

# Monkey Business – or What is an Edition?

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## Abstract

Digital editions make it possible to create a collection of all existing copies of a text including digital facsimiles. Is this a problem if it means that there will be editions that are in fact collections of full variant texts with no selected or edited reading text? This paper argues that both archival editions with digital facsimiles and encoded source texts (digital diplomatic editions) and digital critical texts can and must exist side by side. It is also suggested that from high quality diplomatically encoded source texts it is possible to automatically extract texts that either directly or with some further encoding/editing can function as a base text for editions of different types and which build on different editorial philosophies. The editions produced at the Wittgenstein Archives in Bergen and in the project Henrik Ibsen's Writings in Oslo are used as examples of projects supporting the author's arguments.

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1 Robinson's requirements (or propositions) for a critical digital edition are:

- (1) A critical digital edition is anchored in a historical analysis of the materials.
- (2) A critical digital edition presents hypotheses about creation and change.
- (3) A critical digital edition supplies a record and classification over time, in

## 1 Introduction

In a recent paper Peter Robinson argues against a belief he claims to have seen, proposing that computers and hypertext make it possible to publish all variants and versions of a text, and that this would free the editor of making the choices which an editor traditionally had to make regarding text selection, editing etc. (Robinson, 2002). Against this simplistic belief in the use of computers and mass digitization Robinson adds a list of proposed requirements<sup>1</sup> that should be fulfilled in order to produce what he considers a critical digital edition.

It is not clear from Robinson's paper if he only considers worthwhile editions which can be classified as critical digital editions according to his propositions. There are reasons against such a view. At a conference organized by the *Editing Medieval Manuscripts* research group at the Centre for Advanced Studies at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters<sup>2</sup> research programme in April 2001, Már Jónsson presented what he called 'editorial impotence' (Már, 2001)<sup>3</sup>. In his paper he claims that one of the reasons why the number of published editions of Norse medieval texts per year seems to be reduced is the requirement for scholarly work expected in the introduction. This creates a problem, Már claims,

since the texts are not only not available with additional scholarly content until they are published, but they are just not available outside the archives or libraries where the original is stored.

In this paper I will argue that any scholarly edition is better than none even if it is not a critical edition, and that editions that may not be critical digital editions do indeed have a value and represent a kind of edition which are in fact the basis for critical text editions. I will also add a set of propositions for digital archives.

## 2 Editions from What to What?

G. Thomas Tanselle defines editing as ‘the considered act of reproducing or altering texts’. (Tanselle, 1995) In the same paper he presents a diagram<sup>4</sup> which can be used as a framework for classifying varieties of editing. The diagram is almost organized as a tree, and the editions appear as leaf nodes. This gives the impression that an editor<sup>5</sup> starts out with a set of available texts in the original (which may be manuscripts, printed editions or even speech recordings) and produces an end product, an edition. One kind of edition, the critical digital edition is presented by Robinson (2002), and again the impression is that the editor works from scratch. But should all editions start from scratch and reach the level of an end product, assuming there will be no further work done? One reason why editorial projects may have such aims is that the scholarly merit has traditionally been linked with the final product. It is, however, not difficult to find projects aiming at a complete critical edition with linguistic and factual comments that have run out of time or money or both and have left us with no useful edition.

If a high quality digital facsimile of a manuscript is published there is something available which will enable other scholars to move further towards a ‘digital critical edition’ (and a non-digital as well). The next step up from a high quality facsimile is a high quality encoded transcription<sup>6</sup>, and with new layers of preparation and editorial work we finally arrive at the critical edition. It is not necessary that all these steps should be done by the same editor. One editorial project which reached its aims within the time given and with the economic resources available was the publication of Wittgenstein’s Nachlaß. (Ore and Cripps, 1997) The Wittgenstein Archives Bergen (WAB) published all the available texts and did not make any choices between alternative versions of texts. Robinson (2002) writes: ‘In place of editorial anxiety about which text, what choices, we can have all the texts, all the versions, and never have to make any decisions.’ and ‘We can have images, lots of images, showing all the different forms of the text, from manuscript scrawls, through cheap serialisations and deluxe printings.’ So is the alternative to a digital critical edition a helter skelter collection of documents where no editorial work has been done and where ‘serious’ scholars who wish to make a real critical digital edition have to start from scratch? Not all scholars find that the critical edition and only the critical edition is an acceptable project goal (see for instance (Renear, 2001) or (Vanhouette, forthcoming)).

many dimensions and in appropriate detail.

