses? How Pliny could support scholarly writing

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Notetaking and the Interpretative and Writing Processes

The schematic figure below shows how Pliny's use-by-reference model for notes and other resources serves the purposes of supporting the development of an interpretation, and suggests how it could support taking this interpretation and turning it into a published text. The figure represents the state of things when a user is well along in his/her use of Pliny. Things progress from left-to-right – starting with reading, proceeding through interpretation building in the middle, and then progressing to writing on the right.

- o To the left – in the area labelled "Reading" – we see an area representing 3 textual sources (the grey boxes) that have been read and annotated. The annotation notes – which contain the reader's response to the materials s/he has read – appear in the diagram as little turquoise boxes and are anchored to bits of the articles as annotations.
- o In the middle "Interpretation" section we see the ideas that arise in the user's mind structured into a set of concepts. Relevant notes from the reading that appear first in the first column appear again with their appropriate concepts (the arrows show the references), and are combined with notes that the Pliny user newly creates when thinking about his/her ideas.
- o In the third section "Writing" we see the notes and concepts being used – presented perhaps – in two papers. Here the concepts and materials organised in the interpretative step have to be first assembled, then ordered so that they form a coherent presentation of the researcher's ideas.

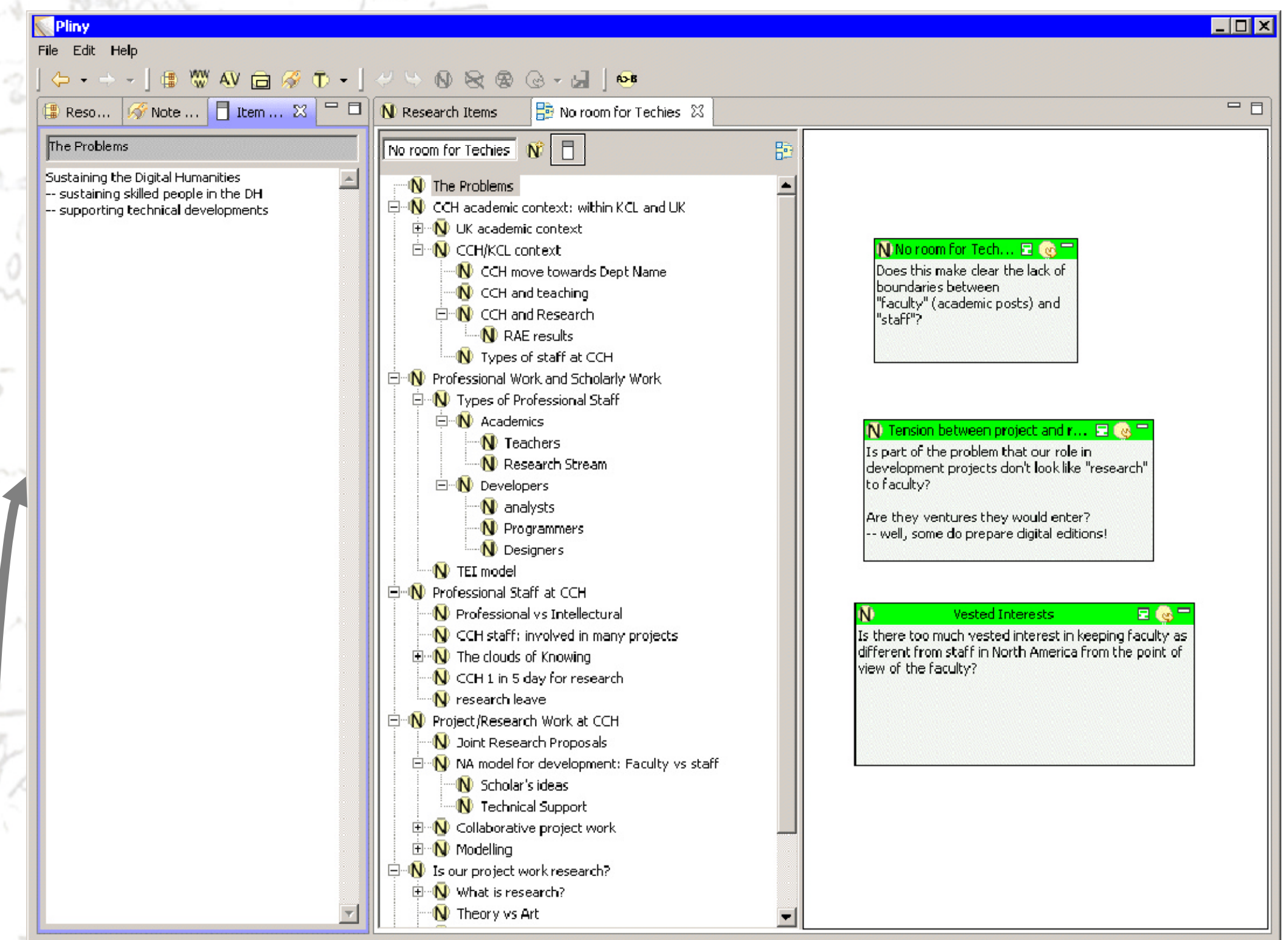


From a 2D plan to text

- Pliny already provides a 2D space for organising notes, and encourages the use of this space to relate items to each other. The image above right shows Pliny being used in this way as a space to organise notes for a paper.
