

# Review of *Francesco Guicciardini - Storia d'Italia*

*Resource title:* Francesco Guicciardini Storia d'Italia

*Editors:* Paola Moreno (Université de Liège), Pierre Jodogne (Université de Liège - Académie Royale de Belgique), Élise Leclerc (Université Grenoble Alpes), Samantha Saïdi (UMR Triangle 5206).

*URL:* <https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/>

*Publication date:* 2019 (uncertain)

*Date of last access:* 08/24/2020

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## Introduction

The incipit of the *Storia d'Italia*, well-known masterpiece of the historian and statesman Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), is the result of a tormented elaboration work, which lasted for five years on the pages of several successive manuscripts, all autographs or however containing corrections and notes by Guicciardini himself, currently preserved in the archives of the Guicciardini family and in the Laurentian Medicean Library.

An international team, led by Paola Moreno, came together to create a systematic and analytical edition of this corpus, with the aim of improving the understanding of the genesis of the incipit, and outline the conceptual nodes and the evolution of the thought of the author Guicciardini. This should be possible through the help of the accessibility and readability offered by digital tools.

This edition, as stated by the work team itself, is a prototype of a digital edition that does not claim to be complete for the time being. We will analyze together if there are the prerequisites to consider it a Scholarly Digital Edition (SDE).

## 1. Opening the review

### 1.1 Bibliographic identification

First of all, the title of the edition is not outright clear to me: from the logo at the top left of the homepage it seems to be “Francesco Guicciardini Storia d'Italia”; however, looking at the metadata in the head tag of the HTML source code of the website, it appears to be “Storia d'Italia”, “Edition numérique analytique de la Storia d'Italia de Francesco Guicciardini” in

the title tag in the XML-TEI file and “Presentazione de l'edizione digitale - Storia d'Italia” is the result that appears from a browser search.

The two code resources (HTML and XML-TEI) are also the only way to extract information on the publication date, the year 2019, not stated in any other part of the website; from the texts suggested in the bibliography we can assume a date after 2015, but nothing more. Information about job versions and last modification are completely absent.

The editors can be identified as Paola Moreno (Université de Liège), Pierre Jodogne (Université de Liège - Académie Royale de Belgique), Élise Leclerc (Université Grenoble Alpe), Samantha Saïdi (UMR Triangle 5206).

As for the institutions involved, we can certainly deduce them thanks to the researchers that constitute the team. In particular, the two presumably most important ones are the Université de Liège and the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon, whose logos appear at the top right of the page and can be clicked to land on the respective webpages (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: Screenshot of the upper part of the homepage

## 1.2 General parameters and transparency

The research team is well documented<sup>1</sup> both in the homepage at the section “L’équipe” (through hypertextual links, two of which are unresolved), in the page “Crédits et Mentions légales” and in the “Contacts ” drop-down menu at the top of the page (provides email addresses):

- philological edition and comment: carried out by Paola Moreno (Université de Liège) and reviewed by Pierre Jodogne (Université de Liège - Académie Royale de Belgique);
- digital and commented version of the edition: Élise Leclerc (Université Grenoble Alpe) realized the XML-TEI encoding and the general modelling of the edition, working together with Samantha Saïdi (UMR Triangle 5206), who also adapted the visualization tool *Edition Visualization Technology*<sup>2</sup> to the project, carrying out XSLT transformations and CSS style sheets and visualizations in JS;
- analysis and comments: implemented by Jean-Louis Fournel (Université Paris 8), Jean-Claude Zancarini (ENS Lyon), Matteo Palumbo (Università di Napoli Federico II), Hélène Miesse (Université de Liège), Paolo Carta (Università di Trento).

<sup>1</sup> <https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/#03> and <https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/storia-credits.html>

<sup>2</sup> ROSSELLI DEL TURCO 2014.

Beyond the institutions already mentioned in par. 1.1, we can further deduce from the logo at the bottom left, in what is supposed to be the footer of the page, that Huma-Num is involved as the host of the website (<https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/>). The logo is present only in the homepage though (Fig. 2 and 3).

