

Scholarly Editing through Digital Pedagogy in the Hoccleve Archive

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“A computer model surrounded by a wall of explanatory words is not enough. Make the computer model itself an expressive object. Turn your data into a story, into a game, into art.” -- Mark Sample¹

We have been invited to this seminar to discuss our work on the *Hoccleve Archive*² and one of its central projects: the first variorum edition of Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*, to be developed fully online. The project is in very early stages, focusing primarily on two tasks: digitizing materials and ingesting them into the *Archive*, and articulating our project goals and identifying what it will contribute to the fields of digital humanities and medieval studies. This second task is perhaps the most pressing, since competing for internal and external funding that will enable us to complete the first task depends upon presenting a compelling case for the *Archive's* value as a scholarly and pedagogical resource. Consequently, our emphasis here is on how we plan to use the *Archive* as an opportunity to reimagine both the place of textual studies in the undergraduate humanities classroom, and the relationship between teaching and research within institutions of higher learning. To this end, we aim to develop a Digital Editing Portal for use with the *Archive* to transform our process of building a digital critical edition into a platform for scholarly collaboration and teaching from archival resources. In accomplishing this goal, we hope to demonstrate that scholars who teach, study, or edit humanities texts—and their students—could all benefit from editorial collaborations that originate in a space they already share: the humanities classroom.

The Hoccleve Archive: Building Upon an Immensely Successful Editorial Failure

“Finally, I have to thank my immediate family, who have suffered the indignity of living with a reluctant editor of whose work they are not likely ever to reap the benefit.” -- Charles Blyth³

¹ Mark Sample, "The Poetics of Non-Consumptive Reading," *Sample Reality*, May 22, 2013, <http://www.samplereality.com/2013/05/22/the-poetics-of-non-consumptive-reading/>.

² *The Hoccleve Archive*, ed. Elon Lang, (Austin: Texas Digital Library, 2012-2014), accessed June 29, 2014, <http://hocclevearchive.org>.

³ Charles Blyth, "Acknowledgments," in Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles Blyth (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, TEAMS Imprint), 1999, viii.

Hoccleve scholars and others working in the field of Middle English studies have long lamented the absence of an authoritative critical edition of *The Regiment*. In the 1980s and 90s, a team led by M.C. Seymour, David Greetham, and including Jerome Mitchell, Marcia Marzec Smith, Charles Blyth, and others, set out to create one. Due to the immensity of the project, however, and due to both internal and external debates about editorial methodology and the purpose the edition was meant to serve for its readers,⁴ their extensive efforts were never fully completed or published. But this editorial “failure” enabled Charles Blyth to produce the very successful [1999 TEAMS edition](#)⁵ of Hoccleve’s poem, opening the *Regiment* up for serious study by a whole new generation of students and scholars--ourselves included. Blyth also preserved all the materials he and the original critical-edition team collected and produced, and these have in turn become the core of the *Hoccleve Archive*. The archival corpus thus simultaneously records both Hoccleve's Middle English text and a modern editorial process, inviting study of the methods we commonly use to create critical editions of medieval texts, in addition to the text itself.

When complete, the digital instantiation of the *Archive* will include scans of almost 6,000 handwritten collation sheets that Blyth and the other original editors used to transcribe every variant line in all 43 of the poem’s extant witnesses. There are also over 40 microfilms of Hoccleve manuscripts that have yet to be digitized (see catalog [here](#)⁶) and over 130 text-based computer files, containing marked-up transcriptions of Hoccleve’s holograph manuscripts, which aided the selection of orthographic forms for the TEAMS edition. These all came into Lang’s possession in 2009, after Blyth--who was in the process of retiring from active work as a medievalist--transferred all the edition-related materials to him. With the help of existing resources at the University of Texas, Lang established the *Hoccleve Archive* in 2012 to preserve, publish, and add to these materials online.

The *Hoccleve Archive* has a problem, however, that large-scale editorial projects and digital humanities projects often encounter. It requires funding, personnel, and institutional resources on a scale not typical for most humanities scholarship. In our case, the situation is further

⁴ See D.C. Greetham, “Normalisation of Accidentals in Middle English Texts: The Paradox of Thomas Hoccleve” *Studies in Bibliography* 38 (1985): 121-151, and “Challenges of Theory and Practice in the Editing of Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*,” in *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature: Essays from 1985 Conference at the University of York*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), 60-86. See also Charles Blyth, “Editing the Regiment of Princes,” in *Essays on Thomas Hoccleve*, ed. Catherine Batt (London: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1996), 16-21, and his “Introduction” in Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles Blyth, 17-26.