(4) A critical digital edition may present an edited text, among all the texts it offers.

(5) A critical digital edition allows space and tools for readers to develop their own hypotheses and ways of reading.

(6) A critical digital edition must offer all this in a manner which enriches reading.

2 The Centre for Advanced Studies has a homepage at: <http://www.cas.uio.no/index.html> (This URL was valid on 22 August 2003)

3 I cite a manuscript version of the paper as it was given at the conference. A revised version was published in Icelandic in *Getuleysi útgefenda? Skírnir* 175 (fall 2001): 510-29.

4 p. 11

5 ‘Editor’ may here and elsewhere in this paper be understood as a project group just as well as an individual editor unless I have clearly stated something else.

6 The encoding of a transcription may also be done at different levels: first a simple encoding and then later encoders may add, for instance, grammatical tagging—see the papers by Haugen and Johansson in this issue.

The WAB saw it as its aim to provide the basis for later critical editions. The Nachlaß was accurately transcribed and heavily encoded. The enormous amount of intellectual scholarly effort put into this now makes it available for scholars who wish to produce critical editions to start with a great deal of the work already done. In addition to the transcription and encoding for a digital diplomatic edition, the text was also made available for normalization: by running the encoded text through filters, both the diplomatic version and a normalized reading version are available. One of the things a computer can do is to search through large amounts of data. Since normalized versions of place names and personal names are available in the Bergen electronic edition of Wittgenstein's Nachlaß, it is also possible to perform meaningful searches for names (WAB, 1998–2000).

### 3 The Text Archive Reborn

Since 1998, the project Henrik Ibsen's Writings (HIW)<sup>7</sup> has produced large quantities of deeply encoded transcriptions of Henrik Ibsen's printed editions and manuscripts. HIW is funded for ten years by the Norwegian Research Council and by the universities in Oslo, Bergen, the University College of South-Trøndelag, and the National Library of Norway. This is a large project, at least by Norwegian standards, and its aim is to produce a critical edition—both in print and a digital edition—of the complete works of Henrik Ibsen.

The specifications for the critical digital edition are not yet finalized, so whether the edition will fulfil all of Robinson's (2002) propositions is as yet unknown. This project does, however, show how editions can be produced on several levels and that it is possible to use the data from one kind of edition when another is produced. The diagram of edition types

<sup>7</sup> See the paper by Bøe, Jørgensen and Taugbøl in this issue.



**Fig. 1** Adjusted version of edition types

shown by Tanselle (1995) is basically a tree. This means that the different types are shown as leaf nodes, that is, there is no further link going out from them. An adjusted version of this diagram shows other possible relationships between edition types.<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 1)

The HIW project illustrates how results or editions from one project can be reused as building blocks for another editorial project. All known (and available) manuscripts by Henrik Ibsen were scanned in a project at the Ibsen Centre at the University of Oslo (Eide, 2000). This collection of digital facsimiles with a certain amount of metadata linked with the facsimiles is in itself an edition, at least according to Tanselle's classification system. The HIW project uses these facsimiles as their primary source for transcriptions. Only where something is not exactly clear from the facsimile are the original manuscripts consulted (if possible).<sup>9</sup>

At what was then the Norwegian Computing Centre for the Humanities at the University of Bergen, the dramatic and lyric texts by Henrik Ibsen as they were published in the so called Centennial critical Ibsen edition were transcribed with the aim of producing a lemmatized and grammatically tagged concordance of Ibsen's works (Noreng, Hofland and Natvig, 1987). As a spin-off from this project, the dramas and poems from the Centennial edition are available and can be searched at the University of Bergen's web pages.<sup>10</sup> This is in itself also one type of edition. But the encoded material was also given to the HIW project where these texts gave the HIW a flying start in its work on transcribing and encoding the printed Ibsen editions.

