

For Ecdotica: Rivista di studi testuali
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Literary Documents, Texts, and Works Represented Digitally

The advent of digital technologies for preservation and dissemination of texts has complicated rather than revolutionize textual scholarship on literary texts. Disputes about methods and goals for scholarly textual studies in the fields of bibliography, textual criticism, and scholarly editing have been the subject of continued debate and development for centuries and have been particularly productive in the last century, producing a range of competing schools of thought, such as, rationales for the selection of copy-texts and development of emendation policies, or for Historical-Critical methods for establishing print surrogates for scattered manuscript and print archives, or for genetic studies and genetic editions. Given the liveliness of this history of dispute, it is not surprising that computerized methods are not so much new as they are more convenient. Perhaps that understates the case in the same way that it is an understatement to say that taking a train from London to Edinburgh is more convenient than walking. While amenities are greater, the destination is the same: a clear understanding of relationships among the texts of surviving documents. There have been at least four significantly new waves in methods and tools for digital expressions of textual studies, and yet, there is no consensus about basic principles for creating digital archives and editions.¹ In TEI/XML we have currently broadly subscribed encoding schemes for scholarly presentation of text transcriptions, but a survey of scholarly textual projects shows that, for the most part, both the tools used for development and the designs of interfaces are either weakly generic or project specific. This is to be expected in this incunabular period of digital humanities. The focus here is on how scholarly principles from pre-digital textual studies can be translated into practical principles for developing tools and environments for digital scholarly editions. The aim is to suggest some points of beginning and to see if consensus on broad principles of practical development can be approached.

I. Context: Histories

The context for examining the current state of scholarly editing vis-a-vis developments in digital archiving and editing can be laid out in a potted history of the controversies about how to do scholarly editing.

First, remember that print scholarly editions always produced new texts: sometimes accurate lexical reiterations of historical texts and sometimes eclectically edited new texts. In either case, the reading text was a new text, not an old one; and it was bolstered or surrounded by historical introductions and

¹ Waves cannot be firmly categorized, but using computers to prepare print editions, issuing digital projects on CDs, developing monolithic proprietary electronic tools like Dynatext (now dead) and Anastasia (now open source), and mounting first generation web-based archives might be said to constitute four waves.

an apparatus of textual materials from alternative texts, which among other things attempted to indicate what was new and what was old about the newly produced scholarly edited text. Always the print scholarly edition text involved resetting type, producing a new configuration of inked words on new paper in newly designed covers, a new object constructed for the purpose of giving readers a sophisticated guided tour of the history of the text and a chance to read either an important historical lexical text or a new text constructed from the surviving textual evidence--a new text thought to be optimal in some way.

In America, the third quarter of the twentieth century was dominated by Fredson Bowers's recommendations for eclectic scholarly editions, but, in the early 1970s Donald Pizer and James Thorpe separately initiated arguments against eclectic editing: Pizer, reacting specifically against new editions of Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage* and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, objected that readers were already invested in the historical texts, which the new editions disrupted by restoring cancelled manuscript readings; Thorpe argued that in many cases authors were grateful for what had been done to their texts.² Thorpe's ideas were enlarged in the 1980s by Jerome McGann's social theory of text production and his application to editing principles of Donald F. McKenzie's re-examination of bibliography as a sociology of texts.³ It is interesting to note that McGann's social theory was about the collaborative nature of production for each historical physical edition of a work and actually has NO consequence to scholarly editing other than to show that editing of any kind fails to preserve or recreate the evidence of historical social collaborative production histories, and, rather, produces a new social production event. And it is further interesting to note that McKenzie's sociology to texts was not an editorial argument, but rather a bibliographical one for broadening the purview of historical bibliography. That McKenzie's argument was about bibliography and the history of books and not about editing is borne out by his edition of the Works of Congreve⁴, which is based on an early text and emended eclectically according to McKenzie's views of what Congreve wanted his texts to be, in spite of what the social collaboration and the bibliographical sociology of text production had given him in the printed form of his early editions.

Although I think that McGann and McKenzie's social and sociological insights have been misapplied to editing⁵, they have a bearing on how one (re)presents a historical text in facsimile and how one writes

² Pizer, Donald. Review of the Pennsylvania *Sister Carrie* in *American Literature* 53 (January 1982): 731--37; Pizer's "Self-Censorship and Textual Editing." In *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 144--61. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985; and James Thorpe, *Principles of Textual Criticism*. San Marino: Huntington Library, 1972.

