

## The Scholarly Digital Edition 2.0

JORIS VAN ZUNDERT, PETER BOOT

*Huygens Institute  
Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences*

### Abstract

The creation of our digital textual heritage spans just a few decades, but it is already arguably more at risk than any part of our non-digital cultural heritage. The more we apply digital technology to share our documentary information with ever more people without conceivable limitations, the more vulnerable that very information becomes. Humanities scholars have nevertheless been keen to pick up on the possibilities of new digital technologies, attracted by the ease and benefits of sharing, and propelled by the wish to apply collaborative and computational approaches to humanities research. Thus scholars are using ever more sophisticated digital technologies to composite their tools, conduct collaborative research and publish results; they are moving from a desktop view of research to a networked paradigm in every respect. Current 'born digital' editions illustrate this shift, and future digital editions will be ever more networked and distributed. Unfortunately however, in applying cutting-edge information technologies to the task of this networking, sharing and analysis, we find ourselves introducing severe issues of sustainability. Standardization is commonly tried as a method to battle these issues of sustainability. But premature standardization can hinder innovative exploration and is extraneous to a domain like the humanities, which is inherently and pervasively heterogeneous in its research data, subject and approach.

EU COST Action 'Interedition' has been looking into practical ways, apart from the creation of sets of standards, to address the problem of sustainability of digital scholarly editions and digital scholarly infrastructure. This has resulted in a promising strategy for resilient digital scholarly data and services, rooted in distribution, redundancy and community best practices. However, the establishment of the right conditions, environments, policies and incentives necessary to realize such a strategy is not a task that humanities research communities can achieve on their own. The digital edition of the future, and moreover the need for it to be sustainable, will put considerably new and different demands on the existing digital and non-digital infrastructures of those institutions that are essential to the support of the work of humanities scholars. Among these institutions are institutional libraries and, increasingly, their digital counterparts. The borders and limits that define their responsibilities to establish and maintain truly sustainable infrastructures for digital resources and services remain until now obscure, uncertain and rather undiscussed. We therefore need a timely reflection and thorough discussion of the roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders, if they are to establish the right conditions for a sustainable future for our digital textual heritage.