For the concession of the photographs of the manuscripts, we can underline the collaboration of the Guicciardini Archive of Florence, where Professor Moreno took the photos, and the Laurentian Medicean Library, which granted the images from a microfilm<sup>3</sup>.

Lastly, there is no mention about financial or time resources employed, and the possibility of citing the project it is not given.



Fig. 2: Screenshot of the footer of the homepage



Fig. 3: Screenshot of the footer of the other pages

## 2. Subject and content of *Storia d'Italia* digital edition

### 2.1 Selection

As Paola Moreno points out<sup>4</sup>, what Guicciardini has left us is an impressive amount of written materials. Most of them are kept in the Florentine Archives of the Guicciardini family, but some have merged into other archives and libraries, in Italy and abroad, both as a result of hereditary bequests, and due to the normal migration of epistolary documents.

This digital edition has a narrower and precise focus though, the 8 manuscripts that contain the *Storia d'Italia*, and specifically the parts of the text that include the incipit. The textual selection presented by the edition is therefore limited and accurately described in the documentation as follows<sup>5</sup>:

- AGF I, quire 1, cc. IVv, pp. 1 and 2 (c. IVv autograph; cc. 1 and 2 in the secretary's hand, with handwritten corrections); manuscript consisting of 28 quires, containing the entire text of the *Storia d'Italia*.
- AGF II, quire b, cc. 1 and 2 (all autograph); the quire contains only Book I (in an incomplete version).
- AGF II, quire c, cc. [1r-v] and [2r]; 24-sheet notebook, all of the secretary hand without author's corrections; contains part of Book I.

<sup>3</sup> <https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/storia-credits.html#2>

<sup>4</sup> MORENO 2020, pp. 13-19.

<sup>5</sup> <https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/index.html#04>

- AGF IV, quire 1, pp. 1, 3, 4-5 (fully autographed code).
- AGF V, quire 1, cc. [2v], 3 and 4 (c. 2v is autographed, while cc. 3 and 4 are of the secretary hand, with corrections by the author). The code contains the I-V books of the *Storia d'Italia*.
- AGF VI, quire 1, c. 1r-v (handwritten by the secretary, with autograph corrections). The code contains Books I-V, divided into two quires.
- AGF VII, quire 1, endpaper [ar] and [br], c. 1r-v (all apographs but written by different hands, with autograph corrections by the author). The code contains the full text of the *Storia d'Italia*.
- Florence, Laurentian Medicean Library, Pal. CLXVI, pp. 1-3 (apograph, with precise corrections by Guicciardini; other corrections are attributable to the historian's grandchildren, who edited it posthumous). The code currently consists of 5 volumes and contains the entire text of the *Storia d'Italia*.

The goal that the work team has set is ambitious, as the incipit is a particularly complex part of the work that frames it, due to the great variety of authorial interventions present in the numerous variants. However, the researchers hope that new developments may arise from the results of this first phase and be applicable to other textual segments of the work preserved in the 8 manuscripts.

## 2.2 Previous and project's achievements

The most coherent nucleus of Francesco Guicciardini's documentary collection is certainly the one preserved in the family archive, which has undergone various rearrangements over time. This long and complex process of reorganization does not allow, even today, the establishment of absolute or relative chronologies in the location of the historian's papers<sup>6</sup>.

This edition, however, is not intended to replace the edition set up by Alessandro Gherardi at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>7</sup>, adopted by all subsequent editors, which essentially incorporates the text obtained from the ms. Laur. Indeed, it leans on it as the current point of arrival.

This digital edition of the incipit of the *Storia d'Italia* wants to highlight the articulated process that led from the ms. CFG Iib to the ms. Laur., and facilitate its analysis using the tools made available by the digital dimension.

## 2.3 Content

This digital edition includes first of all facsimile reproductions of the aforementioned manuscripts, specifically the sheets containing the text segments that are of interest for the topic analysed; in addition we also find the images of the Gherardi edition, for a total of 28 images. Of each facsimile, is provided a semi-diplomatic transcription (will be examined in par. 3.4 and 3.5). They can be analysed in parallel in the "Manuscripts" section<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> MORENO 2020, pp. 13-14.