³ McGann, particularly in *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1983), but also in other writings such as *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); and McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Text* (Panizzi Lectures, 1985, London: British Library, 1986 (reviewed by McGann in "Theories of the Text," *London Review of Books* 18 February 1988, 20--21.

⁴ 3 vols. Oxford University Press, 2011.

⁵ McGann has argued eloquently to the contrary (see fn 3), but the lynchpin of his application of social theory to

introductions and historical notes, because arguments against eclectic editing apply to any textual investigation designed to provide accurate accounts of historical documents. That includes digital virtual archives and the Historical-Critical school of “editing” refined in Germany. Editing is in scare-quotes because the German objection to eclectic editing is based on the confusion caused by what logicians call the “undistributed middle term”--in this case “editing”. Historical-Critical editing is about compressing the data of historical bibliography for a particular work into the space between the covers of a single book. The aim is archival--encrypted archives--providing access to information about the historical documents. With two small caveats, the resulting text is not “edited” but merely “reiterated” as an anchor for an archive of documents compressed in an apparatus.⁶ The Historical-Critical edition is designed to stand in the place of the whole scattered collections/archives for a given work for the benefit of future editors of reading editions who can base their scholar/student editions on all the evidence without having to redo the work represented by the Historical-Critical edition. Few Anglo-American scholarly editions had that kind of work in mind when “editing”. Perhaps the Cornell Yeats and Cornell Wordsworth editions⁷, focusing on getting the manuscript texts transcribed and placed in the context of early print editions was archival in this sense. In fact, when the Cornell Yeats edition was first submitted to the Modern Language Association's Committee on Scholarly Editions (CSE) for its seal of approval, it was reluctantly rejected on the grounds that it was not, essentially, an edition. Instead it was considered to be unedited archival work, very much worth doing, but not under the aegis of the CSE, which was about editions.⁸

The line between archival editions and scholarly editions was beginning to blur in America by the 1980s, in part because of the rising argument about “process v. product” in scholarly editing, in part because of a new fascination with multiple texts, each understood as a production process developed for specific purposes, and in part because of the attacks on eclectic editions mounted most effectively by Jerome McGann. Blurring of terms has never, in my opinion, been useful as scholarship, though it is very effective in persuasion. In this case, the scholarly *archival* aim of representing the history of documentary evidence for the texts of a work is opposed to the scholarly *editorial* aim of sifting through the surviving documentary evidence in an effort to determine what the text or texts of the work should

scholarly editing--that emendation to restore authorial forms violates the production realities of the social authority of historical book production--entails, I think, flawed logic; for, a photo-facsimile edition with no emendations also violates those realities. Every new edition, regardless of how faithful to one's notion of history, results in a completely new social production, not the preservation or even the reiteration of an old one. His insight applies to book production, not to editing literary texts.

⁶ The two caveats relate to the word Critical: editors of this school can correct demonstrable errors or draw attention to them in notes; and, there is a considerable amount of critical analysis involved in preparing the apparatus which not only records the differences among authoritative documents but provides explanations and reveals significance of the documentary record.

⁷ Cornell Wordsworth, 16 vols., gen. ed., Stephen Parrish; Cornell Yeats, 30 vols., gen. eds. Phillip L. Marcus, J. C. C. Mays, Stephen Parrish, Ann Saddlemyer, and Jon Stallworthy.

⁸ At the time I was coordinator of the CSE and recollect the discussion in committee.

have been or were meant to be in spite of the errors and interferences of well-meaning but often careless or incompetent production staff members, from secretaries, copy-editors, compositors, censors, and even by authors.⁹ Editing, traditionally, focuses on the work in relation to documentary texts thought to be “authoritative”--which sometimes means “authorial”. That is, it tends to omit from focus the appropriations and adaptations of text created by persons considered to be unauthoritative.

So, if the archival impulse¹⁰ is to reiterate texts and the editorial impulse is to fix texts, then it seems fruitless for an archival editor to blame a scholarly editor for misrepresenting the documents by emending; and it seems equally fruitless of a scholarly editor to blame an archival editor for stopping with “mere reproduction” before the hard work of actual editing is undertaken. They are talking about two different things, each using the same word, “editing”, to mean a different thing¹¹.

