TEI BY EXAMPLE



MODULE 6: PRIMARY SOURCES

Ron Van den Branden

Edward Vanhoutte

Melissa Terras

Centre for Scholarly Editing and Document Studies (CTB) , Royal Academy of Dutch Language and Literature, Belgium, Gent, 9 July 2010

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1. Introduction

Texts exist in many genres and forms, each with their particular structural and semantic features. Besides structural characteristics, texts can be roughly distinguished for their "editorial status." Typically, the majority of conserved documents have a "public" status: after scrupulous authoring and editing by an author and/or editorial instance, they have been published and multiplied, either as manuscript, in print or nowadays in electronic form. Still, the textual universe is wider than these published documents. Lots of texts were never intended to be published, because they have a private nature (letters, ego documents), were not considered "final" documents (but may have survived their published successors), were conceived as exclusive pieces of art,... Often, such texts are of great value, either because no other representations exist (anymore), because they reflect stages in the conception of a published literary work, because they are evidence of historical language use, or for many other reasons to many other types of research.

Because non-published texts typically are less editorially polished, they can contain many traces of the authoring or editing phase. Frequent phenomena in primary source materials are additions, deletions, restorations, errors, corrections,... Moreover, the condition of the material that carries the text may influence the transcription: damage may render a fragment illegible or incomplete. The TEI Guidelines offer specific elements to cover such phenomena in transcriptions. Notice, however, that these phenomena are not confined to handwritten texts: analogous phenomena may occur in typewritten documents, born-digital texts that have been printed for revision, or digital texts that include some form of electronic revision control information. Although many of the TEI elements discussed in this tutorial module are available in all TEI texts, some specific ones require inclusion of the dedicated **`transcr`** TEI module in your TEI schema, documented in chapter 11. Representation of Primary Sources of the TEI Guidelines.[1]

This tutorial focuses on transcription of *phenomena in primary sources* rather than *manuscripts*, because the latter term is often understood with a specific connotation: texts written by hand before the print age. Those have their own highly specialised textual phenomena and cataloguing needs, to which a specific chapter of the TEI Guidelines is devoted (10: Manuscript Description). Instead, this module will focus on the transcription of a

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1 For directions on composing a TEI schema by selecting TEI modules and elements, see Module 8: Customising TEI, ODD, Roma.

handwritten prose text. Notice, also, that this tutorial does not cover the advanced mechanisms for combining transcription with facsimiles, as discussed in section 11.2 Combining Transcription with Facsimile of the TEI Guidelines.