

The digital edition as a nexus of documents and data for historical research: the example of the Imperial Diet records of 1576

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Political assemblies are viewed and documented through a media lens, sometimes resulting in a great amount of written material. In the early modern period, the Imperial Diet (*Reichstag*) played a central role in the constitutional structure of the Holy Roman Empire and had a significant impact on European politics. The Imperial Diets of the 16th century were usually held at intervals of several years in different places and over several weeks. Documents resulting from these events have been continuously edited by the Historical Commission at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences (HiKo) since the 19th century (Wolgast 2005). Since 2018, a collaborative project of the HiKo and the University of Graz developed the first digital scholarly edition of the Imperial Diet's records of 1576 (RTA 1576). The edition and its data are stored in the GAMS, the digital asset management system developed and maintained at the Center for Information Modelling (ZIM) in Graz (Stigler / Steiner 2018).

The Imperial Diet of 1576 was a major European event. Emperor Maximilian II and more than 200 representatives of the imperial estates (*Reichsstände*) met in Regensburg to discuss and decide on the political fate of (Eastern) Central Europe. Records from this event include documents exchanged during the negotiations (*Verhandlungsakten*), minutes and reports. In editing the RTA 1576, the same high editing standards are applied and the same types of texts have been edited as in previous editions, supplemented by some reports and more minutes, as it is mainly these sources that document the interaction and decision-making at the Diet which are in the focus of current research. In addition, for the first time a database of surviving manuscripts (archival documentation) lists the corresponding central archival holdings at the level of files. This makes the selection of sources for the transcription more transparent. The archival documentation holds metadata of about 10,000 documents from 34 archives stored in TEI/XML format, the selection made in order to depict the diversity of the empire - geographically as well as in terms of estates and confessions. The transcriptions of the central documents were enriched with TEI/

XML markup to allow a more in depth study of the event (Bleier / Zeilinger / Vogeler 2022).

The edition is developed as an assertive edition (Vogeler 2019), a scholarly representation of the historical documents in which the information on facts is asserted by the transcription. Following the digital paradigm, central information is provided as structured data and allows the user/reader to make use of the edition in a way that was not possible with print editions. The idea behind the project is to offer more data (dates, names, topics,) than a classic edition can and tools as a basis for answering a wider variety of research questions. The digital format also allows for visual representations, the most important of which is a timeline.

The timeline represents dates from the archival documentation, the edited texts and indexes providing further information. The dates include the arrival of persons, days of ceremonial events, of official and informal meetings mentioned in texts as well as days documents were issued, arrived, were submitted as a basis for negotiations and read to those who had to decide. Starting from the timeline, users will be able, for example, to find out about meetings and to compare different minutes and reports about them across the entire edition. What was protocolled by whom in which way? What persons were involved in which meetings and which topics were discussed? Further research questions not necessarily focusing on the Diet as a political meeting may also be envisaged, for example, how long did it take for a letter to arrive in Regensburg, when was it recorded, submitted and read and what does this tell us about chancery practices and postal routes?

In the short paper we will give an overview of the data generated during the editing process, present our methods and some results of the analysis. We will then discuss our timeline visualisation and its potential to answer different research questions.

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