The development of digital editions (as opposed to editions that were developed using electronic means but published in print), beginning in the 1990s, notably with the Blake archive¹², made it possible to think more in terms of surrogate textual archives rather than encrypted archives in print or newly edited texts, though, of course, editors everywhere continued to work as of old, using the same term, editing, to apply to whatever it was they were doing. The digital surrogate archive of historical texts is a triumphant extension of the archival impulse in editing. Its potential to advance eclectic editing has not yet been sufficiently explored or discussed. Archives are always historical and should be accurate as

⁹ It is often difficult in essays on textual studies to speak precisely because terms such as document, text, and work are used interchangeably; I use document to mean a physical object upon which text is inscribed; I use the word text to refer to the series of symbols inscribed in a document or held in memory; and the word work I use in two ways: first, as the conceptual uptake or aesthetic object implied variously by each of the documentary texts that reasonably belongs under the same title and is a copy or version of the literary entity known by that title; second, work is a categorical noun, useful in aggregating the disparate texts that seem to represent the same literary entity. In addition, work is an active verb word suggesting that each engagement with one or all the texts categorized as members of that entity is labor of some kind, either of authoring, reproducing, or reading. Editing, traditionally, focuses on the work in relation to documentary texts thought to be “authoritative”--which sometimes means “authorial”. In short, the word work, as I use tends to unite the conceptual or mentally functional experience of literature with the naming of the group of documents that represent that literary entity. I return to this subject in section III, below.

¹⁰ The happy phrases “archival impulse” as opposed to “editorial impulse” are Paul Eggert’s, recently used in conference papers, and of course taken up immediately because they articulate what now to me seems so obvious.

¹¹ Whether or not “editing the work” as opposed to “archiving the documents” is worth doing remains a question which many textual scholars have already decided in favor of archiving documents. Editing, in the sense used here, is occasionally denigrated as the result of one editor’s opinion about the evidence in the document, or as critical thinking, not hard research. And there are other dismissive arguments designed to put down the notion of fulfilling the intentions of author or the potential of works, thus creating “neither fish nor foul” or “something never before seen on land or sea”. That is name-calling, not argument. For the nonce, I will assume that if one edits the work, the aim and methods will have to be different from those adopted by those whose aim is to “reiterate” documents in a virtual archive.

¹² The Blake Archive, like the Rossetti Archive and the Whitman Archive might, as Kenneth Price suggested at a recent conference, be more accurately called Collections, but their aim is archival in the sense that they gather and present virtual images and transcriptions of historical documents. They are not “editions” in the sense of sifting the historical evidence in an attempt to edit the work as it should have been or as it was intended by its author to be.

representatives of the texts found in historical documents. Editions, on the other hand, give new life in new forms to texts of works from the past. Editorial goals, as indicated, are different from archival ones, but in digital environments they can live side by side in the same project without being confused with one another.

Third, early digital scholarly editions may frequently have used the word archive in their names, but, partly because of the way in which social textual editing had co-opted McKenzie's sociology of texts, developers of so-called digital archives seemed to compete with scholarly print editions--as if a digital *archive* could replace a scholarly *edition*. The upstart digital editions/archives had to be as good or better than established print editions and, so, the digital took over several characteristics of the print scholarly edition, even as it added certain important and obvious new characteristics such as searchability, manipulability, and wide access, to say nothing of hypertextuality or intra- and inter-textual linking. Among the print characteristics that remained, however, was the complete new “resetting of type”--an anachronistic way of saying digital text transcriptions are always new texts in a new environment with a new configuration of relationships between text and medium of display. The historical and textual introductions remained more or less the same as they had been in print, and the apparatus had the same goal of presenting the history of textual change, though opportunities for new display designs did begin to appear as pop-up windows, parallel text displays (not totally unknown in print), and hot links.

