Request for Proposals: prototype of web-based reference software for assymmetric primary and commentary text

Principals  
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# Background

Greek rhetorician Hermogenes of Tarsus (2nd century CE) wrote an important treatise called *On Issues*. It is highly condensed and technical, giving rise to commentaries that provide explanation and supplementation. The 5th-century scholar Syrianus produced one such commentary, and this project focuses on the correlation of these two texts. Syrianus’ commentary is unusual in that rather than treating the text line by line or section by section, he writes a continuous discussion of up to 40 printed pages that runs parallel to a section of *On Issues*. Syrianus also refers to details of *On Issues* that come earlier or later than the section currently under discussion.

# Summary

The difficulty in studying these two texts arises partly from the inherent complexity of the subject matter and partly from the need to understand Hermogenes’ text in order to clarify Syrianus’ commentary. Currently, using printed editions, this is a cumbersome task. The project would involve linking the texts so that it is immediately clear which particular part of Hermogenes’ text is the subject of each part of Syrianus’ discussion and providing access to the other texts quoted in the form of footnotes.

Bible study software is a possible analogue. Most feature dual-pane reading, with hyperlinks in the left pane modifying what’s displayed in the right pane, and vice-versa. Translations and notes are also accomodated.

# User Stories

## Scenario 1

As someone interested in the use of precise terms in rhetorical texts, I want to be able to go straight to the passage(s) where Syrianus uses a particular term (via a TLG search which will give me the reference(s) or via our text?).

I then want to be able to:

1. Understand the immediate context in which the term is being used via notes and a translation
2. Find out immediately which passage of Hermogenes is being commented upon via a link so that I can read them together and arrive at a fuller understanding of Syrianus’ thought.

## Scenario 2

As a reader of Hermogenes, I want to know what Syrianus has to say about a particular chapter or passage. I therefore need a tool that will take me straight to the passage or passages where Syrianus elaborates on this passage in Hermogenes. Again, a translation and notes will help me to understand the Syrianus passage when I get to it.

(Variant)

As someone interested in Hermogenes but with little or no knowledge of Greek, I want to be able to go from my printed translation of Hermogenes directly to a translation of Syrianus (via the Greek text or directly, using chapter numbers??) to understand what Syrianus has to say about a particular passage in Hermogenes.

## Scenario 3

As someone primarily interested in Syrianus and his work, I want to be able to read his commentary on Hermogenes either sequentially or selectively (i.e. focussing on certain passages) in Greek and/or in translation. Notes on the content and on his use of other ancient authors will help me to understand the meaning. Apparatus criticus will explain the problems with the Greek text and the choices made by Rabe in the 19th century and by the creators of the site. I may also need to refer to the text of Hermogenes being commented at any particular point in order to understand Syrianus’ argument.

# Assets

Client will provide EpiDoc formatted files of the two texts. EpiDoc is a subset of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) XML standard. Important elements such as page and line numbers, references to other texts, languages, and footnotes will be demarcated. For this prototype phase, we will focus on approximately 30 pages from each text.

# Technical Requirements

Software should be written using a common open-source language, preferably Python, Javascript, Ruby, Go, PHP, etc. Any libraries used should likewise be open-source and well maintained. Software should be able to be run on a standard Linux distribution with little modification beyond installing the necessary interpreter, package manager, and libraries. On the client end, we require compatibility with the latest versions of Firefox, Chrome, and Safari. Internet Explorer and Edge compatibility are desirable. Only a 960px wide viewport and higher is required. Client plug-ins like Flash or Java may not be used. Accessibility compliance with the WCAG AA should be considered in the implementation.

# Selection Criteria

Strong proposals will briefly describe how past work met clients’ needs with creativity and technical competence, as well as some initial thoughts on this project. Please include an estimated schedule and cost. A background in text processing and the humanities a plus, but certainly not required.

# Project Deliverables & Budget

The goal of this stage of the project is to produce a prototype which can serve as a demonstration of concept to secure further funding, and as a foundation for future development. The budget is limited to $3,000. Based on the success of this round, the selected developer would receive preferential selection for the next round of development.