⁵ See the online version here: <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/blyth-hoccleve-regiment-of-princes>.

⁶ Elizabeth Kempf, “Catalog of Microfilms Containing Hoccleve Manuscripts in the *Hoccleve Archive*,” ed. Elon Lang (Austin: University of Texas Digital Repository, 2012), <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/24869>.

complicated by the fact that we are non-tenure-track faculty who are evaluated primarily on our contributions to our institutions' teaching missions. To succeed we must not only think carefully about the question of *how* to go about publishing the *Archive* and our edition of the *Regiment* with limited resources, we must also consider *who* is meant to benefit from our activities, and *what* we hope our readers/users will gain from their encounters with this material. We are consequently taking seriously Blyth's tongue-in-cheek acknowledgment of his family's patience with his work. He implies Middle English editorial work is idiosyncratic, isolating, and rarely if ever offers anyone but intensely interested parties any demonstrable benefit. Yet, by creating the TEAMS student edition and making the text of the *Regiment* much more accessible for pedagogical purposes, Blyth introduced new audiences to Hoccleve's work in the context of Middle English literary history. Learning from Blyth's example, we therefore think the benefit of making a critical edition of the *Regiment* may lie in rendering the editorial process itself accessible to a larger community--thereby introducing new audiences to Hoccleve's work in the context of Middle English *textual* history.

The editorial process we envision for this much-needed critical resource will integrate digital pedagogy with crowd-sourced scholarly editing strategies modeled on those successfully used on the award-winning [Transcribe Bentham](#)⁷ project, [The Acts and Monuments Online](#)⁸, and the [Map of Early Modern London](#)⁹. The *Archive* will be an open access, open source repository of digital materials and tools, accessible to scholars and their students without regard to institutional or disciplinary affiliation. Our project will be designed to engage an interdisciplinary community of student, faculty, and independent self-teaching contributors, particularly by facilitating the incorporation of work on the *Archive* edition into curricula for literary, historical, and textual studies undergraduate course work.

Digital Humanities and the Affective Turn: Reconsidering the Form and Purpose of Editorial Scholarship

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⁷ University College London, *Transcribe Bentham*, accessed June 29, 2014, <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/transcribe-bentham>.

⁸ John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* (Sheffield: HRI Online Publications, 2011), accessed June 29, 2014, <http://www.johnfoxe.org>.

⁹ *The Map of Early Modern London*, ed. Janelle Jenstad (Victoria, BC: MoEML, 2012), accessed June 29, 2014, <https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/index.htm>.

¹⁰ Brantley Bryant (@LeVostreGC), Twitter post, June 19, 2014, 9:47pm, <https://twitter.com/LeVostreGC/status/479802583259684865>.

By exploring new methods for creating scholarship that is public-facing, expressive, and collaborative in ways that redefine traditional expert-novice/teacher-student hierarchies, we are responding to significant imperatives in medieval studies and the digital humanities. Middle English literary production was inherently collaborative, multimodal, and interdisciplinary;¹¹ as objects, books could be elaborately decorated, and reading often involved social performance. Reading aloud—for instruction and entertainment, and sometimes both at once—was a common practice in a variety of settings.¹² For the most part, though, the products of medievalist scholarship—from critical editions of canonical texts to interdisciplinary studies of art and architecture—conform to narrow disciplinary and aesthetic conventions born out of the dominance within modern academic discourse—and to some extent perhaps within our culture more broadly—of the print monograph.