In short, in its beginnings, digital scholarly editing involved developing a system for displaying both a newly “typeset” text and a history of textual variation. Until about halfway through the first decade of the twenty-first century, however, digital archives relied almost entirely on transcriptions of texts. Though unfortunate, this was understandable, first because the advantages of electronic editions (search, manipulation, distribution, text analysis, etc.) required transcriptions, and second because digital image files were too big, too slow, and too expensive for the equipment then available. In view of the need to represent historical texts primarily through transcription, and because transcriptions required encoding for every aspect of text that could not be recorded by a single keystroke on the qwerty keyboard, encoding was invented.¹³ TEI uses encoding for the same purpose, though its particulars were designed for scholarly uses in order to offer some hope that scholarly work on digital texts had a good chance of migrating from aging operating systems and/or digital platforms to new ones, and the hope that standardization would lead to easy interchange of data among different projects. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, image files became faster and cheaper, and storage space and upload times ceased to be significant issues. Images offer a more reliable representation (accuracy of both text and

¹³ I am grateful to Desmond Schmidt for providing two references to the early history of encoding: W. Ott, "A Text Processing System for the Preparation of Critical Editions", *Computers and the Humanities*, 13 (1979), 29-35; and, Georgette Silva and Cliff Bellamy. *Some Procedures and Programs for Processing Language Data*. Monash University 1969, p.5.

appearance) of historical documents than can any quasi-facsimile transcription, and so, a significant shift is taking place in our understanding of what is required in transcriptions--are they essential representations of the work? or are they merely conveniences for computer-assisted text analysis.

For print editions before the web, I advocated strongly for *eclectic* editions because, producing new typesettings of texts readily available in historical editions did not seem worth the time or ammo. Diplomatic transcriptions of manuscripts were worth doing—and still are—because manuscripts can be difficult to read. In addition, unless the social, industrial, and market dynamics of book history is investigated, textual histories might not be understood at all, might in fact be misunderstood, or might be turned into a narrow or even biased narrative. Donald F. McKenzie deserves a great deal of credit for opening our eyes to the value of a broader perspective, but, I have never fully understood why some editors and theorists, seem to wish to “edit” in a way that could perhaps be done more effectively by a photocopier or scanner. McGann and Speed Hill both declared eclectic editing to be dead as a dodo, advocating in its place the reproduction of historical texts, justified as the results of a historical social dynamic of production.¹⁴ To some it appeared that Americans had finally begun to see also the value of Historical-Critical principles to eliminate the fallible editorial critical judgment of individual editors from the serious business of recording the history of texts. Nevertheless, the new socially and historically responsible editors, in both print and digital form, by resetting type and encoding aspects of texts, destroyed the historical authenticity they were striving to preserve. The objects of social theory could only be seen by looking at an original or possibly at a good photo-reproduction of an original. And what was being encoded in transcriptions could also be better seen and understood by examining an image if not an original.

In my potted history, then, the next step in digital scholarly editing was the wholesale introduction of images of historical texts, particularly high-definition images of manuscripts, formally offered only in samples. But we have reached an age when full high-definition color images of every page in a book, including the blank ones is not only possible but becoming ordinary. Important as it may be to raise the social democratizing question of how the poor in developing countries are going to benefit from capabilities that require equipment they do not have. a great deal of the thinking that initially guided digital scholarly editing requires rethinking in light of advanced digital capabilities.

As a textual scholar, author of *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age*, which I typeset using Donald Knuth's TeX typesetting programs (in plain tex form, for those restricted to AMS macro-packages and LaTeX), and author of *From Gutenberg to Google: Electronic Representations of Literary Texts*, and editor of ten volumes of a scholarly edition of the Works of W. M. Thackeray, all but one of which I constructed and typeset myself using computers, I can say with all honesty that I have never been

¹⁴ McGann quoted by Speed Hill in a review of Dave Oliphant and Robin Bradford's *New Directions in Textual Studies* (1990)], *TEXT* 6 (1994), 370--81.

interested in technology or in computers or in programming or in TEI *for their own sake*. That is to say, I would not have lifted a finger to find out about these things apart from what they could do for me as a textual scholar, investigating the history of texts and representing the fruits of scholarship so that other textual and literary critics could share in my discoveries. I represent the world of textual scholarship that finds analytical and descriptive bibliography and editorial theory, from the archive through the eclectic edition and the social edition and genetic textual aids, sufficiently complex that I do not want the added responsibility of learning a new technology which itself is still finding its way toward robust solutions to the digitization of physical manuscripts and print objects.

