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Rediscovering Renaissance Recipes: Digital Presentation for a 16th Century Text

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Background

In cooperation with Dr. Timothy Tomasik, Professor of World Languages and Cultures, the project team seeks to create a web-based system for displaying and indexing a French recipe book from 1509, *Platine en francoys*, which has been transcribed into an XML (Extensible Markup Language)-based file format using the conventions of TEI. The tool would allow users to read, compare, and search recipes digitally rather than relying on a lengthy, unorganized physical book.

Transcription

Our project was made possible by the efforts of French students Anna Corner, Ellie Benz, Maddie Bohlin, and Annika Brown, in collaboration with Dr. Tomasik, who have worked to digitally transcribe the text from the original book and format it as XML documents for our group to display in our web interface.

Development

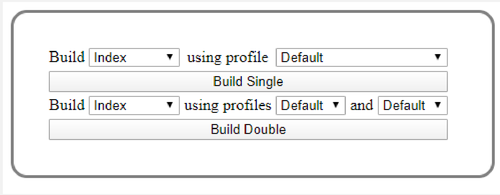
The system was developed using an Agile environment; this allows the team to gradually design, implement, and test new features in short sprints, rather than trying to develop the entire program on one lengthy schedule. This allows for dynamic prioritization of which features are most important for the client, as well as ensuring that the team always has a working version of the software, regardless of delays, unforeseen bugs, or changes in the needs of the client.

Our team expanded on a pre-existing code base, which included XSLT files used to convert the digitized text into the format we needed.

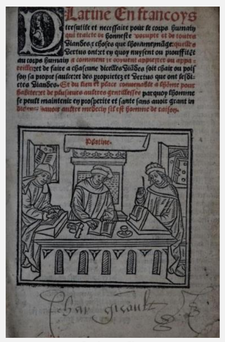
Web-Based Display

The application implements a webpage that allows users to select up to two properly formatted XML-based files to view in their browser. The application can display a single file, or two files in a side-by-side view for multitasking, comparing recipes, or displaying different revisions or translations of the same recipe at once. The web view also includes links on the side to page numbers, which take the place of page breaks in the original text; users can click these links to view scans of each page of the original text, allowing them to view the style and formatting of the physical book while accessing the easier-to-read transcribed version in their browser.

The HTML formatting converts the original, ornately written text into a format easily read by both humans and computers.

