Digital Architecture and the Role of the Editor: Mapping Invention in Writing
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Although critical editing knows different traditions, each with their own methodology, it is safe to say that the main intention scholarly editing is "to examine material documents as socio-cultural and historical evidence"(Schillingsburg, 2009). Scholarly editions enhance our understanding of how texts came to be and thus "how books exist and how communication happens" (Schillingsburg, 2009): from author, editor, publisher and bookseller to reader, including (literary) critics and socio-cultural events like censorship (Darnton, 1982). This talk addresses several challenges in the field of digital scholarly editing.

A part from the guidelines for text encoding offered by the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), there are few general rules for the construction of a digital scholarly edition. The 'right' digital edition depends on the available textual material and additional information. Establishing the construction and design of a digital edition touches upon essential issues in the field of textual scholarship. For instance, can an edition in digital form still be considered as a scholarly edition or rather a 'documentary archive', a database or a library? What are the changes in the role of the editor and the reader? (DiXiT project proposal, 2012)

My research project aims to develop a digital infrastructure that promotes further research to the genesis of a modern literary work. Following the statement that scholarly editions enhance our understanding of how texts came to be: how can this textual genesis be best represented and visualized in a digital scholarly edition?

A digital scholarly edition could provide a valuable contribution to the study of the processes of reading, composition and production of texts. It can contain a variety of textual material: besides the writings of the author (e.g. drafts, manuscripts, typescripts, editions), it is possible to include (annotated) personal books, a diary, or a commonplace book. Developing a digital infrastructure allows the reader a detailed examination of the relations between all textual representations of a work and other relevant material.

Next to mapping and defining of (inter)textual relations, my research examines current best practices in coding and visualization of the relation between various witnesses of a text and of the writing process itself. The identification of the relationships between an author's writings and his or her readings shows a text as subject to many various influences and can clarify the exo- and endogenesis of a work.

A third research objective is to explore the role of the editor of a digital scholarly edition. When it comes to the encoding and structuring of texts, the expertise of an editor is preferable to total freedom for the reader. However, the process of encoding texts in XML allows little ambiguity. This has consequences for the presentation and interpretation of variants and versions. The infrastructure, interface design and tools are developed in close collaboration with an IT-specialist and influenced by the (intended) user audience. Moreover, the ways in which the reader approaches a digital edition could affect the arrangement and presentation of the material. Is the creator of a digital edition also -or still- an editor?