Nevertheless, for development of tools, methods, designs and capabilities for digital archives and digital editions to be sophisticated, durable, and worthy of the advanced scholarship of textual investigation and representation, they must be undertaken in cognizance of the complexity of the textual condition. My best attempt to understand that complexity is expressed in an essay entitled “Text as Matter Concept and Action”¹⁵ which surveyed the rationales for various ways of understanding the relationships between documents (physical), textual (symbolic), and experienced (conceptual) forms of literary works. The variety of ways to conceive those relationships is complicated by the variety of roles adopted by persons handling and experiencing and processing literary works in these forms: authoring, producing, editing, distributing, reading, reviewing, criticizing. Hence the waste of breath in so many disputes where the same words are used to mean different things. And now we face the added complexity of digital forms, for which there is a strong temptation to find a simple correlation between the ease of using digitized texts and the apparent simplicity of texts themselves. No, that which you see on the screen is not the work itself; it isn't even the 1842 or 1927 edition of the work; it is a representation, subject to both error and reconfiguration, such that allowances and adjustments must be made by the scholar using the digital form to generate insights into what historically was physical in documents, symbolic in texts, and conceptual in the uptake of every reader from the author forward. These observations are so basic and obvious as to seem unnecessary to be stated.

The distinction between archival and editorial impulses¹⁶ and the fact that textual scholarship in the digital age has, so far, adopted the surrogate archive, not the scholarly edition, as its lodestar, has created a new light to shine on our activities, if not exactly the light that Germans, like Bodo Plachta, as proponent of Historical-Critical Editing, wanted Americans to see.¹⁷ Digital textual scholarship is not like print

¹⁵ Originally published in *Studies in Bibliography* 44 (1991), 31-82; rev. in Ch. 3 of *Resisting Texts* (Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 1996).

¹⁶ It has been argued that there is no clear line distinguishing these impulses because even the most basic “literal” transcription involves critical interpretation and transfiguration from the specifics of analogue physical originals (especially manuscripts) to digital forms. The purpose for each impulse is different, even if at their foundation there is overlap.

¹⁷ Bodo Plachta, “In Between the ‘Royal Way’ of Philology and ‘Occult Science’: Some Remarks About German Discussion on Text Constitution in the Last Ten Years.” *TEXT*, 12 (1999), 31-47.

textual scholarship in ways that probably everyone knows but which can escape notice.

II. Context: Disciplines

Two further contextual issues should be taken up: first, the relation between digital and textual humanities (i.e., between technical digital implementation and textual scholarship), particularly in the area of tool development; and, second, questions about the desirability, methods, and place of editions, defined as the results of *textual criticism and editorial scholarship* to present an edited text of the work, as opposed to the results of *bibliographical, collecting, and representational scholarship* to present virtual surrogates for the archival record of documents.

First, digitally, we can do what we could not afford to do in print: we can build a full-text virtual archive—a surrogate for physical archives—a collection of documents normally residing at a collection point like a rare-books room or other building, or, more often, in several buildings around the world. Digital archives can be comprehensive, but, by virtue of being digital, they are restricted to images and transcriptions, both of which are copies, not the original things. Digital archives lack the third dimension, weight, texture and physical substance of the originals, but still, they are visually palpable and capture a simulacrum of originality that does not depend on the individual critical judgment of those who create the digital project. Furthermore, digitally, we can create what is very difficult to create physically—to wit, a complete archive collected in one virtual place and available virtually everywhere, even though (pleasant paradox) some of its items are unique.

Print textual scholarship relies on a complete bibliography and, usually, extensive travel; digital textual scholarship requires the same bibliography, but dispenses with the travel. Researchers will not always be content with digital images, but with a digital archive they need no longer despair of ever seeing at least a good simulacrum of the one copy of some rare or unique document listed in the bibliography. Textual scholars already know that multiple copies of the same edition can differ. Therefore, as virtual archiving grows, we can anticipate having images of multiple copies of every edition (assuming the physical copies survive). In preparation for that day we need E-Hinman programs to compare digital images; there are a few already under construction.¹⁸

