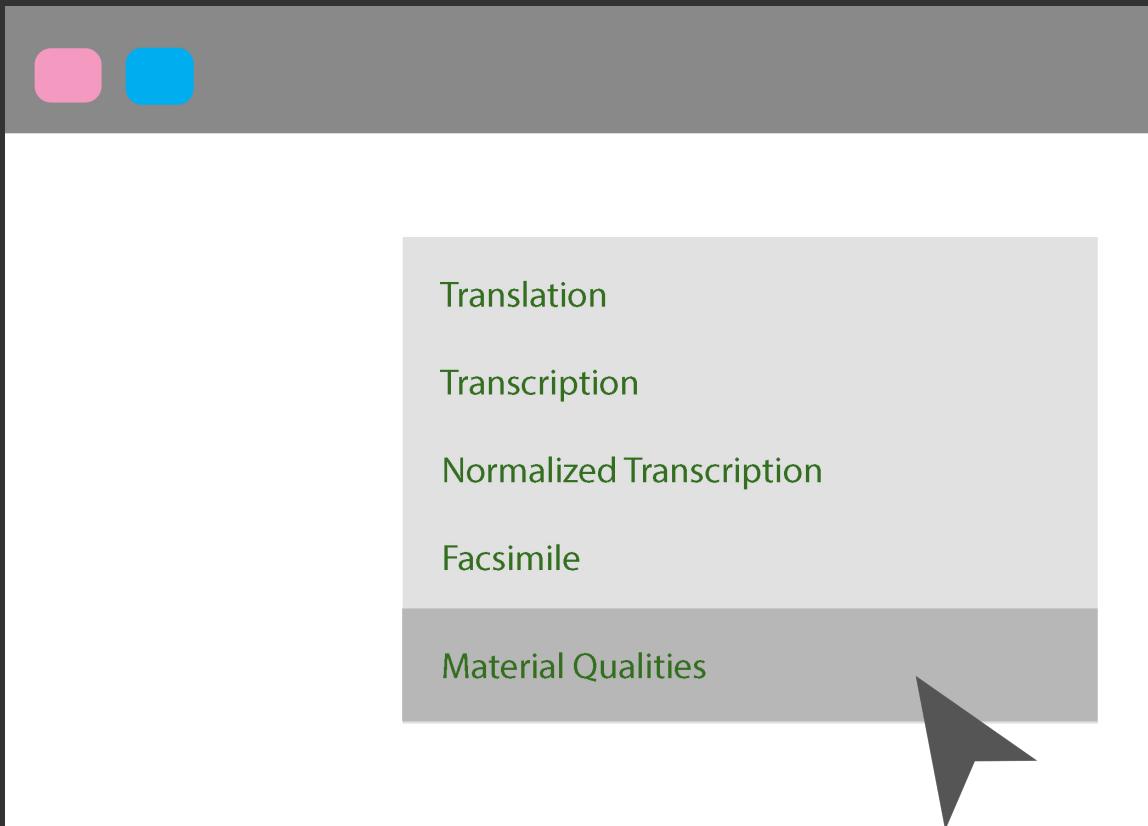


DIGITAL TEXT TRANSFORMATION
FINAL PROJECT

Material Qualities of the Page: A New Interface for the DCE



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Interface Design

For our project, we have created a prototype of a tool for a Digital Critical Edition of the Making and Knowing Project that would examine the material qualities of the manuscript. In doing so, we have utilized wireframes as a means by which to highlight and reflect on specific areas of the manuscript. Using wireframes to explore the manuscript would enable a user of a digital critical edition to focus on a variety of interesting material aspects of the work. Throughout, we looked at textual content (such as titles, paragraph-like text blocks, and side notes) along with physical elements of the page (including illustrations, ink stains, or oxidation marks).