Gradually, over the past several years, the so-called “affective turn” in medieval studies has prompted some scholars to reconsider these discursive norms, and the result has been new-form scholarship that is both ludic and serious, and formally as well as methodologically innovative. For example, Carolyn Dinshaw in *How Soon is Now?* offers what she describes as “a contribution to a broad and heterogeneous knowledge collective that values various ways of knowing that are drawn not only from positions of detachment but also . . . from positions of affect and attachment, from desires to build another kind of world.”¹³ Dinshaw heralds a new or renewed receptiveness to formal heterogeneity within medievalist scholarship. She makes a persuasive case for opening our field to creative scholarly work, and, just as significantly for our project, for accommodating and validating the efforts of passionate amateurs who wish to participate in the work--and asynchronous play--of medievalism and medieval studies. Looking beyond medieval studies, we see similar calls for broadening the rhetorical and aesthetic range of our project from digital humanities practitioners. In the epigraph quoted at the beginning of this paper, Mark Sample, whose work often blurs accepted formal and generic distinctions between the objects and products of literary studies,¹⁴ challenges scholars to consider how digital media can transform the expressive capacity of and audiences for humanities scholarship through new tools and creative processes.

¹¹ Andrew Taylor, "Authors, Scribes, Patrons, and Books," in *The Idea of the Vernacular*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, et al. (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1999), 354-58.

¹² Joyce Coleman, "Aurality," in *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 68-79.

¹³ Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 6.

¹⁴ See, for example, Sample's *House of Leaves of Grass*, <http://fugitivetexts.net/houseleavesgrass/>, in which Sample has created an interactive remix of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* and Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (Artist's Statement: <http://www.samplereality.com/2013/05/08/no-life-no-life-no-life-no-life-the-10000000000000-stanzas-of-house-of-leaves-of-grass/>).

Within medieval studies--and within the humanities more broadly--questions such as “Who counts as a scholar?,” “What does scholarship look like?,” and “Who is the audience for our scholarship?,” increasingly lack easy answers. Consequently, in our work on the *Archive* we have an opportunity to ask and answer such questions anew, rather than simply remediating or reiterating the formal and methodological conventions associated with print editions. Further, like most editors of pre-modern texts, we have before us a nearly impossible task: to recast the rich multimodality, and complex multi-exemplarity of the *Regiment*'s textual tradition into a new medium. As digital editors, should we not take advantage of the chance to hyperlink our work to the expanding collection of high-resolution digital images of medieval manuscripts that are now freely available on the web? Should we not consider giving readers the option to engage in an “immersive reading” of the text accompanied by a LibriVox recording of the Middle English?

Because editions are perhaps first and foremost tools for teaching, by opening up these and other possibilities, digital editions also have the potential to influence profoundly how and what we teach. The books we study--especially those we study in the classroom--have a tendency to become surrogates for, as opposed to interfaces with, the textual traditions we query with modes of humanistic analysis. For example, we read *The Riverside Chaucer*, or *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* in our classes because the original manuscript record or the various historical texts in which Chaucer's works or “English literature” are preserved are inaccessible to the average undergraduate student in so many ways. As scholars, we understand that any particular edition is just one artifact in a long textual tradition, and we read with attention to how that tradition is represented--or misrepresented--in the collated text and editorial apparatus.¹⁵ For the most part, though, our undergraduate students have not yet been trained to see their books in this way. Rarely are students taught to understand the process by which their editions come into being.

In its humor, the faux-Chaucerian quote from Brantley Bryant that begins this section captures the essence of what the Digital Editing Portal we are proposing could accomplish. In addition to providing richer, multimedia representations of the *Regiment*'s textual history, we wish to build developmental tools into the *Archive* that will allow users to create their own expressive digital and paleographic experiences. By providing students and their teachers the opportunity to contribute actively to the transcription, mark-up, annotation, and publication of a crucial new resource for our discipline, we will be pioneering new pedagogical strategies that productively transgress the traditional academic boundary between teaching and scholarship.

Textual Studies and Digital Pedagogy: Leveraging Archival Resources Across the Disciplines

¹⁵ For example, Taylor in “Authors, Scribes, Patrons, and Books,” 353, briefly describes some of the issues presented even by an excellent critical edition such as the *Riverside Chaucer*.