The HIW project is thus reusing data from two other projects, the facsimile project at the University of Oslo and the concordance project at the Norwegian Computing Centre for the Humanities. The facsimiles are used for data entry and encoding—the originals are not collected in any one single place or country.

The HIW aims at producing critical editions of the complete works of Henrik Ibsen. But will these critical editions be the project's product with the longest lifetime for usefulness? The HIW are founding their critical editions on the first published version of each of Ibsen's works (when they have been published at all). For the first published editions, three copies of each have been collated against each other and the variant information has been stored in the encoded apparatus. For later editions published while Ibsen was alive, only one copy is read and transcribed and encoded. If another project in ten to fifty years time decides that there are reasons for 'eine Ausgabe letzter Hand' it is not necessary to start all over. The facsimiles are available and the transcribed and encoded texts. The HIW has collated only the first editions so a project basing its editions on the final version may wish to collate the transcribed texts from the final publications during Ibsen's lifetime with one or more additional copies of this publication, and these new collations can be added to the set of available encoded transcriptions. Apart from this, the archived texts can be reused for new editions based on different editing principles than the ones stated for the printed edition in the HIW project. Although it has been claimed that it is impossible to generate different

8 A slightly different model, though very similar is presented by Edward Vanhoute (Vanhoutte, 1999). In a former paper I have also presented a related model (Ore, 1999)

9 The transcription of the Wittgenstein Nachlaß worked in a similar way—here microfilms were originally used for the transcriptions.

10 This URL was valid on 4 September 2003: <http://www.hd.uib.no/ibsen/index-e.html>

types of editions (such as critical vs. reading editions) from the same encoded archived texts,<sup>11</sup> it is difficult to understand exactly why. The factual and some of the linguistic comments in the HIW publication will become outdated, partly because additional information will be needed for future generations of readers but the transcribed manuscripts and editions from Ibsen's lifetime do not need to change, even if corrections and additional mark-up may be added.

In the HIW project, the creation of encoded transcriptions is part of the same project as the critical editions. But just as the digital facsimiles and the first transcription of the Centennial Ibsen edition have been produced by other projects, there can also be other projects like the WAB where the aim is not critical editions but collections of encoded transcriptions. Since the 1970s, there have been digital text archives for special purposes or for special genre, languages or authors (for instance the *Thesaurus Linguae Graeca* (Berkowitz and Squiter, 1986) or the WAB) and text archives which have functioned as depositories such as the Oxford Text Archive (OTA, 2003). For Nordic medieval texts a new type of text archive has been established: The Medieval Nordic Text Archive. MENOTA has member institutions from Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. *The MENOTA Handbook* (MENOTA, 2003) provides guidelines for transcriptions and text encoding. A text may have only a minimum of mark-up and still be an acceptable MENOTA text, or it may have deep encoding such as, for instance, grammatical and normalization information for every single word in a text. This means that a MENOTA text may be anywhere on the span from 'Transcription' to 'Deeply encoded transcription' in Fig. 1. This type of organization makes it possible to provide texts for other scholars before there is a digital critical edition and in many cases a scholar, for instance a historian (to return to Már Jónsson (2001)) will be more helped by having a transcription with a certain amount of mark-up available than if he or she would have to wait another twenty years for a digital critical edition.

In Robinson's (2002) paper, one can get the impression that unless one produces a critical digital edition one is actually doing nothing of intellectual and scholarly value but just 'magically' adding in texts and images to some kind of computer storage. In a paper given at a conference in Stockholm (Ore, 1999), I gave an early version of some of the ideas appearing here. One of the comments in the discussion after the presentation was that I was suggesting the kind of textual criticism that could be performed by trained monkeys, that unless an editorial project included text selection and emendation, without the critical edition there was no work of scholarly value. For those of us who have looked at the *Wittgenstein's Nachlass. The Bergen Electronic Edition* (1998–2000) or have followed the work done in the transcription and text encoding in the HIW project, this criticism is clearly groundless and seems to be constructed from lack of knowledge. Editions other than critical editions and archives of such non-critical editions are of value in themselves and are natural building stones for a critical edition whether that is digital or printed.

