

“When E.R. Dodds pronounced that our texts are good enough to live with, he cannot have been thinking of ... the longer declamations falsely ascribed to Quintilian” (Shackleton Bailey, 1976, 73). Nor, certainly, of medieval Latin. In 2007 we are still forced to rely on crudely edited nineteenth century editions of many works (e.g. Bode’s 1834 edition of the Third Vatican Mythographer). For a number of important texts we still have to fall back on early printed editions, e.g. the Latin Josephus, Papias’s *Elementarium*, the *Speculum* of Vincent of Beauvais, Bersuire’s *Reductorium Morale*. And we still lack *any* edition of major works like the “Vulgate” commentary on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* or Alexander Neckam’s commentary on Martianus Capella. This paper will try to explain why progress has been so slow and assess prospects for improvement.

Some obstacles are inherent in the material. Many important medieval Latin works are massive in scale and/or survive in hundreds of manuscripts. Some works of particular interest raise complicated issues of format and editorial practice: they were composed as commentaries or glosses, survive in multiple redactions, (expanded, abridged, or just divergent), or borrow so freely from other texts as to be essentially anthologies. Publishing a text from manuscript requires time to identify, locate and collate the extant witnesses, and funds for travel and reproductions. Editing requires wide reading (in classical as well as medieval texts), palaeographical training, and a sound knowledge of many varieties of Latin (and often of relevant vernaculars as well).

The process also requires a substantial scholarly and institutional infrastructure. Few libraries have a critical mass of the material needed to construct a good testimonial apparatus. Basic editorial aids (e.g. dictionaries) are often inadequate or lacking altogether. Publication can be a significant challenge. Even with the aid of computers, editions are expensive and time-consuming to typeset. With the partial exception of the *Corpus Christianorum*, Medieval Latin still has no large-scale text series comparable to the Bibliotheca Teubneriana or OCTs, nor a smaller-scale version like the Loeb library or the I Tatti series. Not all journals are receptive to editions or editorial parerga. Finally, there are institutional and disciplinary hurdles, some common to all editing, some specific to the field. Jobs in medieval Latin are rare, and once hired, medieval Latinists are often marginalized or set to work teaching other things. Editions are a poor fit with many standard disciplinary forms (conference paper, job talk, 20-page article). The monograph remains the preferred form among hiring and tenure committees. As a result, our libraries are filling up with secondary literature on primary texts that remain inaccessible.

There are signs that things are changing. The last few years have seen a flood of new editions, especially from the Società Internazionale per lo Studio del Medioevo Latino (SISMEL). Recognition that some works can only be tackled by a team has resulted (finally) in a usable edition of Huguccio’s *Derivationes* (Cecchini, et al., 2004); other such projects are in progress. The *Journal of Medieval Latin* (1990-) and *Filologia mediolatina* (1994-) offer new venues for research and editions of shorter texts. Digital imaging and web technology allows instant access to important manuscript collections, e.g. those at St. Gall and Valenciennes.

The potential contribution of digital technology to publication is harder to assess. Its promise seems obvious, yet its performance so far has been underwhelming. Scholars have been more successful at envisioning hypertext editions than actually producing them. The question of the long- or even medium-term durability of digital formats is a concern—as it should be. To date, the most successful online initiatives are those that archive printed works (like J-STOR) or offer online texts of out-of-copyright editions (like the Latin Library). As Kenney (1974) has shown, the last great technological leap—printing—actually *retarded* progress in textual criticism and editing. It would be ironic if the twenty-first century saw the pattern repeat itself.

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