“while tinkling away on my computer [,] I asked myself what is the moment proper to the archive...was it not at [the] very instant...I pushed a certain key to ‘save’ a text undamaged, in a hard and lasting way, to protect marks from being erased, so as to ensure in this way salvation and indemnity, to stock, to accumulate, and, in what is at once the same thing and something else, to make the sentence available in this way for printing and for reprinting, for reproduction?”-- Jacques Derrida¹⁶

For the most part, crowdsourcing has been considered a means for getting things like transcription and tagging done quickly, and on the cheap. Thus, in tailoring work for crowdsourcing, teams often focus efforts on creating tasks that can be completed by anonymous participants “tinkling away” on their computers with minimal oversight. In thinking about what role crowdsourcing will play in our project, however, we would like to use our Digital Editing Portal to address the question: what benefits accrue from continually inviting new people into the editorial process over time? What might the new invitees themselves gain from their participation, beyond a grade in a class? And what about the fields in which the project is set (defined narrowly, e.g. Hoccleve studies, or broadly, e.g. literary studies)? And what would institutions gain that may provide archival content, finances, computing power, and person hours to a project? Here again we are guided by work on *Transcribe Bentham*, which has implemented a blend of "heavyweight" and "lightweight" peer production. The former involves a "community," the latter a "crowd":

Contributions made by a crowd [...] tend to be anonymous, sporadic, and straightforward, whereas the engagement of a community [...] is far more involved. A community of volunteers [...] requires [...] qualitative recognition, feedback, and a peer support system. Contributors tend to be smaller in number, to be less anonymous, and to respond to more complex tasks and detailed guidelines.¹⁷

We anticipate the Digital Editing Portal will rely, perhaps exclusively, on "heavyweight" peer production by a community of students, self-taught enthusiasts, and teacher-scholars working as contributors. Consequently, in addition to building the editorial platform, work on the Digital Editing Portal will include creation of pedagogical resources that will assist with integrating textual studies and editorial work into the curriculum.

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 25-26.

¹⁷ Tim Causer and Valerie Wallace, "Building A Volunteer Community: Results and Findings from *Transcribe Bentham*," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 6.2 (2012), <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/6/2/000125/000125.html>.

Designing a digital editing tool and editorial process oriented towards collaboration and classroom implementation will help researchers, students, and curators across the humanities and social sciences to more effectively leverage archival resources in their work. We nod above to Derrida's thoughts about the relationship between archiving and writing on a computer because it is part of his broader insight that "the archive has always been a *pledge*, and like every pledge, a token of the future."¹⁸ We wish to open up new ways to explore such pledges with computing resources while actually working to build an archive's future. For example, faculty who currently use their library's special collections or images of manuscripts for illustrative purposes in their classes could actually engage their students in actively constructing new literary histories.

Lang's home institution, the University of Texas, possesses several fantastic archives--including the Harry Ransom Center--that are notoriously under-utilized by undergraduates. Students primarily seem to think of these archives as gallery spaces and museums rather than as tools for research. This is partly encouraged by well-intentioned faculty who incorporate show-and-tells into their classes with special sessions held at an archive or rare-books room so that students can "ooh" and "ahh" over beautiful, musty, rare, and valuable original artifacts. While this kind of activity can indeed excite students and encourage a long term appreciation for primary source materials, it also presents a key missed educational opportunity. Rather than merely having students visit the Ransom Center to see manuscripts of Chaucer or Dante, leaf through the correspondence of Norman Mailer, or compare Tennessee Williams' early drafts of *A Streetcar Named Desire* to the version performed by Marlon Brando, with the Digital Editing Portal, faculty could invite students to collaborate with them in the work of transcribing, editing, tagging, and describing these documents to preserve and publish them for future readers.

Thus, to conclude, we propose that a collaborative editing platform designed to be integrated into pedagogical practices could present three key benefits to users: (1) it would offer easy access to meaningful research opportunities for students at both undergraduate and graduate levels using flexible and compelling online tools, (2) it would offer a low cost-of-entry means for faculty to develop editorial projects, advance their publications with the help of students, and synergize their research and teaching efforts, and (3) it would provide a means for archives, libraries, rare-books rooms, and specialty research centers to increase their visibility in the world by developing and publishing digital collections—while simultaneously reaching out to their immediate institutional communities. The *Hoccleve Archive* and its Digital Editing Portal will give us a chance to test this proposal and we welcome your comments and suggestions about how to implement our project so as to maximize its benefits to the community of professional, student, and amateur humanities enthusiasts to which we all belong.

¹⁸ Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 18.

