

## Topic Maps and the Semantics of Inscriptions

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In this paper I discuss the theory and the technologies of topic maps (ISO/IEC 13250:2002) applied to inscriptions. The aim is to evaluate whether and to what extent these describing knowledge structures can represent the semantic network of links that can be established through an historical analysis.

It is based on text encoding and information architecture literature (ISO/IEC 13250:2002, Biezunski 2005, Burnard and Sperberg-McQueen 2006) on one hand, and on the other hand it is based on studies about digital epigraphy (Fusi 2002, Fusi 2007, EpiDoc). The main focus however will be on a relevant epigraphical example, the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti (RGDA)*, and on the traditional references of classical studies about this inscription.

The starting point is a TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) encoding of the fundamental Mommsen's edition of the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (Mommsen 1883) that Mommsen usually called "die Königin der antiken Inschriften." This edition, despite playing a central role in the history of the *RGDA*, is quite rare nowadays and, up to now, it is not available online even if few web sites pretend to do so. This encoding will be adapted to the EpiDoc encoding to focus more precisely on epigraphical features and the indexation of basic concepts (e. g.: persons, places, dates). These basic concepts are just a starting point; more abstract concepts would be desirable. Following the method of Tuohy 2005 for presenting TEI documents through topic maps, we extract some significant topics that could be related to various other inscriptions in different ways (e. g. by the action and / or function of the person, by historical events in certain places). Persons, places, and dates, which frequently recur in the *RGDA*, are clearly identified by the encoding; for example, the Forum of Augustus is clearly distinguishable from Augustus as a person, even when the sequence of characters is the same. These items can constitute a starting point of a semantic network of the historical information that scholars have identified in inscriptions. The topic maps are composed of "topics." The three characteristics of the topics are names, association and occurrences (which, in this case, are constituted by different epigraphic monuments), and their roles and types have to be carefully chosen and defined by the creator of the topic maps.

The semantic relationship between topics can be defined in the best way by historians with special competence in the analysis of epigraphic documents. The topic map that has been created for the present study focuses on the text of a sample of inscriptions and we start by focusing on the 34 consuls cited in the *RGDA*. It does not focus on the historical commentaries. This is a practical choice. Theoretically, it is obvious that historical commentaries should be also considered because concept maps have exactly been conceived to link heterogeneous resources (primary sources, images, commentaries...). This is also true for other primary sources; in fact, semantic researches should not be applied only to inscriptions, but they should be considered in a global approach to ancient primary sources. If both the use of topic maps and Tuohy's method proved valid, it would give new perspectives to the mark-up and use of epigraphic corpora.