
The Pushkin Digital Project

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The Russian academic approach towards editing of the nineteenth-century classics, in general, inherits German critical editing tradition. Typically, the edition will include three basic sections: 1) critically prepared definitive text of the work, 2) full critical history with the list of all the discrepancies between its versions 3) commentaries including a description of the manuscript and printed sources of the text, history of its creation, a detailed historical and literary commentary based on all the existing research about it, and finally explanatory notes to the text.

All the works of Dostoyevski, Chekhov, Turgenev and other XIX classics are published this way. Only one of the 19th century classics still does not have his collected works academically edited. This exception is Pushkin, whose exclusive place in Russian culture can be compared to Shakespeare's in English, Dante's in Italian or Goethe's in German culture. The reasons behind this phenomenon are simply historical. The first attempt to publish a complete critical edition of Pushkin's works was interrupted by the revolution and the civil war, and the second was distorted by the personal order of Stalin. The third attempt is being carried out now, when the government's interests disregard any cultural values. The work towards finally making this edition is conducted at the Institute of Russian Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Pushkin House). Today there are only four volumes published but the amount of copies is 500 in average, and they are marketed almost exclusively in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

The theme of this conference is Access. Low availability of any printed edition today can be easily compensated by publishing it online. However, when we speak about critical editions, the problem of accessibility obtains an entirely different aspect. To use all the information the existing critical edition of Pushkin's works provides, its readers should have a special philological training. and if they have one, in order to actually conduct any work with the materials provided they will require access to Pushkin's

autographs, books, magazines of the Pushkin's era and to all researches and papers upon which the commentaries are based. And it goes without mentioning that readers are expected to have a grasp of the main cultural realities of Pushkin's epoch, and to be aware of Pushkin's social and political surroundings. All this makes an anticipated number of readers for this edition only slightly higher than the number of experts who participated in its preparation. Unfortunately, all this can be applied to almost all unannotated critical editions. Yet it is obvious that the information they contain can be interesting and useful for every reader. The question is how to make academic publication available for everyone without compromising the scope and depth of its material? And that is the main challenge that stands in front of Pushkin Digital Project.

Developing this project we were thinking not only about how to publish Pushkin's manuscripts, their decipherment and critical descriptions along with the text and the commentary; our ambition was to create an edition that unlike its prototype, which required a certain scientific competence of its reader, would, on the contrary, be able to form such a competence. Our electronic publications were to be addressed not only to researchers and students, but to anyone who would like to have a deeper look into Pushkin's world.

To accomplish that goal, we chose a simple and understandable architecture, consisting of three main operational modes: Text - Commentaries - Manuscripts. Each of these three sections has an autonomous meaning, and could be the sole object for a special digital edition. However, within the framework of our project, it was imperative for all three parts to be closely linked and cross-referenced creating an informational entity, where the text, its history and its context are inseparable from each other.

The Text section of the edition contains the definitive text of the work with two main interacting tools. One tool gives the user the ability to read all the commentary notes upon the text (which may include some external links to music associated with the text and images relevant to this fragment). The other shows all the lines that had any variations along the creation of the text and links to the digitised sources of these variations in section Manuscripts.

The section Manuscripts is a digital representation of autographs and/or printed sources with full transcription and the estimated chronological sequence of author's editings. When working with Pushkin's manuscripts, the presence of a full

transcription has a special value due to the extreme intricateness and illegibility of Pushkin's drafts (less than a dozen specialists in the world are able to read it). This section contains a detailed paleogeographic description of each manuscript together with the history of its creation.

The Comment section - is the most voluminous section of the website. Academic historical and literary commentary on Pushkin's works is formed as a reflection and synthesis of all existing studies upon the subject (there is a special department of the Pushkin House dedicated to accounting, describing, and cataloging every book referring to Pushkin or his works (there is no digital version). In the paper edition, this section appears as a coherent and undivided text sometimes up to hundreds of pages. Without knowing its structure and contents in advance, an unprepared reader will easily get lost in it,