# e-editiones: Focus of the Society

The focus of the Society e-editiones rests on 4 pillars:

1. Coordinating Developments in Open Source Software
2. Promotion of Information Exchange and Communication
3. Fundraising
4. Hosting Services for Digital Editions

## 1. Coordinating Developments in Open Source Software

The Society specifically promotes the use of open standards and open source software for digital editions. While digital editions may differ considerably in structure and content, there is a large overlap in terms of the basic technical functionality that each edition must offer. However, in particular small projects often face the problem of having to publish an edition under time pressure and with limited resources.

But even if sufficient resources are available, projects tend to reinvent the wheel over and over again, i.e. basic functionality is developed anew each time. This generates high costs, limits sustainability and, in the long term, increases the required maintenance effort enormously. The resulting software is usually not sustainable.

The Society therefore focuses on the promotion of open source, standard-based software. Editions should be able to reuse existing building blocks in a modular way, achieving quick solutions at low cost, but without being forced into a corset, neither technically nor scholarly.

Starting point for the initiators of the society is their shared use of [TEI Publisher](https://teipublisher.com/), which meets above conditions as it

1. is consistently based on TEI and related standards such as ODD and TEI Processing Model
2. is implemented as a toolbox: the entire user interface consists of small components complying with W3C standards, which can be recombined and reassembled as needed,
3. supports exchange and communication between different editions

The society thus initially aims to further support the development of TEI Publisher and TEI Publisher-based projects. However, such software cannot be created in isolation. Rather, it requires a constant exchange between developers and users, who are familiar with the technical requirements of their respective edition projects. This is how TEI Publisher originated as an initiative of the TEI Community and has since been continuously developed in interaction with a large number of projects. The Society would like to put such an exchange of information on a firm footing, but does not limit itself specifically to TEI Publisher.

Direct communication between edition projects is also central: instead of having to solve the same problems over and over again, projects should benefit from the experience and developments of other editions. In most cases, the technical requirements of an edition can already be covered with existing building blocks. Where this does not suffice and new blocks are needed, edition projects should coordinate with others to avoid duplicate developments. If possible, new building blocks should be created in a generic way so that other editions can easily adapt them to their requirements. To do this, the project’s context has to be extended beyond the single edition and a broader perspective needs to be adopted.

It is a main objective of the Society to coordinate such developments and channel existing funds or funding applications in a way that supports sustainability, from which all members benefit in long-term perspective.

## 2. Promotion of Information Exchange and Communication

A second important goal of the Society is to promote a constant exchange of information between the members. This includes establishing a communication platform open to all members for questions, suggestions and other contributions.

However, from our experience with open source projects we know that such communication only works in the long run if there are responsible individuals taking on a coordination role, overseeing requests and, if necessary, referring communications to the right people. The Society therefore intends to appoint a secretary who will take on these responsibilities and be available as a contact person for all members.

In addition to electronic communication, the Society also plans workshops, trainings and talks - or arranges these on request. It can often be assumed that the projects themselves have funds to cover travel costs. However, this is not always the case. The Society should therefore be able to cover part of the costs from membership fees - e.g. travel expenses or a compensation for invited experts.

The Society also actively seeks members and promotes sustainable solutions, e.g. through conference talks or workshops.

## 3. Fundraising

The Society can support its members in writing project funding applications, or it can apply for funding itself and in this case represent the interests of all members. All software development shall be for the benefit of the general public and must be available for further use as open source.

## 4. Hosting Services for Digital Editions

Especially for smaller edition projects limited in duration, hosting can be a massive problem. Running a server and maintaining the corresponding infrastructure is expensive and requires constant commitment, likely beyond the project duration. And even if hosting is provided by an institutional service infrastructure, this can often not guarantee more than a mere keeping alive of the status quo due to lack of human resources. With no updates and minimal maintenance only, online services often die after a few years and are no longer available or only partially accessible.

In cooperation with larger institutions, the Society thus aims to provide an infrastructure for long term hosting services and keep maintenance effort as low as possible. In early 2020, the *swissuniversities* project, *Nationale Infrastruktur Editionen* (NIE-INE), already financed corresponding developments for TEI Publisher to facilitate long-term updates and enable shared hosting of heterogeneous edition projects on one platform. A server was also made available.

The Society commits itself to continue these efforts and to ensure hosting service operations in the long term, as far as members are interested in it. However, such a service generates costs which cannot be financed from membership fees. These include administration, ensuring availability and regular server and software updates.

It is therefore up to the edition projects interested in hosting to cover the costs. It is also their individual responsibility to make sure that they meet all technical requirements to be included in the hosting. The Society merely acts as a broker for the hosting service and can assist in answering technical questions.

If smaller editions are unable to raise funds for hosting, their fees can be waived at the decision of the Society, provided that surplus from other hosting contributions allows it.

Since the entire software is freely available, it is also possible for external infrastructure providers (e.g. libraries and archives) to set up a corresponding service themselves. The Society explicitly welcomes and supports this.