**MARTINEZ — Digitisation**

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**Digitisation, Collaboration, Dissemination: Charting the Digital Ecology of the Scholarly Edition**

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**Contexts**

Digital scholarly editing is in a state of flux, as workflows and channels of scholarly communication face disruption via newer technologies, models of creation, and patterns of consumption and re-use. This poster situates the digital scholarly edition (DSE) as a ‘textual locus’ for intellectual activity, where editing is a distributed, iterative web of processes, each with an effect on the surrounding digital ecosystem. We reconsider how *critical digitisation*, *collaborative creation*, and *dissemination and reuse* might intersect to produce a unique lifecycle for the DSE. It is a provocation and a thought experiment; as such, it eschews technical specifications for broader, systematic critiques of shifts in knowledge and edition building.

**Critical Digitisation**

Digitisation has been trivialized as a mechanical preamble to the analytical work undertaken by scholarly editors.1 We assert that *critical* digitisation forms an integral part of the emergent ecosystem of the DSE, requiring informed decision-making, advanced technical and financial competencies, subject specialisations, and a keen awareness of use (and re-use) cases for digitised materials. Publications in critical technology studies and science and technology studies have argued that engagement in digital materiality—and with digital tools themselves—is anything but value-neutral; the work of Bruno Latour, N. Katherine Hayles, and Donna Haraway, among many others, has recently begun to inform discourses surrounding (digital) humanities practices.2 Digitisation is always critical, with judgments made or consciously avoided during the selection of materials, to production, to presentation, preservation and beyond (see Terras, 2008). Critical digitisation is, therefore, an integral layer of the editing process that drastically affects the affordances, values, and potential reuse of materials throughout the lifecycle of digital scholarly editions.

**Collaborative Creation**

Digital connectivity—and the communities of practice it engenders—re-shapes how editions are produced from the ground up. Wikipedia and crowdsourcing projects like Transcribe Bentham and the Letters of 1916 suggest outlines for this new way of constructing knowledge. *A Social Edition of the Devonshire MS* has explicitly attempted to model large-scale collaborative editing, prompting debate among scholarly editors and digital humanists.3 Despite the contentious nature of this discussion, the DSE may continue to become a more social, collaborative, and multivariate network. The open-source community, especially those groups devoted to tool building and knowledge construction, is a powerful articulation of how the technologically facilitated social production of intellectual content may fruitfully develop, given a vibrant community of interest. Such a community might be deeply invested, active for significant periods of time, and most importantly, radically open to participation from everyone, not just experts. Content might be available for copying, alteration, and redistribution, because when scholarly editions can be copied with a click of a button, the isolated edition of the past becomes untenable.

**Dissemination and Usage Environments**

New media has dramatically blurred the delineation between scholars and readers, producers and users. As scholarly communication increasingly moves from clearly defined channels of production, distribution, and use toward overlapping loci of intellectual activity, this tendency becomes more apparent. DSEs are accordingly disseminated and reused in increasingly iterative fashions, with users often having access to a DSE across a multitude of platforms while it is still a work in progress—not least because digital editions rarely constitute something that could be considered a ‘finished product’. This allows for broader pedagogical and societal impact as new audiences, remixers, and use cases open up. Users accessing such a work in progress can exert influence over future iterations of the publication through feedback or even user-centric design processes. Social approaches to production such as crowdsourcing, social annotation, and pedagogical exercises in creating editions have made users a valued part of the production process. Participation in these editorial processes is arguably a very pure form of scholarly dissemination, to the extent that production and dissemination might blur together when such transformed relationships occur in digital environments. In this poster we address ways to map and account for such transformed relationships in dissemination and the digital environments where these activities take place.

**Conclusion**

The ways that humanists study, create, and remediate textual materials through digital scholarly editions is changing. The digital ecosystem we envision explores how technical, cognitive, and social developments fundamentally affect what a DSE is or *can be*. For inasmuch as the edition is a site of intellectual activity among the interested publics, academics, and librarians, it is also a site of production, deeply intertwined with its foundational materials and the ways it is disseminated and read.

**Notes**

1. For a discussion arguing against digitisation as critical process, see Lavagnino (2009). For the opposing viewpoint, see Dahlström et al. (2012). For a discussion of the relationship between cultural heritage professionals and digital humanists, see, for example, Sula (2013).

2. For an overview of STS, see ‘An Extremely Brief History of Science and Technology Studies’ (2014). For another example of discourse-shaping discussions of critical analysis, see Liu (2012). As a field, the digital humanities largely ignores debates raised by new media and information science professionals who approach technology as completely imbricated in socio-cultural contexts. For example, see Winner (1980).

3. For the edition itself, see the Wikibooks-mounted project, http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/The\_Devonshire\_Manuscript. For critical work relating to the project, see Siemens et al. (2012). For arguments against the idea of collaborative editing, see Robinson (2013). See also Bordalejo (2013).

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