Although digital images represent the texts and appearance of originals faithfully, they do not do so comprehensively. They fail to represent weight, texture, substance and smell, of course, but we expect digital editions to be searchable, malleable, collatable, quotable, analyzable, which images alone do not allow. For these functions we need transcriptions, and if transcriptions are to be fully expressive, they must be encoded—that is what TEI is for. Furthermore, particularly in the case of manuscript materials,

¹⁸ The one I know best was developed (not yet launched) by Nicholas Hayward for the HRIT project at Loyola Univ. I have also seen the prototype developed for the Edmund Spencer edition. I have heard about adaptations of photoshop for the purpose, but have no experience with them.

many of us need help to read the originals, and we thank editors for transcriptions. But, really, transcriptions are, therefore, just a convenience, just an aid to our reading and investigation of texts as found in original documents. The transcription cannot stand in place of the originals. Nor does an analysis (by whatever means) of a transcription count as reliable until its results are checked against originals (or good reproductions). Every textual critic wants to see originals--or at least images of them. Imagine, as I've said elsewhere, going to the Newberry Library or the Berg Collection and asking to see a manuscript and being offered instead a transcription. No thanks. The first duty of a digital archive is to be a faithful iconic representation of the original. And for that one needs images. The second duty is to make the original legible and otherwise useable, for which one needs a transcription. But only an accurate one will do.

The theoretical foundation of digital archives has nothing to do with a sociology of texts or a social / democratic value for communally constructed historical artifacts. The theoretical foundation of digital archives, intended to be used as surrogates for the originals, is that, for convenience--particularly the convenience of world-wide accessibility--the digital archive stands in temporarily for the physical evidence, answering as many questions as the medium can support, i.e., questions that a textual critic might want to ask of the original documents. To reach that standard, accuracy of representation, not adequacy of editorial theory, is required. Digital archives will always fail to achieve complete representation perfectly, but it will not be because their compilers failed to understand the right editorial ideology to follow. It will be because even digital images do not capture all the evidence of the originals, and it might be because a compiler failed to see that accuracy is the only guarantee of evidence. Nevertheless, digital archives can support a tremendous amount of research, leaving visits to original documents for double checking results of more convenient work online.

What do I, as a textual critic, want in order to conduct the business of building a digital archive? As a textual critic, a bibliographer, and a book historian, I can say what I do not want: I do not want to learn to write computer programs, I do not want to learn TEI encoding, I do not want to learn how to judge the relative merits of various content management systems, and I do not want to spend my time combing the newest gadgets and apps to see what is happening out there. I want tools that will enable me to mount a digital archive of images of texts (combining high resolution with quick download times), each with an accurate transcription designed to aid in the reading and searching and analysis of that text, and ways to generate collations of images and collations of transcriptions which will render the results in texts that look just like their printed originals, with italics and special characters in place, not codes for the same. As a textual critic I already know everything I need to know about what to include in a transcription. I do not need TEI to teach me textual criticism or paleography or transcription. TEI learns from textual scholars what needs to be included. Textual scholarship is NOT more important than digital scholarship; they are different. Textual scholarship offers challenges that push digital scholarship into new areas of investigation. Digital investigation of capabilities is exciting and important, but not my

area of primary interest. Now I hope digital scholarship makes tools that “speak humanists’ language.” It seems a bit draconian--or perhaps just nearsighted--for digital humanists and computer scientists to think that for textual humanists to take advantage of digital capabilities they need to learn the language of computer science. To think that or to think for a nanosecond that textual critics learn how to transcribe texts by learning TEI means that digital capabilities will be (actually, currently are) restricted to a small audience, which, to join, one must pass rites of passage.

Textual scholars need digital tools that use the language of textual criticism. We are not there yet, perhaps by a long shot. But making digital humanists out of textual scholars is not a long-term answer. No one is asking digital humanities to make textual criticism easier or automatic. Textual criticism is difficult and complex all by itself. Thank god for computer scientists and digital humanists who have broadened our expectations of ourselves about what we can learn about texts and about how to represent archives and editions. But it is not enough to show these possibilities and then tantalizing non-DH humanists by insisting that the intricacies of TEI and XML must be learned first. Where would the world of word processing be if its tool developers had insisted on similar barriers to intuitive use?

