"How Can You Love a Text, If You Don't Know It?":
Critical Code and Design toward Participatory Digital Editions
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ONE-PAGE ABSTRACT

How do scholars interface with scholarly digital editions, and how can we improve the appearance and behavior of digital edition interfaces to not only better support current scholarly use, but predict and create new ways of reading, teaching, and learning about texts? Digital editions are texts presented according to some critical ideal in digital space. We need to know more about how this scholarly form is used so that we can build sites that fully communicate and preserve literary texts, from the written word on the page to the iconic codes and materiality of the whole book, and so that we can in turn use digital editions as better platforms for inquiry into the nature of complex textual objects.

Textual studies concerns itself with the study of the history, forms, and whole content (from the linguistic to the material) of texts; digital textual scholarship, as a narrower discipline, focuses specifically on the preparation of such texts for scholarly use via a digital space. To push the current research, reading, and teaching abilities of the digital edition further, we need to move beyond the norm of theorizing on paper what needs to be changed about editions—it is necessary that we make these theorized changes to digital editions through web design and code work, then critically assess what our interventions teach us about the texts of these digital editions, the form of digital editions in general, and about literary research and teaching in digital spaces. This dissertation proposes to take a step back from the specific literary texts prepared by textual scholars—and a step forward from the purely-written theorizing of textual studies researchers—to create tools that explore the critical efficacy and possibilities of that increasingly quintessential meta-textual form, the digital edition.

I propose to build textual forms to understand them, creating three digital edition interface projects that separately explore the textual behaviors of reading, teaching, and research. Project #1 ("Infinite *Ulysses*") will examine the social experience of critical reading, exploring whether a difficult Modernist text becomes "normalized" or "diminished" by moving to the center of public annotation, interpretation, and conversation, and how we might curate the information overload of a vibrantly active digital edition reader/commentator community. Project #2 ("Choose Your Own Edition") treats teaching as knowing, using a digital framework for the teaching of editing as a tool for tracing the development of textual scholarship theory and opinion. Project #3 ("Material Editions") assesses the whole use a scholar in a physical archive might make of a codex and imagines how we might use digital affordances, such as linkable metadata and 3D models, to bring a less partial simulation of the whole book to remote researchers. All three of these interface projects will be built around specific exemplar texts that push the boundaries of modeling via digital edition, texts that challenge both scholar and reader with a multiplicity of meanings (e.g. James Joyce's notoriously multilayered *Ulysses*) or that manifestly cannot be fully communicated by current digital edition formats (e.g. the rich design of a presciently-hypertextual Victorian edition of *Hamlet*). By building digital edition interfaces that employ and extend current textual theory, this dissertation will advance our understanding of how a key scholarly form creates knowledge around texts.

Textual scholarship has always intertwined theory and practice; arguments about which document (or eclectic patchwork of documents) best represents the ideal of a text, for example, were reified through editions of specific texts. As part of this theory through practice, design experiments are also a traditional part of textual scholarship, as with the typographic and spatial innovations of scholarly editor Teena Rochfort-Smith's 1883 *Four-Text 'Hamlet' in Parallel Columns*. Furthermore, textual scholarship (in the form of standards for digital text encoding) has been a part of the digital humanities since its earliest days as humanities computing. Both the call for a more public digital humanities—a DH that teaches our scholarship to others—and the growing idea that we really should make use of all this lovingly marked-up edition text connect in the development of new, multiple edition interfaces aimed at multiple audiences. To understand how these interfaces are experienced, though, we need to move beyond the norm of developing digital editions and archives based on what their scholar-developers imagine as their use, instead developing a user studies specific to humanities research, teaching, and reading to test and improve digital editions.

This dissertation is very much about not just describing, but actually making tools that identify and respond to gaps I see in the field of digital textual studies; thus, the main prospectus' descriptions of my dissertation's three coding projects provide the best picture of my research questions and practical goals. The coding and design in this dissertation is scholarly work, with the final deliverable consisting of a written introduction and conclusion, three scholarly articles, and a public website where each of the projects I create can be used.