- The 2D space seems helpful for exploring the relationships between issues that should figure in the writing of a paper, but the remaining task – turning these issues into a temporally presented argument is still a difficult task.

What does the writer have to do when moving from a 2D plan to actual writing?
- S/he has to plan how to introduce temporality into the presentation of his/her ideas in the form of a narrative or argument.
- Does this, in part, involve introducing rhetorical strategies into the materials?
Is an *ordered hierarchy of textual objects* a good model of the result? (it seems to work well enough for TEII!)

A prototype outliner in Pliny



There are benefits to integrating an outliner tool into the Pliny model: it can then maintain connections to the interpretive materials, and back to the original reading.

- The figure above shows the beginnings of a prototype outliner, built to explore how the process of taking a 2D map into an ordered hierarchy of text might work.
- The central panel represents the items that make up the presentation, ordered and organised hierarchically

- Each item is a Pliny note, or some other kind of Pliny resource.
- The hierarchy can be initially generated automatically from the 2D representation of the issues like the one to the left of this text.
- Items in it can be re-ordered by drag and drop.
- New items can be inserted (to provide, say, transitional text that is needed in the argument, but did not appear in the 2D representation).

Note the area to the right. It is a kind of scratch area: things placed there are not a part of the presentation forming in the central panel, but represent ideas that come to the user that may affect the presentation at some point.

Thinking about the act of writing

Much scholarly literary-critical thinking is centered on the reader rather than the writer (Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser etc.)
• My purpose in this work is really more pragmatic than this thinking anyhow.