My goals are in textual studies (bibliography, textual criticism, scholarly editing, and book history) not in those other fields (computer science, programming, coding). And yet, those fields are the (still) emerging disciplines that explore the potential of the new media that textual criticism stands to benefit from. And so, the nature of tools, the methods of transcription, the possibilities for file storage, data mining, and options for display of textual materials are the main subject on our minds. Many who have gone before have provided partial answers, tools and designs that begin to fulfill the promise of the digital archive. The scholarship that goes into collecting, describing, analyzing or introducing materials is very much the same whether for print or digital projects. But developing a digital textual site is not yet in the grasp of humanist textual scholars because the tools are not there for them. Having demonstrated that sophisticated, complex digital archives and editions are possible was a giant first step (journey, really). The tools that are now needed are those a textual scholar can use to develop digital sites designed for the study of texts--the user-friendly tools to be offered to developers and users of the sites. What is the content management system? and Which are the tools that will help the textual (not digital) humanist to populate the framework with textual content? Where are the tools that will spit out the collation of transcriptions so that they can be checked against the originals to identify false variants resulting from transcription errors? Where are the tools for importing and exporting text? for mapping transcriptions of texts onto the images of documents they derive from? Where is the encoding editor that speaks my language and that does NOT embed analytical and annotational markup in transcription files that should be text and the minimal markup required to overcome the deficiencies of qwerty keyboards? That is what, as a textual critic, I want to know about the digital.

Others, who are interested in the digital for its own sake—and thank god there are such folk, for we

need them—can spend their time exploring general capabilities in that world. This attitude of mine causes a valued colleague, who is really my DH conscience, to call me a Luddite. But my focus of interest is on texts as documents first, on texts as works second, on humanistic engagements with works as texts and as documents third, on the fascinating options and capabilities of digital media to enhance those first three interests next. And last, if at all, I am interested in understanding coding, programming, interfaces, storage, interoperability, and file migration. Without computer scientists and digital humanists textual scholars will never have robust, user-friendly digital archives or digital edition development tool-sets. But its time to stop being nice to people who think one is not a scholar worth his salt if he/she does not learn TEI. We are willing to learn things that make our desires real. We have all learned more than we want to know about technical aspects of computing for that reason. Every minute spent learning “that stuff” is a minute taken away from reading, weighing, comparing and understanding the texts of works.

My second remaining contextual issue (the first being the relation between digital and textual humanist interests and skills), concerns the desirability of editorial intervention in creating new texts, including eclectic texts, as opposed to the presentation of virtual surrogates for the archival record of documents. This essay is not the place to present an apologia for editing as opposed to archiving or reiterating historical texts. But there are some points to make, assuming that such editing is chosen as a task in a textual digital project. The first is that bibliographical investigations and archival representations are necessarily preliminary to any effort to edit; hence, edited digital texts are additions to digital archives, not substitutes for them. Secondly, therefore, an edited text (or even several differently edited texts) of a work should be labelled as such, with emendation rationales and methods explained, and emendations scrupulously recorded--just as in print scholarly editions. And third, it is pointless to rail against such editorial activities as if they were inherently unscholarly or tainted by whimsy. All scholarship is potentially tainted by whimsy, which does not mean all scholarship is so tainted. The principles for choosing copy-texts and emending them can be very disciplined and impersonal--to the extent that any critical activity can be. Drawing inferences about that which cannot be seen is a fundamental scientific and logical activity. There is no reason to restrict editors to that which can be proven directly when there is ample evidence from which to draw inferences. Scholars take responsibility for their work just as much as they take credit for their accomplishments. Both the archival and editorial impulses are achieved through careful application of thought and methods. They are two different things; not a right and wrong way to do the same thing. None of it is absolute.

III Works, Editions, and Digital Representations

Much of the discussion in archival and editorial theory as been about how to focus the labor on the objects appropriate to the work. In Historical-Critical editorial theory, the distinction used by Gunter Martens, Hans Zeller and others between the text as document and the text of the aesthetic object was

not only a fine distinction, it severed the aesthetic object from editorial and archival attention.¹⁹ Admitting that as humans/humanists we are driven primarily by our interest in the aesthetic object, they insisted, nevertheless, that the editor/archivist role was with documents, their histories, and their relationships. The focus was to be on the evidence, not on the experience of the evidence, which would be personal to the editor, not verifiable scholarship. The aesthetic object was the uptake from the documentary and contextual evidence that a reader invoked in order to read and understand and experience the work. Therefore, the task at hand was NOT to edit a *work* but to edit its *documents*--to curate the evidence for works.