11 See for instance (Dahlström 2001) p. 69: 'Att ur ett och samma uppmärkingsarkiv hoppas kunna generera sinsemellan olika editionstyper ... riktade till väsentligen olika publikationer är överidealiskt, ...'

## 4 Encoding within and without

Digital editions—critical or not—contain encoded text. In some cases this mark-up is not explicit, for instance when we look at texts where chapter headlines might be written in bold and in another typeface than the running text. But once we look further into this we realize that this is also a kind of mark-up, and in a digital edition there will also be some explicit encoding hidden behind the bold text. In this example the reason something is shown as bold is that the publisher (or, as the case may be, the reader) has chosen to display chapter headlines this way. This is the abstraction level intended when SGML was introduced and very clearly described when the Text Encoding Initiative launched the P3 Guidelines in 1994. (Burnard and Sperberg-McQueen, 1994). In a text or a document some part might be encoded in start- and end-tags and the choice of tag might identify some kind of property the editor or encoder claims has a certain value for this part. This might for instance be that this word has been overstruck or deleted by the writer. There might also be single, empty tags which contain information valid at this part of the text (for instance the insertion point for a footnote or a line break might be marked). Here is an example from a tagged manuscript transcription:

```
<lb/>forferdet da jeg oppdaget a?<note type="transkr">av?
</note> <name type="person">fru Hills</name> grav
(Smith, 1954–55, p. 100)
```

In this text extract `<lb/>` marks a line break. `<note>...</note>` gives two pieces of information: the start-tag (`<note>`) is placed at a certain point in the text where there might be for instance a footnote mark in one view. The start/end-tags surround the content of the note. (In this case a working note about the transcription.) Similarly the `<name>...</name>` tags surround a part of the text and the encoder uses these tags to make a claim about the content. Later processing may for instance use this to create an index of person names if this should be printed.

From the idea of a footnote it is not much of a leap to imagine the encoding marking the start or end of a hypertext link. From this description we might go one step further: there really isn't any difference between inline mark-up and hypertext, it is only a matter of the abstraction level we are working at and of the tools available for our editing.

Hypertext has so far not developed into general systems for everyone.<sup>12</sup> Instead some of the features expected in 'real' hypertext, such as links from one place to another, are available in a more simplified form in for instance web document mark-up (html) and web protocols (http). Also we find that the linking information is usually hard coded as part of a text's mark-up and this mark-up is again usually embedded as part of a document. If we go back to some of the early descriptions of hypertext or similar ways to organize information (e.g. (Bush, 1945) or (Nelson, 1987)) one of the main aspects of the Memex or Hypertext/Xanadu is that the user should be able to add his or her own links to selected parts of the same or other documents. If we accept mark-up as just one special

12 Some commercial software systems such as Panorama and before that Dynabook could store notes and comments as external texts with links into the commented text. But these and other serious SGML presentation tools did not survive the move to XML and there doesn't seem to be any software developing firm that considers this kind of software worth developing.

case of added hypertext then in a full hypertext system we should be able to add our own mark-up (i.e. tags) to the text we are working with.

A full hypertext system, especially one including all the features mentioned by Nelson,<sup>13</sup> should not be necessary even if we wish to include some of its features. I will not discuss for instance micropayment systems here (but these are crucial for Nelson's model). But a development towards external encoding would give digital editions a longer life. A correctly (as far as possible) transcribed text witness may then be encoded with layers of encoding, and these codes need not necessarily be stored in the same text file—or even file system—as the encoded text—a solution known as offset mark-up that is proposed, and used, by a number of projects, one of which will be described below. (This would also make it possible to encode texts on read-only media and stored outside of catalogues where the scholar has writing access.) Emendations of the transcribed text may, at least for a time, also be stored as parts of the external links or tags—in this way variants of a text witness which have been used for scholarly work may be preserved. The idea of external mark-up is implemented in the Just In Time Markup (JITM) system described in a paper at the ACH/ALLC 2003 Conference (Tiffin *et al.*, 2003). The JITM uses proprietary tools for a particular computer system. In the not so distant future my hope is that such a system can be run on any web server along with the necessary tools for showing selected tag sets for a given text. For if everyone can tag a text according to her or his wishes and scholarly level of competence, it is not given that a reader may wish to see a text in a view reflecting all these tags. The JITM system described by Tiffin *et al.* (2003) also has features for displaying information from certain parts of the complete mark-up. Similar selective display systems can of course also be made with embedded mark-up and the use of namespaces/style sheets, but this opens up far more complex issues which I will not elaborate here except for mentioning them: should we ideally be able to select certain sets of tags from a certain selection of encoders (when we have multiple encodings)?