<sup>7</sup> GHERARDI 1919.

<sup>8</sup> <https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/par-folio.html>

There are also two other textual reconstructions:

- i. what is called “premier jet” that is to say the first layer of writing, without Guicciardini’s interventions;
- ii. the final version of the “text revu”, obtained by applying all the corrections and second thoughts by the author himself;

They can be found both in the “Segments textuels” and “Editions” pages, where they can be appreciated and compared with one another.

Moreover, I can assume that more content will be added in a section for *comments*: the word “commentaires” appears among the team roles, and is said to be a “under development” section in the “Modifications sur EVT pour le projet Storia d’Italia” paragraph.

The research team also created a single XML-TEI encoded file, which allows to process all the proposed textual displays, accompanied by its documentation.

Finally, a reference bibliography is provided, both for the part closely related to the text and for the technical and technological aspect.

### 3. Aims and methods

#### 3.1 Documentation

The description of aims and methods can be found in the homepage of the website. A separate section of the site is dedicated to the technologies used, where however the content is the same as the one that already appears in the homepage, in the “Outils de visualisation” paragraph<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, in the “Crédits et Mentions légales” page the extensive documentation for the XML-TEI encoding can be found in the form of a pdf file<sup>10</sup>. Inside it there is a paragraph called “Perspectives”: the title is self explicative, and for this reason should be placed in a more easily accessible part of the website.

These considerations lead me to recommend the reorganization of the documentation, in order to outline a clearer and more organized scheme, especially considering future project developments and its utilization by external researchers.

#### 3.2 Scholarly objectives

The research team stresses that in this initial phase of the project it is still not possible to clearly state the chronological succession of one manuscript compared to another. However, the contemporaneity of some copies is already evident: it is highly probable that Guicciardini entrusted his secretaries with the copy of a draft while he was about to rewrite the sentences of another manuscript. In this sense, and given the particular complexity of the situation, any philological analysis of the copy should be accompanied by the philology of the author, and both can benefit from this digital edition.

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<sup>9</sup> Compare <https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/index.html> and <https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/storia-technos.html>.

<sup>10</sup> [https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/files/SdI\\_Manuel%20encodage\\_FR.pdf](https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/files/SdI_Manuel%20encodage_FR.pdf)

A codicological analysis could also be relevant in order to better understand Guicciardini's approach to his papers. However, at the current state of the edition, this type of study has no advantages because the number of facsimile is quite low.

Finally, linguistic and semantics study could make use of the XML-TEI encoding of the texts, and maybe open to the possibility of connecting the edition to a Linked Open Data project.

### 3.3 Mission

As stated in the section "Une édition numérique", the goal of the digital edition is to find solutions to make Guicciardini's tortuous creative process visible and readable on the screen. This improved accessibility and readability should consequently help the researcher in better understanding the genesis of the text and of the evolution of the author's critical thinking.

Considering that the edition defines itself as a prototype, I can say that it achieves its main objective. The different modalities of visualization offered through a suitably remodeled tool (see par. 4.1) allow the researcher to reason easily on the text and its progression, bypassing the difficulty of deciphering the text and visualizing portions of the manuscript in parallel display. The work team does not in fact claim to be complete, at least in this initial phase of the project; rather it proposes to create a model that can be extended to other parts of Guicciardini's opus.

Since the website was initially designed to allow members of the research team to collaborate remotely in the philological analysis of the different stages of the text, the target users are scholars who have a particular interest in deepening the critical thinking and written production of Francesco Guicciardini, both from a philological and linguist point of view.

On a personal note as a historian, I think that this digital edition could also have potential from a historiographical point of view. It could help a scholar, not particularly fluent in philology and the decoding of manuscripts, to inspect the reasoning behind the evolution of the content of such an iconic incipit and masterpiece for the origin of this field.

### 3.4 Method

This prototype of digital edition propose itself to be a systematic and analytical edition of the corpus that contains the variants of the writing of the incipit. In order to do so, the research team collected all the meaningful manuscript and began philological work on it.