Print media in fact forced editors to ignore this fine distinction and, for many, to deny that they were ignoring it; for, transcribing and composing text required translation from one medium to another (manuscript to print), which cannot be done without uptake, without an attempt to understand what one is transcribing or composing. Digital archives and editions do not help editors to avoid invoking the aesthetic object--that which they believe the documentary text to be "saying." And yet, it remains the goal of the archivist to purge this individual participation in the archive from the archive.

But if the work, thus understood, is always the result of an individual (any individual) sentient being's efforts to transform a lump of paper and ink into a conceptual, and indeed often, emotional artistic experience, how can such purging take place? and why should such purging take place? and if it should take place, why are we happy to have authors but not others continue to exercise their participatory role in revising a work? McGann made the case for allowing the original production personnel to be involved, but drew the line (with some allowances) at the death of the author.²⁰ On what grounds must it stop there?

If one accepted that the archivist/editor's goal was to curate the evidence and not to allow critical, interpretational thoughts to interfere with that activity, there remains the problem that, strictly speaking that goal is impossible. Evidence is evidence; once reproduced it stands only as a witness to the real thing. But if one accepts that archival and editorial representations of evidence are, nevertheless, worthy actions, where does one legitimately draw the line between representation and interpretation?

Add to that problem the fact that, as works wend their way through new editions over time, the ways in which individuals (re)construct the aesthetic object, which for each person IS the work, change. Even if the text of the work were stable through time, which it is not, the uptake changes and, therefore, the conceptual work becomes different. It matters not what any archivist or editor thinks should be the case. The case is that what readers take the work to be changes even when the texts stay the

¹⁹ Essays by Marten, Zeller and others collected in Gabler, Hans Walter, George Bornstein, and Gillian Borland Peirce, eds. *Contemporary German Editorial Theory*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.

²⁰ *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1983.)

same--which of course they seldom do.

Hence, new editions, whether print or digital, are new; new documents, new texts, new contexts, new readers, and, therefore, new aesthetic objects which could not have been created in the minds of readers of a previous age or place. Does the scholarly editor, re-creating the work for modern audiences, have any responsibility toward this developing, evolving notion of the work? Should the editor allow such considerations to alter the text itself? Should the editor try to surround the reconstruction of the author's or otherwise historical text with metadata and critical and historical annotations that will encourage (or prevent) modern reactions to the work? How can editors incorporate the facts of an evolving notion of the aesthetic object(s) supportable by the historical evidence?

I tend to side with Gunter Martens--the focus of editing is the text of the historical documents. I go one step further and say editors have a right, if not obligation, to seek to emend the documentary texts to fulfil what logical and scientific inference leads them to believe the text was meant to be according to some well-articulated notion of authority for text. To take that step is to admit that the aesthetic object entertained by the author, editor, and compositors of historical editions can be inferred from the record of variation found in those documents. I hold that position without believing that two editors could, would, or should edit the same way. The digital archive has room for critically edited texts as well as historical ones. Of course the history of evolving reader reactions to the aesthetic objects they have variously extracted from the textual evidence may also be of interest both to modern editors and modern readers, but the effect that such reader responses have had on subsequent editions is not the concern of the archivist and scholarly editors of the texts of the work. That history of reading is the province of book historians and analysts of the history of critical responses to the work. I would define the term "work" in two ways: first, as a category into which we place all texts that appear to be versions of the same artistic unit, including all editions and printings regardless of accuracy or authority. And, second, "work" is conceptually that which is implied by the authoritative texts. The second definition leaves open the question of what is meant by authoritative, but each archivist or editor has to articulate that meaning in order to limit the range of documents to be collected or represented. These definitions leave out the idea that the word "work" is a good one to use when referring the range of aesthetic objects extracted from physical texts. If that idea were to be included, it would seem to suggest that the scholarly editor could or should take the history of a work's uptake as an element that constitutes what the work is. That would have (to me unattractive) editorial implications for the text. Study of the history of such experiences is, I think, the province of book history, i.e., of histories of reading, publishing, and the cultural impact of individual works of literary art.