

Editing Homer commentaries on papyrus from Graeco-Roman antiquity and editing the commentaries that pass under the name of Servius from later antiquity share a crucial problem: no fixed paradosis, so that the collation of any individual textual instantiation against a plethora of shifting and variable editorial witnesses is sometimes like comparing apples to oranges. For Servius the tradition has been described as a series of textual moments that are hardly recoverable, let alone deployable in any single printed text, no matter how sophisticated the layout or number of columns or fonts used. The editor of Homer commentaries on papyrus fares little better, so that the array of sigla necessary for presenting even the smallest scrap of papyrus synthetically, comparable in complexity to that required for editing New Testament papyri, resembles nothing so much as losing track of the forest for all the trees.

At our fingertips are data-base technologies that aid in the recording, processing, and retrieval of information, both raw data like manuscript readings and metadata that record both impression and understanding, interpretation and reaction. It is not just that the critical editions of the future (including those of ancient commentaries) will look different than those of the 19th century; more importantly, they will be used differently, actually read differently by their users. In the case of the digital Servius ad *Aen.* 6-8 currently under construction, it is not as though users will laboriously browse through hundreds, in some cases thousands, of individual different versions (many of them hopelessly corrupt and unintelligible) attested for 'Servius' over a plenitude of 'moments' in time, as though a multi-form text were to morph before their eyes like a movie of the text of Servius: rather the user will 'read' the digital edition much as users now use the digital TLG, by a series of more or less effective search routines based on an ability to use the data base to retrieve answers to individual questions. The result will be tools that to previous generations seemed more like a lexical resources than read texts.

If the remnants of texts like Aristarchus and Donatus are more like a series of moments than a static text, some moments are more momentous than others. Instantiated in the new data bases must be not only the information to account for any individual textual instantiation, no matter how corrupt, but also the ability to reconstruct, if even conjecturally, a static text for purposes of modelling and tagging different elements of transmission for fields like chronology (identified Flavian elements in Servius, for example), secondary instantiation of the primary text of Homer and Vergil, palaeography (development of scripts), and geography (Italic and Germanic lines of transmission). It is in this area that the issue of data base design become most crucial, for judgement is involved. This is the question currently most hotly under debate by theorists of textual database design: is digital markup the post-modern equivalent of a theory of literature? As one recent conference manifesto asked: What are the theoretical implications of digital markup for editors? Are they different from, similar to, or of a completely different order from previous print practice? Are markup schemas theories of the structure of a text in the way that linguistic theories are theories of language or literary theories are theories about literature? The present paper will use examples from Servius and Homer commentaries as test cases to address some of these issues.

Bibliography

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