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*Text Editing, Print and the Digital World.*  
Marilyn Deegan and Kathryn Sutherland  
5 (eds). Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009. 205 pp.  
ISBN 978 0 7546 7307 1. £55 (hardback).

If there is one key issue that has been dominating theory and debate on digital scholarly editing during the last two decades, it must be its relation to editing in print. Looking back at Digital Humanities' still recent history, it seems that scholarly editors who have been publishing electronically have gradually become more and more aware of the ambivalent status of their work with regards to the print medium. Whereas apparently digital pioneers simply denied or neglected possible drawbacks and disadvantages to their new kind of editing, editors of electronic publications later came up with new concepts and ideas on the nature of text itself (like hypertext) to defend their innovative (hyper)editions. Nowadays, digital humanists are no longer blind for reasonable arguments against digital scholarly editing and have come to a more nuanced and more thoroughly thought through rationale of their own activities. Marilyn Deegan and Kathryn Sutherland's excellent book *Text Editing, Print and the Digital World* is an exponent of this most recent phase in theorizing digital scholarly editing. It is an exquisite collection of essays on textual editing and new possibilities offered by digital technologies and draws upon presentations by some of the key players in the field of Digital Humanities at several seminars at King's College in 2006.

'Being Critical', the title to Sutherland's own first chapter is indicative of the overall feeling that seems to have sneaked into the minds of most contributors to this book. Being very critical herself indeed, Sutherland's chapter leaves little room for digital humanists to get too excited about what has been done so far. Sutherland thinks we 'are paying

insufficient attention to electronic difference at almost every stage of our engagement with the architecture and functioning of the electronic edition because we are too enamoured of electronic simulation' (p. 18) and estimates that electronic editions 'are still in an early stage of design; for that reason their worth is limited' (p. 22). Some scholars believe digital repositories to be more neutral or objective and therefore more valuable than actual editions, but Sutherland argues that 'the electronic repository is currently best seen as a recyclable wastebank, one that can be scavenged by scholars for particular purposes, and, as required, mined for new critical editions. Currently and foreseeably these will most usefully [...] continue to be stabilized, printed, paper critical editions'.

Coming from an unsuspecting witness of digital editing and publishing, Sutherland's sharp but nuanced critique on the overenthusiasm that characterized the heydays of electronic scholarly editing is stimulating and inspiring indeed, and other contributors to the first part of the book ('In Theory'), like Mats Dahlström and Edward Vanhoutte, carry on with this carefully balancing of both advantages and drawbacks to digital scholarly editing. Dahlström points at the historical, medial, social, and rhetorical dimensions of scholarly editions, putting constraints on their reproductive force. Therefore, he urges libraries and archives engaging in digitization projects 'to use and make available the most long-term, thick and sophisticated technology they can reasonably consider as legitimate', while at the same time, realising that even their digital archives are subject to their 'situatedness' he suggests 'they stay on a pragmatic path and not be tempted by any siren songs of universal productivity' (p. 43). Vanhoutte judges that 'we are creating the wrong types of editions even for the obvious supporters inside the scholarly community',



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because ‘the diverse theories of the various editorial traditions have resulted in ambiguous and ambidextrous scholarly editions that are estranged from their primary users’ (p. 104). The conclusion to Vanhoutte’s step-by-step reasoning on the audience, nature, function, and status of the scholarly edition is surprising yet plausible: ‘The electronic edition is the medium par excellence for the promotion of the scholarly reading edition and the recentering of the printed edition’ (p. 110).

Also, in the theoretic first part of the book are Dino Buzetti’s thoughts on ‘Digital Editions and Text Processing’. He argues that both ‘the basic form of text representation and the current markup schemes do not afford suitable means to process a string of characters as a proper linguistic unit and so cannot ensure that the linguistic competence of the reader can be transferred to a computer’ (p. 60). While Buzetti is pointing at endeavours like the BECHAMEL Markup Semantics project as an alternative for markup schemes like XML that still draw upon the controversial ‘OHCO’ model (‘Ordered Hierarchy of Content Objects’), Paul Eggert in his chapter (‘The Book, the E-text and the Work-site’) turns to Just-In-Time Markup (JITM) for separating the textual transmission from the markup, thus allowing ‘a base transcription file to be annotated or augmented with analytical or structural markup, in parallel and continuously, while retaining its textual integrity’ (p. 77).

The second part of the book (‘In Practice’) collects some more concrete essays on the practical use of the digital medium for scholarly research and publishing. Their diversity reveals what mostly remains implicit in the theoretical essays in the first part of the book: almost any digital edition has some project-specific problems and issues, and therefore quite a few features of any scholarly edition (still) result from decisions that were taken on the fly.

Seemingly contrary to Sutherland’s plea for critical editions in the first part of the book, Espen Ore in the second part argues that ‘straightforward digitization that makes data available quickly is

preferable to a critical edition which is never finished, even if less scholarly value is added’ (p. 114). Nevertheless, these current archive models often fail to remain formal structures of the sources through the use of facsimile pages. Drawing upon their experience with the *Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition* (ncse), James Mussell and Suzanne Paylor cleverly point out that such digital facsimile archives ‘are clearly limited if they do not incorporate the other relational structures into their edition architecture’ (p. 147).

For the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift, Linda Bree, and James McLaverty follow Sutherland’s idea that stable critical editions currently may very well still be print publications, because the ‘future of the print edition is secure, as that of the electronic edition cannot be at present’ (p. 132). As far as genetic editions are concerned however, the electronic medium obviously offers more opportunities to encode complex textual structures and architectures than print. Focusing on the encoding of temporal phenomena in different kinds of manuscripts, Elena Pierazzo in the last essay of the book takes a close look at the means for doing so provided by the TEI. The conclusion to her article is that the TEI Guidelines still need refinement and reassessment to facilitate the encoding of all kinds of issues in various sorts of manuscripts.

Time will tell if Kathryn Sutherland’s provocative thesis on the limited worth of current digital scholarly editions is correct. In the meantime, *Text Editing, Print and the Digital World* eloquently proves that scholarly thinking on this still recent phenomenon is, however, very flourishing indeed. When digital scholarly editions are gaining strength and importance in a more or less near future, Deegan and Sutherland’s book doubtless will have had its share in that evolution.

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