The first stage was that of the faithful transcription of the manuscripts. Not a traditional one, but a semi-diplomatic transcription: it removes abbreviations (not reported so as not to weigh down the page of graphic signs), introduces diacritical signs and division of words according to modern use, but respects handwriting, punctuation, segmentation of the lines, capitalization and location of autograph integrations. There are overwritten letters, line spacing and margins corrections, in an attempt to be as faithful as possible to the graphical appearance of the manuscripts.

What I would like to stress though is the fact that, in the philological analysis of the documents, the research team made a clear and important distinction between "manucrits"

(codex) and “rédactions” (drafts)<sup>11</sup>: the two terms do not always coincide, in fact it often happens that within a single manuscript there are multiple rewrites of the same portion of text (even three, as in the case of the mss. AGF IV and AGF VII). For this reason, while maintaining the distinction between the manuscripts, which coincide with the “moments” of the writing, the researchers also felt as necessary to speak of “rédactions” referring in this case to rewrites within the different “stades” (stages). And in this context can be placed the distinction between “premier jet” and “text revu”.

Following the opinion stated by Patrick Sahle in *What is a Scholarly Digital Edition*<sup>12</sup>, I see a critical approach to the text in this, even though not explicitly stated.

### 3.5 Representation of documents and texts

The image quality of the facsimiles is good, but I think not optimal considering the possibilities offered by modern technology. However I am not sure, given the fact that there is no information about their technical acquisition<sup>13</sup>.

In the manuscript viewer, facsimiles allow the user to see how Guicciardini used the space of the page, while the semi-diplomatic version (definitely document-centric, see par. 3.4) intends to offer a neat and graphic representation of that stratification.

The visualization in the “Segments textuels” has been elaborated to allow the user to compare multiple editions of the same fragment, both in the “premier jet” and “text revu” versions. The “Editions” section instead offers a complete reading version of each draft.

### 3.6 Data modelling

The different visualization displays are processed from a single XML-TEI encoded file that follows Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) P5 guidelines<sup>14</sup>. Detailed information about the encoding is provided in the “Crédits et Mentions légales” page<sup>15</sup>, in a pdf file that extensively explains all the editorial choices. The entire XML-TEI file is downloadable and available under the terms of the license Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 4.

There is also a legend that explains the visual output of the TEI markers on the semi-diplomatic transcription that we can see in the Codex Viewer (see par. 4.1).

## 4. Publication and presentation

### 4.1 Technical infrastructure

The visualization tool used to set up the “Manucrits” section is version 1.1 of Edition Visualization Technology<sup>16</sup>, which offers the great advantage of being designed to represent a

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<sup>11</sup> <https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/index.html#05>

<sup>12</sup> PIERAZZO-DRISCOLL 2016, pp. 19-39 in particular pp. 24-25.

<sup>13</sup> <https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/storia-credits.html#2>

<sup>14</sup> Version 2.7.0. Last updated on 16th September 2014. We are currently at version 4.0.0 last updated on 13th February 2020.

<sup>15</sup> <https://guicciardini-storia-italia.huma-num.fr/storia-credits.html>

<sup>16</sup> ROSSELLI DEL TURCO 2014. New releases are available: EVT 1.3, EVT 2 beta 1 and 2.



text starting from an XML-TEI file. EVT allows to compare an image and a textual piece or two textual pieces.

Since it was conceived for mainly medieval documentary or critical editions, changes were made to the tool in order to meet specific needs. In particular, the original scripts did not include substitutions (subst), cancellations (rend = “overstrike” or rend = “underline”), addings in various positions (line spacing, left margin, top or bottom). Three modules have therefore been added.

The software was also modified with the addition of three scripts to obtain three output formats, adding a supplementary one for the semi-diplomatic transcription and adapting the two existing formats to create the “premier jet” and “text revu” versions. Along with these formats, a hundred CSS style sheets are active.

Other transformations in Python and XSLT have instead been implemented to create the “Segments” and “Editions” visualizations.

## 4.2 Interface and Usability

The two menus at the top are always present, in any part of the website, and allow to navigate from one page to another. At the top right we find the possibility to choose the language of the site: French or Italian. In regard to this, it should be noted that the Italian version has some errors and shortcomings in the translation from French.