## 5 Propositions for Text and Facsimile Archives

Peter Robinson (2002) offers six propositions for critical digital editions; Edward Vanhoutte on the other hand offers six criteria for what defines an 'electronical (scholarly) edition':

1. the immediate result or some kind of spin-off product from textual scholarship,
2. which is intended for a specific audience and designed according to project-specific purposes,
3. which represents at least one version of the text or the work,
4. which has been processed from a platform-independent and non-proprietary basis that is both stored for archival purposes and is made available for further research (Open Source Policy),
5. whose creation is documented as part of the edition, and
6. whose editorial status is explicitly articulated in the edition (Vanhoutte, forthcoming).

13 Nelson (1986) and in other works.

To this I would like to suggest certain requirements for the basic archives<sup>14</sup> rather than for the museums (to follow Vanhoutte's terminology in an earlier paper (1999)):

- (1) The documents in the archive should have a known source (<sourceDesc> in TEI) This feature is missing in for instance the Project Gutenberg (2003) text collection and is one of the reasons why this collection is not a functioning text archive.
- (2) The documents' genesis should be documented. For digital facsimiles this would include the techniques used for photographing and/or scanning and information about possible post-scanning processing of the image files. For texts, transcription work and encoding (including proofreading) should be documented.
- (3) The documents should be sufficiently described: for images this would include resolution and file type. For texts I would expect character set information and description of any possible explicit encoding scheme in addition to file type information. Ideally this description should be complete enough to allow future users to extract and read or in other ways manipulate the documents.

Archives may also move on from basic archives in the direction of museums (again in Vanhoutte's terminology) if they:

- (4) Offer editing tools and make it possible for users to mark up texts. This mark-up should include text emendation, allowing users to produce scholarly editions. But it is important that the creation of an archive is done as a goal in itself, not as a step in the creation of an edition. The archive should be a possible data source for zero or more editions.

## 6 But What about the Edition?

In Vanhoutte's (1999) model of archives and museums, the edition should handle the museum functions, and present an exhibition based on material stored in the archive. This is similar to my own earlier suggestions (Ore, 1999). But facsimile editions are not unknown, and neither are diplomatic editions. In fact, the boxes in Fig. 1 represent different types of editions. In addition to the critical edition in this figure we may add other types of (subjective) editions, i.e. the museum exhibitions discussed by Vanhoutte. The WAB has encoded the texts for a diplomatic edition. This may be considered an edition belonging to the archive functions. But the WAB has also encoded the texts for normalization and this brings them over to the museum part of Vanhoutte's model. In the HIW project the texts are first encoded for a diplomatic edition—archive building—and are then later used by the philological editor creating a reading text for the text critical edition—the museum exhibition. The word 'archive' may in itself make a problem. The HIW produces an archive of encoded texts by Henrik Ibsen—this can also be considered an edition. If these texts are deposited at a later date at the

14 So far I have mentioned texts and digital facsimiles, but an archive might also include other types of data: sound recordings, movies, computer software etc.

National Library of Norway and incorporated in the Library's text archive, then the Ibsen material may still be called an edition but the Library's text archive is clearly not one. Instead of separating the archive from the edition I would rather use the terms archival editions and exhibitory editions. From an archival edition it is possible to build, or in some cases to extract through a filter the text for an exhibitory edition. And to return to Már Jonsson's worries: an archival edition will in many cases be more than enough for the needs of an historian, and incremental construction of archives of archival editions would probably make more editions available than if the only acceptable editions are the text critical ones.

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