SCHOLARLY EDITING PRACTICES AND THE WEB

A collaboration by the Emma Goldman Papers Project (UC Berkeley), the Margaret Sanger Papers (NYU), the Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Papers Project (Rutgers), the Labadie Collection (U of Michigan Library) and the Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative (UC Berkeley). Supported by the A. W. Mellon Foundation.

Scholarly annotated editions of historically significant texts constitute an important foundation for learning and research. Scholarly editing, however, requires a sustained investment of highly specialized expertise and long-term funding is difficult. Existing editorial procedures are rooted in the pre-digital work practices and space constraints of the eventual printed codex. The expert editors of scholarly editions and their carefully trained assistants spend a good deal of time researching people and other topics connected with their papers in one way or another. Notes on these time-consuming investigations are typically kept in folders in the project offices and may result in a few lines of footnote in the eventual printed volume. The reality is that most of what is learned about these individuals (and all of what is learned in some cases) is neither used in the eventual printed volumes nor shared with other researchers. This editorial work could be better utilized.

Editorial work tends to be duplicated in the parallel editorial efforts of different projects with overlapping scope.

Current Web technology could greatly aid scholarly editing projects through:

1. An increased return on investment by making the eventual, highly condensed printed editorial notes promptly available in a fuller form through Web publication;
2. A gain in efficiency through collaborative, shared access to working notes among related projects; and
3. More effective interoperability with archival finding aids, library pathfinders, and other scholarly infrastructure as all become linked through mark-up, links, common use of name services, web search engines, and other lateral connectivity.

Example

The http://editorsnotes.org website will soon be made openly accessible. Guest access during the ADE Annual Meeting:
Username: _____   Password: _____. Any changes made will be automatically reversed.
**Approach:** What is needed is a move from the first row below to the lower row.

- Notes in editor’s memory, handwritten notes.
- Notes, photocopies, clippings, etc., in folders in filing cabinets.
- Truncated footnote (maybe) in eventual printed volume.

- Initial notes keyed or scanned.
- Files in digital repository open to authorized users.
- Editor’s notes rapidly, fully & openly published on Web.

**Schema:** Editors make notes concerning documents and may add footnotes and citations. All versions are retained. Detailed indexes are generated.

**Software:** All open source. *Django* (Python web framework); *PostgreSQL* (using native support for XML fields); *Xapian* for full-text search; *South*, for database migrations; *Disqus* for discussion threads; *Zoom.it* for high-resolution document scans; and *Zotero* for bibliographical citations.

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