Fig. 4: Screenshot of the homepage

On the homepage, on the left, we find an index that allows to navigate within the documentation of this page, very useful as the content is long. However, not all links are working: this is mainly due to small errors in the HTML text, which can be easily solved. It would also be useful to add a “back-to-top” button.

From the “Manucrits” section you can access the EVT Codex Viewer. Its interface is only available in French. Its use is intuitive, but the design could be improved. For example, in



Fig. 5 we can see an arrow on the right: it allows to change to the consecutive manuscript, but it becomes visible only if you scroll the horizontal bar (I have noticed it by mistake).

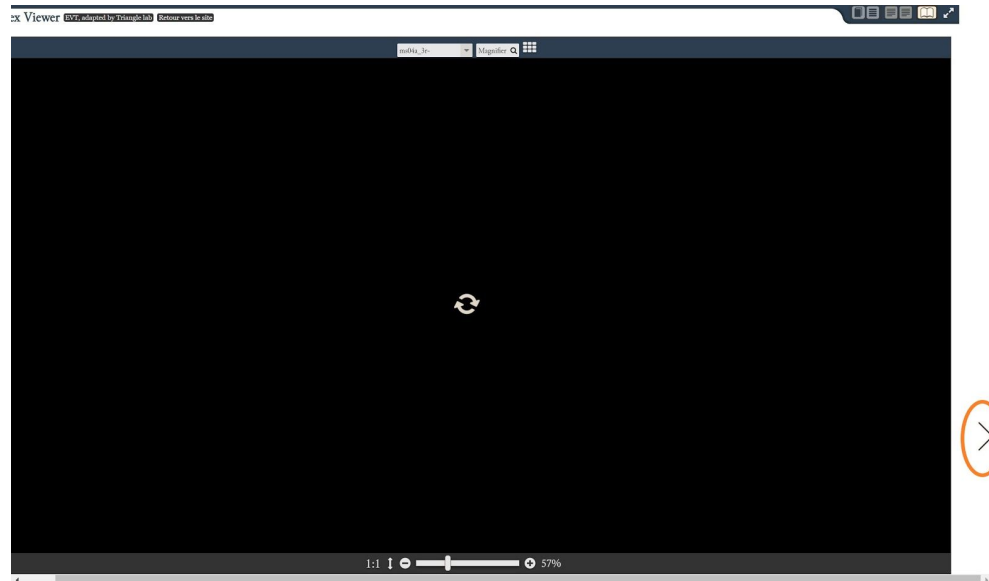


Fig. 5: Screenshot, bookreader mode - image not loading

At the top right there are buttons that intuitively allow you to take advantage of 3 types of display and to enlarge to full screen: image|text mode, text|text mode and bookreader mode. Unfortunately, at the moment the image-only view seems not to work (see Fig. 5 and 6).