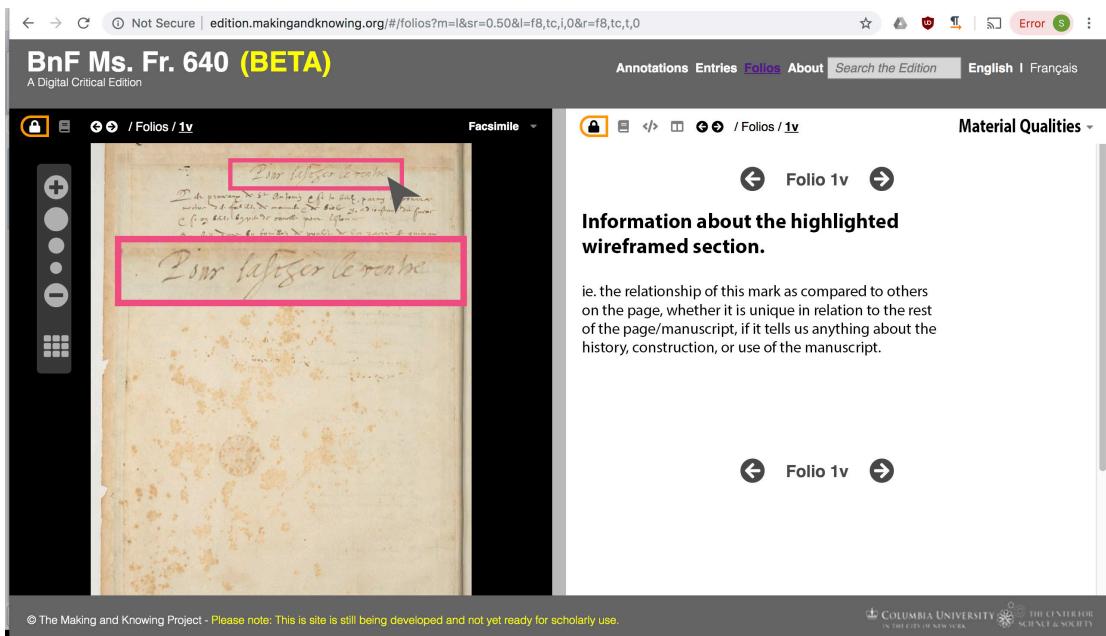


Figure 1: Prototype for the DCE, Mouse over Title

Structure of the Page

For one, a user of a digital critical edition of the Making and Knowing Project could further examine the structure of the text that the author put into effect. For example, as we have highlighted in images pertaining to our prototype, the author employed, throughout the majority of the manuscript, a tri-part structure consisting of the title, a paragraph-like block for the recipe, and a side note. In viewing the text in relation to this

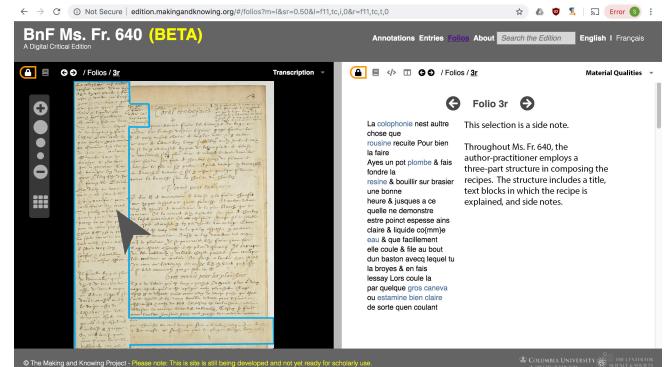


Figure 2: Mouse over Sidenote

structure, a digital humanities scholar may be better able to perform natural language processing in relation to specific areas of the text.

Additionally, viewing the text in relation to its fundamental structural properties as intended and carried out allows for a more thorough understanding of the author-practitioner's material imaginary. How do the individual elements of the structure perform their roles? What do structural choices imply about the way in which the author-practitioner views the making of the recipe? Is it a process that occurs all at once? Or, does the making of a recipe generally occur in steps?

Furthermore, scrutinizing the text in relation to such structural attributes makes it possible to notice unique, meaningful structural elements along with thinking about the structure in a more historical manner. In the images for our prototype, for example, we drew attention to a cross symbol as a unique, historical structural element that indicated that page 3r was likely the initial page of the "La Boutique" section of the manuscript.

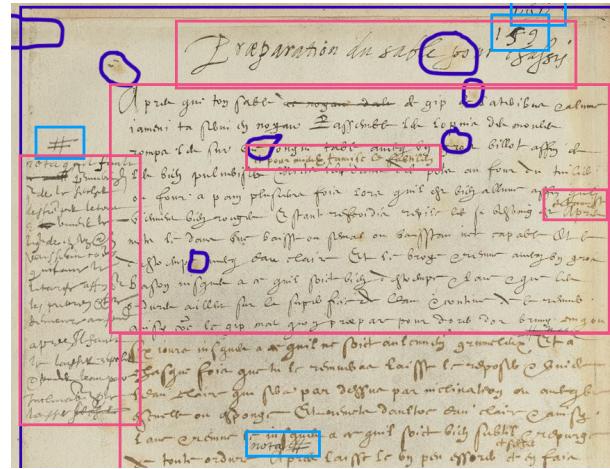


Figure 3: Three Different Inks

A screenshot of a digital manuscript viewer interface for the BnF Ms. Fr. 640 (BETA). The page shown is folio 3r. A mouse cursor is hovering over a blue square highlighting a large cross symbol in the upper left quadrant of the text block. The interface includes navigation controls (left/right arrows, zoom, etc.) and a transcription tool. A note at the bottom states: "© The Making and Knowing Project - Please note: This site is still being developed and not yet ready for scholarly use."