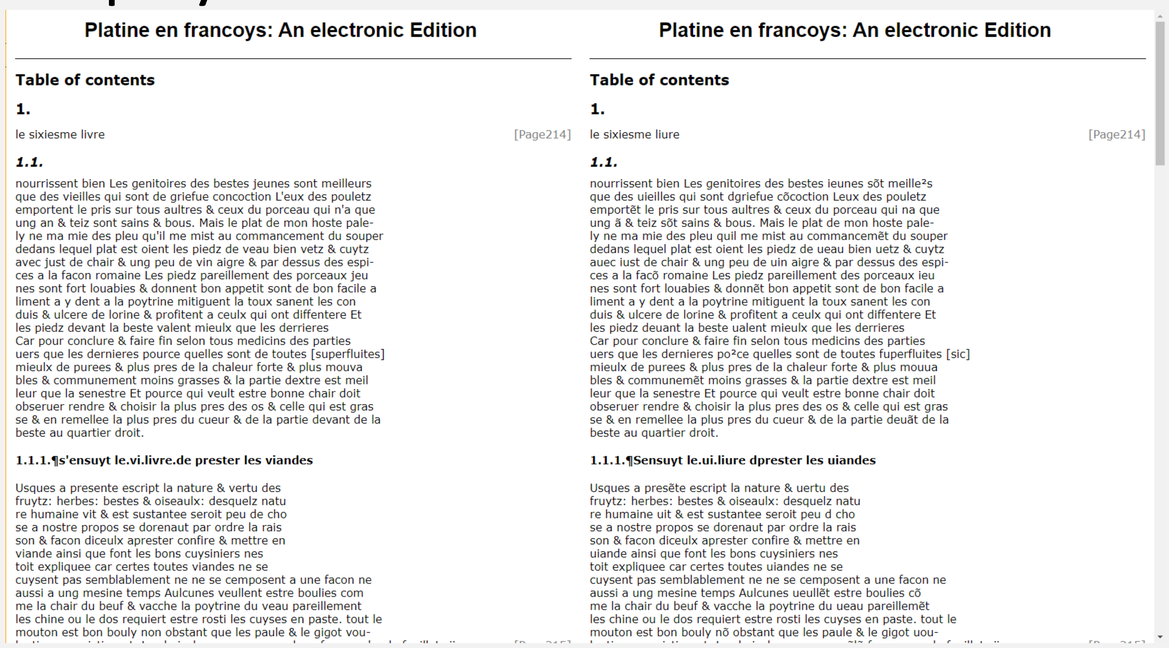


The user interface allows selection of up to two texts to display individually or side-by-side



A scan of the first page of the original, difficult-to-read cookbook from the early 1500s

The web view displays the chosen text(s) with clearly demarcated sections with headings, standard HTML formatting, and links to scans of the original book. Here, the same text is shown twice to demonstrate the side-by-side view, which allows the user to scroll through two texts at once.



Platine en francoys: An electronic Edition

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1.

le sixiesme livre [Page214]

1.1.

nourrissent bien Les genitoires des bestes jeunes sont meilleurs que des vieilles qui sont de griefue concoction L'eux des pouletz emportent le pris sur tous aultres & ceux du porceau qui n'a que ung an & teiz sont sains & bous. Mais le plat de mon hoste pale- ly ne ma mie des pleu qu'il me mist au commancement du souper dedans lequel plat est oient les piedz de veau bien vetz & cuytz avec just de chair & ung peu de vin aigre & par dessus des espi- ces a la facon romaine Les piedz pareillement des porceaux jeu nes sont fort louabies & donnent bon appetit sont de bon facile a liment a y dent a la poytrine mitiguent la toux sanent les con duis & ulcere de lorine & profitent a ceulx qui ont diffentere Et les piedz devant la beste valent mieulx que les derrieres Car pour conclure & faire fin selon tous medicins des parties uers que les dernieres pource quelles sont de toutes [superfluites] mieulx de purees & plus pres de la chaleur forte & plus mouva bles & communement moins grasses & la partie dextre est meil leur que la senestre Et pource qui veult estre bonne chair doit obseruer rendre & choisir la plus pres des os & celle qui est gras se & en remellee la plus pres du cueur & de la partie devant de la beste au quartier droit.

1.1.1.¶s'ensuyt le.vi.livre.de prester les viandes

Usques a presente escript la nature & vertu des fruytz: herbes: bestes & oiseaulx: desquelz natu re humaine vit & est sustantee seroit peu de cho se a nostre propos se dorenaut par ordre la rais son & facon diceulx aprester confire & mettre en viande ainsi que font les bons cuysiniers nes toit expliquee car certes toutes viandes ne se cuysent pas semblablement ne ne se composent a une facon ne aussi a ung mesine temps Aulcunes veullent estre boulies com me la chair du beuf & vacche la poytrine du veau pareillement les chine ou le dos requiert estre rosti les cuyses en paste. tout le mouton est bon bouly non obstant que les paule & le gigot vou-

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Implementation

The project uses XML-based transcriptions of the original text with with TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) formatting standards. The web client is written in JavaScript using NodeJS and the XMLDom parsing library, with HTML/CSS for the display.

Future Work

Planned additional functionality includes searching for specific recipes, including searching by relevant tags and ingredients, and a facsimile-focused view enabling easy side-by-side viewing of the digital transcriptions of a recipe and scans of the original text. The interface will also feature a complete table of contents that allows for quick navigation through the contents of *Platine en francoys*.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Professor Nicholas S. Rosasco, DSc and Professor Timothy Tomasik, PhD for the opportunity to pursue this project and their patient guidance in seeing it through; and thank you to the French students who are working tirelessly to transcribe and format the contents of *Platine en francoys* for us to display.

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