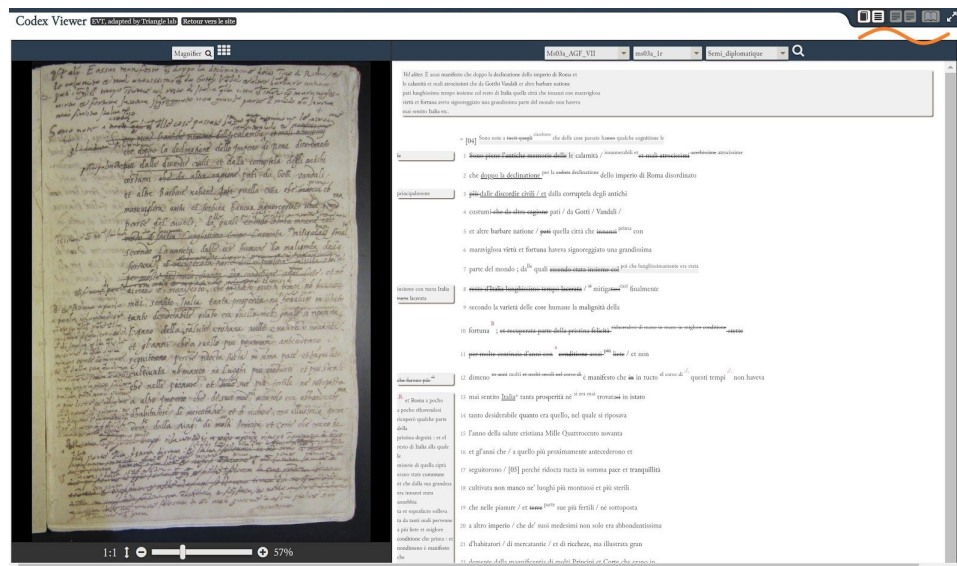


Fig. 6: Screenshot, buttons that switch visualization

As for the facsimile, the possibility of zooming up to 140% is provided. The “Magnifier” function allows you to add an extra to the zoom, such as a magnifying glass.

The choice of the material to be displayed can be done through three drop-down menus: manuscript, text segment, type of transcription.

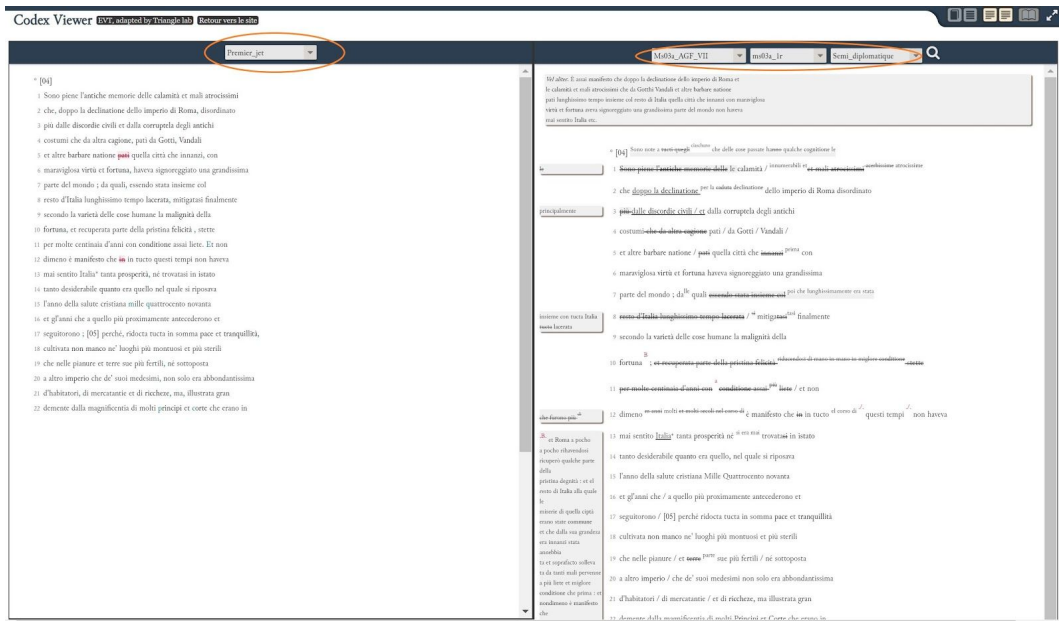


Fig. 7: Screenshot, text|text mode - dropdown menu

The “Segments textuels” and “Editions” sections work in the same way: the text appears on the right, which can be selected through filters on the left. The user can decide the order of display and cancel all filters.

