
Editing Melville's "Billy Budd" with TextLab, Juxta Editions, and MEL Catalog

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Overview

During the creation of the Melville Electronic Library (MEL), we have developed a suite of software applications that, taken together, provide a powerful system for the creation of critical archives. In this software demonstration, we will demonstrate how these applications work, using the editing of Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* as an example. We will demonstrate the editorial process from the initial encounter with a manuscript leaf to the publishing of a web based reading text complete with a critical apparatus and editorial notes.

We will demonstrate the use of the following software applications:

- TextLab
- Juxta Editions
- MEL Catalog

Textlab

Billy Budd comes to us in the author's original manuscript, existing print editions, and many other media instantiations. This multiplicity is what John Bryant, the chief editor of MEL, refers to as a "fluid text." (2002). TextLab aids in the transcription of the manuscript, the presentation of the manuscript facsimile, and the production of a base text. TextLab also aids in secondary editing, which is the process of identifying alternative readings at points of revision in the editing process. The ultimate aim is to retain the fluid quality of the text using digital tools.

TextLab's team environment allows several editors to work simultaneously and independently on the hundreds of leaves of manuscript material. The interface pairs an XML editor with a high resolution image, and deep zoom functionality, allowing close-up viewing of the manuscript.

Textlab transforms TIFF images of the manuscript leaves into "pyramidal TIFFs" and serves them using a IIIF compliant image server.

The editor provides a set of XML elements and controlled vocabularies, which are pre-established by the editorial protocols of the edition. The transcriber can mark revision sites on the image using a drawing tool and then link these to the corresponding XML elements that record them. The transcriber can also validate the XML and preview the diplomatic rendering of the leaf before submitting it for inclusion in the edition.

As transcribers complete their work, the lead editor assembles the submitted transcriptions into a base text. TextLab aids in this process too, allowing the editor to reorder leaves and organize chapters without having to change the XML. In the end, a base text is produced, with diplomatic renderings of each leaf coordinated with the facsimile images. An XML version of the base text is stored in MEL Catalog, which is then retrievable by Juxta Editions.

Juxta Editions

Once a base text has been prepared using TextLab, it is then loaded into Juxta Editions twice. The first copy of the base text is kept for collation with other existing editions. Juxta creates a heat map visualization as well as a side-by-side comparison of the existing versions of the text. The second copy of the base text is then lightly edited for grammar and consistency. This produces a reading text which can then be added to the set of texts being collated.

The reading text is then annotated by the project team. As editors annotate the text, they can link passages to the MEL Catalog's database. Editors may link passages in the text itself or in the editorial notes.

When the text of "Billy Budd" is ready for publication to MEL, it is published using a customized Jekyll template. Visitors to the site will be able to read the text, trace Melville's words back to the original manuscript, and explore alternative readings through secondary editing and collation.

MEL Catalog

The MEL Catalog is a database of places, events, artwork, people, and texts from Melville's life and work. It is linked to name authorities such as the Getty Art and Architecture Thesaurus, so that the edition is compatible with linked open data. MEL Catalog can be used to search MEL as well as cross-walk on the objects it collects. MEL Catalog also has support for storing GIS

data which can then be fed to mapping software the travel itineraries of persons both real and fictional.

Impact

Through a real-world example, this poster session will demonstrate how three specialized tools, used in conjunction, create a flexible, powerful and coherent process, which allows scholars to contend with source materials and produce digital editions more easily, and more quickly. We will also provide an explanation of how attendees can use these, and other compatible tools, for their own scholarship.

Bibliography

Bryant, J. (2002). *The Fluid Text*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12024>