Editors, publishers and the digital world
Elena Pierazzo

The collaboration and division of labour typical of print editions seems not to be transferable to the digital world. In the pre-digital world, publishers and editors normally collaborated: the editors would produce the edition following the guidelines provided by the publishing house, which for its part would take care of marketing and distribution as well as essential scholarly services such as peer review. Digital scholarly editions, on the other hand, tend to be self-published by scholars within their own universities, most often without any connection with a publishing house. Such an arrangement is hardly sustainable as it requires considerable investments in terms of both time and money, and so it is often not available to younger researchers producing their first editions and without access to suitable funding. Lately, after a few years of hesitation, publishers are now increasingly engaging with the digital, in particular in connection with tablet distribution. Yet the formats privileged by this medium are ill suited to scholarly editions, with the majority of eBooks not being generally up to the standards expected by the scholarly community: in many ePubs, for instance, basic features such as footnotes are a luxury – to say nothing of a proper critical apparatus. PDFs provide these facilities, but in this case it is almost impossible to read text and footnotes or apparatus at the same time, given the sizes of screen, and even more impossible to read the apparatus if located at the end of the volume, given the clumsiness of moving back and forth within those printable surrogates. This paper will address some of these issues in the light also of discussions held during a one-day symposium that took place in January 2015 in Grenoble and that brought together editors and publishers over the issues of the future for scholarly editions in digital format.
Title: Editing the Estoria de Espanna: practical implications of collaborative editing using crowdsourcing

'Estoria de Espanna Digital' is an AHRC-funded project based at the University of Birmingham, led by Dr Aengus Ward. Our principal aim is to produce a fully-collatable digital edition of the medieval Hispanic chronicle, the Estoria de Espanna, which will be freely available online. The electronic edition will comprise transcriptions of five of the forty known extant witnesses of the text, with manuscripts dating from the 1270s to the fifteenth century. The transcription process we are using is collaborative, with seven members of the project team as well as crowdsourced volunteers. As with all collaboratively edited texts, such an approach has practical implications to provide a level of consistency and quality control as to ensure the transcriptions produced by all transcribers are of a sufficient standard and homogeneity that they can be useful for the collation system. For in-house transcribers a set of Transcription Guidelines and regular team meetings can provide this, but in the case of crowdsourced volunteers more strategies and resources are required.

This paper will examine some of the practical implications we have encountered in the first year of having volunteers play an active role in the transcription process of the Estoria Digital project. The implications discussed will include training needs, strategies for moderation, acknowledgement and feedback of crowdsourcers’ work, and the creation and maintenance of an atmosphere of shared scholarship goals, towards which volunteers of all abilities play a valued role. I will also reflect on how our first year’s experiences of having active involvement from volunteers have matched our expectations following the launch of crowdsourcing in late 2014, and will suggest ways in which the project’s use of crowdsourcing can evolve and continue to improve in the future.
Beyond Google Search: Editions as Dynamic Sites of Interaction
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Digital Scholarly Editions still tend to retain more than traces of their analogue roots. While digital editions provide us with additional functionality that goes beyond the standard analogue metaphors (such as full text search and comparison of multiple versions of the text), the metaphors used still, by and large, owe much to print. Too frequently, the implementation of search mechanisms and their resultant visualisations are often either too basic to be useful or so obtuse as to be unusable.

The Letters of 1916, a crowd-sourced synthetic digital collection, is positioning itself between a big-data project and a digital scholarly edition. At the time of writing, the project has over 2500 letters collected from a wide variety of public and private sources. This number is expected double by its November 2015 launch. The central question in terms of usability is how to present such a vast corpus in ways that are easy to understand and intuitive to a wide variety of users. The idea of alternative metaphors has been central to the development of the interface, offering a strong user experience in the realm of search. The project also seeks to provide end users with visualisations that assist with a distant reading of the data as well as additional, non-traditional search mechanisms via the use of interactive visualisations.

This paper will explore various user interaction paradigms, focusing specifically within the realm of search and visualisations. By examining the work of Johanna Drucker\(^1\) and other visual theorists, as well as the impact of visualisations on cognitive development,\(^2\) the rationale behind the interactions chosen for the edition will be explored in depth.


Chiara Salvagni

The Homeric Poems as an example of collaborative editing with a return to orality

This paper will focus on collaboration between managing editors and users/readers of a digital critical repository which includes the direct and indirect tradition of the first 105 verses of the Odyssey of Homer, created as a proof of concept. The communication process from the author, work, editor and printed editions to the reader is being reshaped in a digital repository produced using crowdsourcing. The readers are not only receivers of work from the printed edition editors but also editors themselves. Managing editors will provide guidelines and some material, never forgetting their responsibility towards the text, but the repository will be implemented by users/readers. They will therefore not only receive but also give back to the editor/project/community their contribution shaped by their social experience and knowledge. A digital repository is the product of a bidirectional move towards the user/reader and back. If we consider the Homeric Poems as the result of ‘great communicative economy between the bard and the public’ (Foley, 1997), with words and epithets that invoke an entire tradition thanks to the common knowledge that the bards and the audience shared, it can be said that the digital medium is taking the Poems back to the roots of their composition and performance. The users/readers are/can be depicted as the descendants of the listeners of the rhapsodes and the digital medium as the new social environment where the Poems will be shared with more fluidity and openness than the printed medium. The community behind crowdsourcing could take the Homeric Poems back to the greater plasticity of the irrational and affective world, even though the process will be partially mediated by the community, the editor and the medium.