

Perspectives on the digital edition and publication of medieval manuscripts

Toward a reader-oriented theory of edition

Historical documents, digital approaches
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Outline

- Why study manuscripts
- What should a *manuscript description* look like
- What should an *edition* look like
- Structured text principles
- Manuscript editions in the context of information theory
- Manuscript edition and publication
 - Goals of edition and publication
 - Editions of manuscripts and editions of texts
- The digital workstation
- Thinking about digital editions

Why study manuscripts

- Codicology: the book as an archeological object
- Textology: history and transmission of texts
- History: recorded in texts
- Language: of texts? of manuscripts? of scribes?
- Orthography
- [Paleography]
- [Art history]
- Preservation and access, but of what?
- Context
 - “New” or “material” philology
 - Lara Sels, “On artifacts and editors: The Vidin miscellany digital edition project”
 - Caroline Macé, “Edition and history of texts in the digital age”

Manuscript description

- Manuscript description as document
- Manuscript description as database
 - Search, query: Find manuscripts that contain specific texts or textual materials
 - Compare, cluster: Which manuscripts are similar to which others with respect to their contents, and how:
 - Analyze: quantitative codicology
 - Visualize: non-textual views of patterns of textual information

What should an edition look like

- For codicology
- For textology
- For history
- For language
- For orthography
- For paleography
- For art history

Some editorial decisions

- Variant letter forms
- Orthography
- Capitalization
- Word division
- Punctuation
- Abbreviation
- Page layout
- Additions and deletions
- Errors, omissions, etc.

Structured text principles

- Single source and multiple use
- Document analysis: properties inherent in the object and features that interest us
- OHCO: Ordered hierarchy of content objects
 - A convenient partial truth ...
 - ... with some inconvenient side-effects

It always starts from the manuscript

- We study different aspects of manuscripts, but ...
- ... no matter what the focus, the evidence is found in the same place: the manuscript
- Studies with *different* goals
 - *Don't* use *different* primary materials
 - *Do* use *differently selective* views of the same primary materials
 - May use *different* ancillary materials

Single source and multiple use

- Why create editions that serve multiple purposes?
- Practical
 - Avoid duplicate effort
 - Avoid errors caused by inconsistency
- Philosophical
 - Replicate the human experience of targeted, purposeful reading

Document analysis

- Identify inherent structural and other properties of the document
- Identify properties of the document that are of interest
- Both are conveyed in the original object by pseudo-markup or inferred from external reader knowledge
- Both are encoded in the digital source files with markup

Ordered hierarchy of content objects

- OHCO
- Why documents are ordered hierarchies of content objects ...
- ... and why they aren't
- Multiple, overlapping hierarchies
- Why XML doesn't admit overlapping hierarchies and how we work around the limitation

Manuscript editing and information theory

- Transcription is always an interpretive act
- An edition is not information ...
- ... it is a view of information
- Can it be multiple views, serially or simultaneously?

Normalization

- Orthographic variation matters for linguistic and orthographic study
 - Language of the manuscript?
 - Language of the scribe?
 - Language of the text?
 - E.g., chronicle entry dated 980 in a text from 1112 in a manuscript from 1377
- Orthographic variation complicates text-critical study

Thinking afresh about normalization

- Diplomatic and normalized transcriptions are different views of the same real object
 - Both are interpretive
- Select during use, instead of during production

Editions of manuscripts

- Unique physical object
- Physical structure
 - Hierarchical (folios, sides, lines)
 - But not always (convolutes, divided manuscripts, rearrangement during rebinding)
 - Focus on representation: abbreviation, letter forms, etc.
- “Fetishization of manuscripts”

Types of apparatus

- Apparatus fontium
 - References to biblical and other sources (sometimes with references to particular witnesses)
- Traditio textus
 - Changing list of manuscript sigla relevant for the page
- Apparatus criticus
 - Patterns of witness variation
- (Versio brevis: traditio textus and apparatus criticus)
- Apparatus collationum fontium
 - Comparative apparatus
 - Cf. apparatus fontium

Text-critical variation

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbreviated (traditional) critical apparatus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pro: See patterns of agreement easily – Pro: Economical use of space – Con: Selective, making the interpretive results unreproducible – Con: Only the copy text is complete – Con: Only the copy text is legible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interlinear edition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pro: See patterns of agreement easily – Con: Generous use of space – Pro: Complete evidence, making interpretation reproducible – Pro: All texts are complete – Pro: All texts are legible |
|--|---|

Of screens and paper

- How is the screen like paper?
 - Limited area
- What does paper do that the screen can't?
 - The publisher controls the appearance of paper
 - Digital publications cannot anticipate the devices and clients that will be used to access them
- What does the screen do that paper can't?
 - The screen is dynamic and interactive
 - The page is static

Thinking afresh about variation

- Generate interlinear views and traditional critical apparatus from the same source
 - User selects view
 - Does the apparatus become cluttered with insignificant variation?
- User selects and deselects witnesses dynamically in either view—or let the system suggest
- Properties: location, order; typeface; size; color; outlines, borders
- Non-textual representations of variation patterns

Nontextual views of textual variation

- Full text: variant graph (Stemmaweb)
- Miscellany contents: plectogram (Repertorium)
- Variation and contamination: multidimensional scaling (Weitzman)

Toward user-oriented editions

- Readers of manuscripts pay attention to the features they care about
- In traditional editions, the editor chooses the features
- Can that choice be returned to the user of the edition?
- Practical
 - One transcription serves multiple purposes
 - The edition earns a wider audience
- Philosophical
 - Reading the edition becomes more like reading the manuscript

The digital workstation

- The user determines the view / perspective
 - Dynamic response
- The edition should anticipate and facilitate where the user will go next
- Textual and non-textual views are interlinked
 - Because they're all views

Thinking about digital editions

- What we know
 - The manuscript is a physical object, a textual witness, linguistic evidence, and more
 - Editions of manuscripts vs. editions of text is an oversimplification
 - There are more than two perspectives on the complex information encoded in a manuscript
 - Different views of the information in the manuscript are required to answer different research questions
 - Those views have a lot of data in common
- How we might think about it
 - Can that data be encoded once and used for multiple purposes?
 - Select the information we need
 - Avoid being distracted by the information we don't need
 - Can those decisions be left to the user?