

TEI as an archival format

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There's a lot of TEI-XML out there and we don't want to lose it!



What metadata is needed for the long-term preservation of an XML-TEI file and how should it be supplied?



TEI users access CINES via HumaNum

Long term preservation of XML resources: what's the problem?

XML data is easy and cheap both to store and to maintain in the long term but...

- XML is just a syntax. To process XML data correctly the meaning and function of the data must be preserved as well
- The processing of an XML data stream is highly application-dependent
- Different applications and projects make up their own processing models, and have done so over the long term, so there are competing legacy systems
- Until recently, standards for describing and packaging data have been comparatively immature

Consequently, although XML data may be easy to store without loss, it may be hard to guarantee its correct processing in the long term.

Is TEI-XML the answer?

YES : it provides an agreed vocabulary, together with a consensus around the meanings and intended use of all the XML elements anyone might ever need, plus ways of evolving that consensus in step with changing priorities

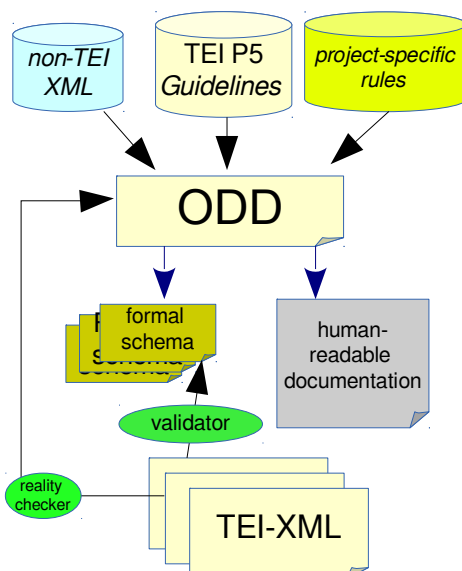
NO : in some places the full TEI has many ways of doing essentially the same thing, in others it is under-specified. This leads to inconsistency and ambiguity when trying to combine TEI-XML resources from different projects, and also suggests that something more is needed to ensure that such resources are processable in the long term.

Verification
Documentation

Storage
Duplication

Restitution
Delivery

TEI Conformance and the importance of an ODD



"TEI Conformance" goes beyond simple syntactic validity... A TEI conformant file must

- be valid with respect to TEI All
- be accompanied by an ODD documenting its specific TEI usage
- respect any additional constraints (e.g. use of elements from non-TEI namespaces)
- respect the TEI conceptual model

Suggested procedures:

- syntactic validation of each document against the most appropriate TEI schema; for documents containing textual data this would naturally include TEI All, but also any project-supplied XML schema, and also (for any ODD document supplied) the standard TEI ODD schema;
- creation of a TEI schema from the supplied ODD and validation of the documents against that in order to validate any project-specific constraints such as attribute values;
- comparison of the ODD supplied with an ODD generated automatically from the document set;
- definition and usage of a set of stylesheets to convert the resource into a "lowest common denominator" TEI format.