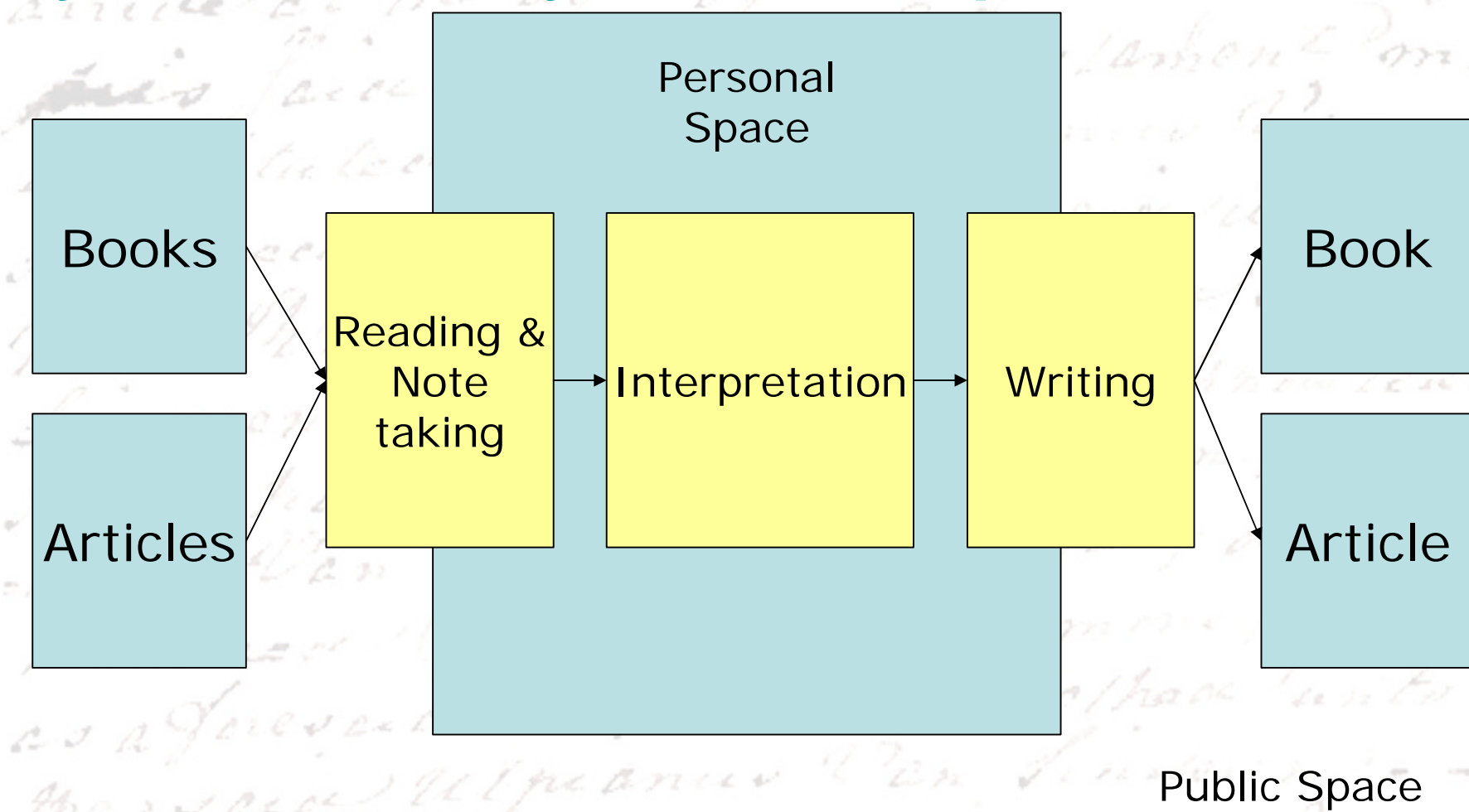
Perhaps research on the teaching of academic writing would be more helpful:

- The Linda Flowers 1988 article "The Construction of Purpose in Writing and Reading" seems to touch on relevant issues and raised questions of purpose in writing, and role of rhetoric that I found helpful.
- Her "web of purpose" model for the author struck me as having parallels with the 2D web that a user of Pliny could create, and if so, perhaps connects particularly well with how Pliny is designed already.
- What else should I be reading?

Acknowledgements

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Pliny and Scholarly Personal Space



- Pliny is a piece of software that explores the idea that mainstream scholarship has at its centre a *personal space* where the work is done.
- It expresses a model for personal (rather than public or shared) annotation and both asks what *personal annotation is for* and explores how the computer can help it to be used more effectively to support research mainstream scholarly practice.
- Note that there are two "portals" between public and personal space.

o Material from the public scholarly sphere in the form of books and articles becomes a part of the personal space as the scholar reacts to what s/he reads and (at least for many) records some of these reactions by means of note-taking or annotation. This is a kind of "entry portal".

o On the other pole is the re-entry of the personal scholarship back into the public sphere as the researcher writes a text that presents his/her ideas in the form of a book or article. It is at this right-end portal – from inside Pliny and the user's personal interpretation that it represent back into a public statement of this interpretation – that Pliny's tools are significantly less mature.