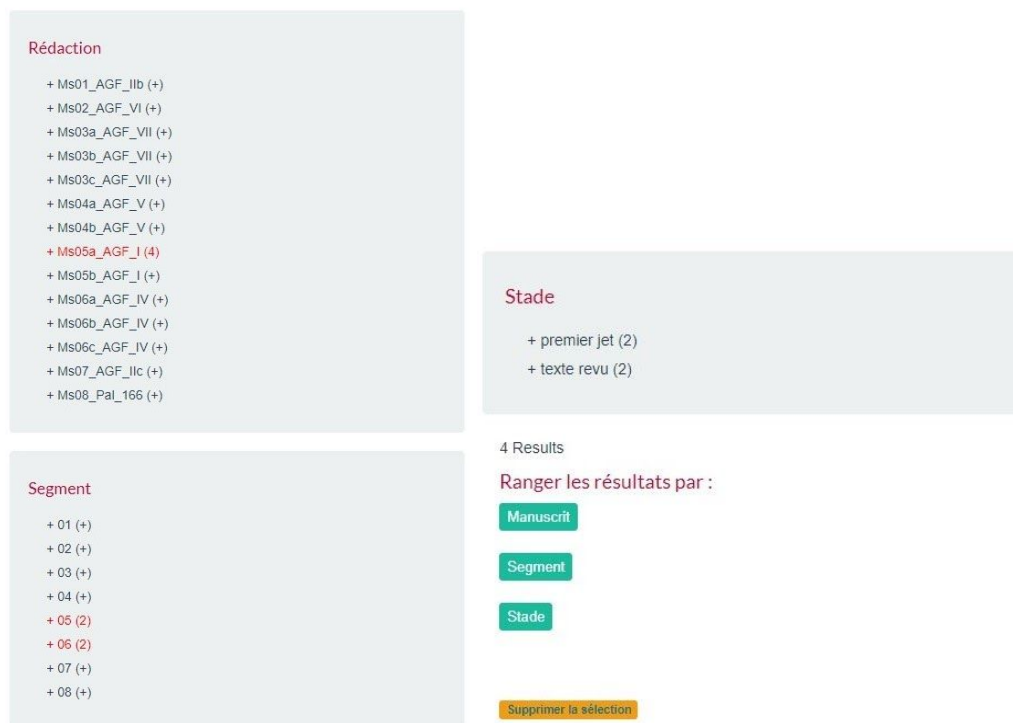


Fig. 8: Screenshot, filters in “Segments textuels” and “Editions”

### 4.3 Browse and search

The ability to browse through the entirety of the content of the website is not provided. In the Codex Viewer, on the other hand, there is a “Search” button which, at the moment, does not work.



Fig. 9: Screenshot, search problem in Codex Viewer

## 4.4 Rights and licenses

As already mentioned, the content normally present in the footer is not provided. There is a dedicated section (“Crédits et Mentions légales”) which specifies personal responsibilities in the creation of content, but does not speak about the reuse of images and transcriptions. Only the license of the XML-TEI file is provided.

## 4.5 Long term use

On several occasions it is specified how this digital edition is a prototype at its initial stage, and there are proposals for future developments. However, nothing is specified in terms of funds from the institutions involved, so it is difficult to judge whether the project will be truly carried out or not.

## 5. Conclusion

The digital edition of the *Storia d'Italia* can be considered an SDE, since it answers all the questions posed by Patrick Sahle in *What is a Scholarly Digital Edition*<sup>17</sup>: there is a full representation of the subject in question, the approach is critical, there is academic quality and it follows a digital paradigm. On the other hand though, there is not the possibility to cite it, no information about fundings and time are provided, there is the lack of search function and usability improvement are in order.

Since the digital edition is actually still a prototype, I think it would be forward looking to update the encoding to the latest version of TEI (4.0.0 last updated on 13th February 2020) and the EVT interface to version 1.3. Regarding this last point, some projects such as *The Vasto Project*<sup>18</sup>, which has a strong affinity with the research work examined in this review, even employs the beta version of EVT 2: more modern graphic interface, greater flexibility and modularity, higher level of customization<sup>19</sup>.

Overall, it is clear that behind the project there is a team that knows the subject, the author and his works so well that it understood the best way to represent them in digital format.

<sup>17</sup> PIERAZZO-DRISCOLL 2016, pp. 19-39.

<sup>18</sup> <https://dharc-org.github.io/progetto-vasto/index.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://evt.labcd.unipi.it/> and <https://visualizationtechnology.wordpress.com/2020/06/30/announcing-the-second-beta-version-of-evt-2/>

Therefore it would be desirable that the technical apparatus that supports the digital edition reaches the expectations and the level of quality that the philological research has produced.

## Bibliography

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## Sitography

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