Figure 4: Mouse over unique symbol (Cross)

User Stories

For a digital humanities scholar interested in natural language processing, identifying the structural elements of the text as intended by the author may be of value. For example, the scholar could carry out word count operations within specific elements of the structure—such as the title, a paragraph-like block detailing the recipe, or side notes. A question, for instance, might be: what kinds of ingredients are typically found within the paragraph-like block in comparison to those found in a side note?

For a scholar interested in the physical elements of a manuscript, our tool may be of much benefit in that it can identify a variety of physical aspects of the text. For instance, it can provide information about what the text was composed on. Or, it could point out important aspects of the ink used,

including variations. Furthermore, the tool could enable a scholar to learn about an “accidental” aspect of the physical manuscript—such as the stains that can be noted on it.

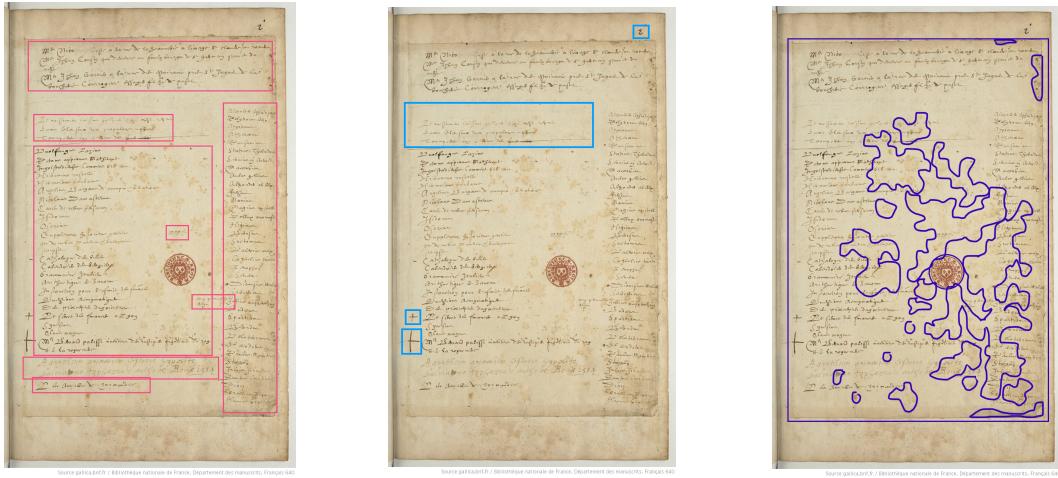
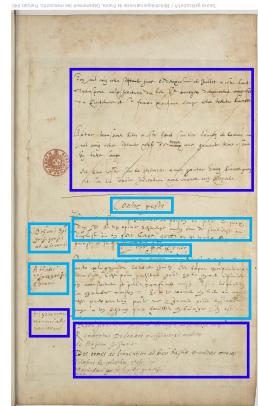


Figure 5: Three Layers of materiality on the page

For a scholar interested in genetic methods of criticism, our tool would also be of much interest. For one, it could demonstrate a history of the manuscript as the author-practitioner engaged with it. For example, points at which the author-practitioner first developed the manuscript could be noted along with later additions. Furthermore, our tool could shed light on the history of the changing physical nature of the text.

One potential interesting application of the tool for scholars—that draws on both more structural and more physical qualities of the material page—is that of a genetic approach to the history of the page, as we suggested with a time-lapse image in the presentation of our prototype.

Figure 6: Text blocks show genetic history



Future Endeavors

If we had unlimited funds, more scholarly work could be devoted to examining the structure of similar historical documents. Thus, we could better place the ideas about the structure that our tool brings to light in examining BnF Ms. Fr. Additionally, we could take examining the physical history of the manuscript to further extremes. For example, we could do a “chemical” analysis of the actual manuscript. Would we find traces of the ingredients as mentioned in the manuscript? Or, what would a chemical analysis stir up? Furthermore, we could spend much more time working on the design of the tool within the interface so that the experience of digitally navigating the manuscript would be enjoyable and productive.