

‘Vortrag’

Abstract / paper proposal

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Editing as Connecting: Including Writers’ Libraries in Genetic Editions

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For more than a decade, one of the recurring questions in theoretical debates on digital scholarly editing has been the distinction between digital archives and digital editions. In 2006, Peter Shillingsburg expressed his skepticism about electronic archives because of the danger of information overload: ‘The comprehensiveness of the electronic archive threatens to create a salt, estranging sea of information, separating the archive user from insights into the critical significance of textual histories’ (Shillingsburg 2006, 165). Kenneth Price (director of the *Walt Whitman Archive*) reacted to this statement by arguing that instead of focusing on ‘the limits of a form still being developed’, we might want to focus on ‘the potential of that form’ (Price 2009, §24) – ‘that form’ being the electronic archive. Hans Walter Gabler prefers not to speak of electronic archives, but of manuscript editions (*Handschrifteneditionen*). He makes a categorical distinction between *text editions* and *manuscript editions*, arguing that we are now on the verge of being able to fully implement the consequences of this distinction thanks to the digital medium (Gabler 2016). Against this background, the main thesis of the proposed paper is that turning a digital archive into a digital edition involves a crucial editorial task: making connections. This implies a theoretical model that implements a continuum (cf. ‘Modelling a Digital Scholarly Edition for Genetic Criticism: A Rapprochement’; Van Hulle 2016) or a slider (cf. ‘The Archival Impulse and the Editorial Impulse’; Eggert 2019) between ‘digital archive’ and ‘digital edition’. The digital archive offers the raw data (scans with transcriptions). This archive can be turned into an edition by incorporating and thus fleshing out connections between the raw data, to be activated by users if they so desire. Providing these connections is arguably one of the most important tasks of the editor. The paper discusses the intricacies of this task by focusing on the inclusion of writers’ libraries in digital scholarly editions. The focus will be on Modernist authors, but since various authors’ libraries have been preserved across several periods, this topic will speak to a broad audience of editors working on works from different periods. The paper can be presented in German if the organizational team would prefer that.

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