

Paolo Monella

**Why are there
no digital scholarly editions
of "classical" texts?**

*IV Incontro di Filologia Digitale,
Verona, 15 September 2012*

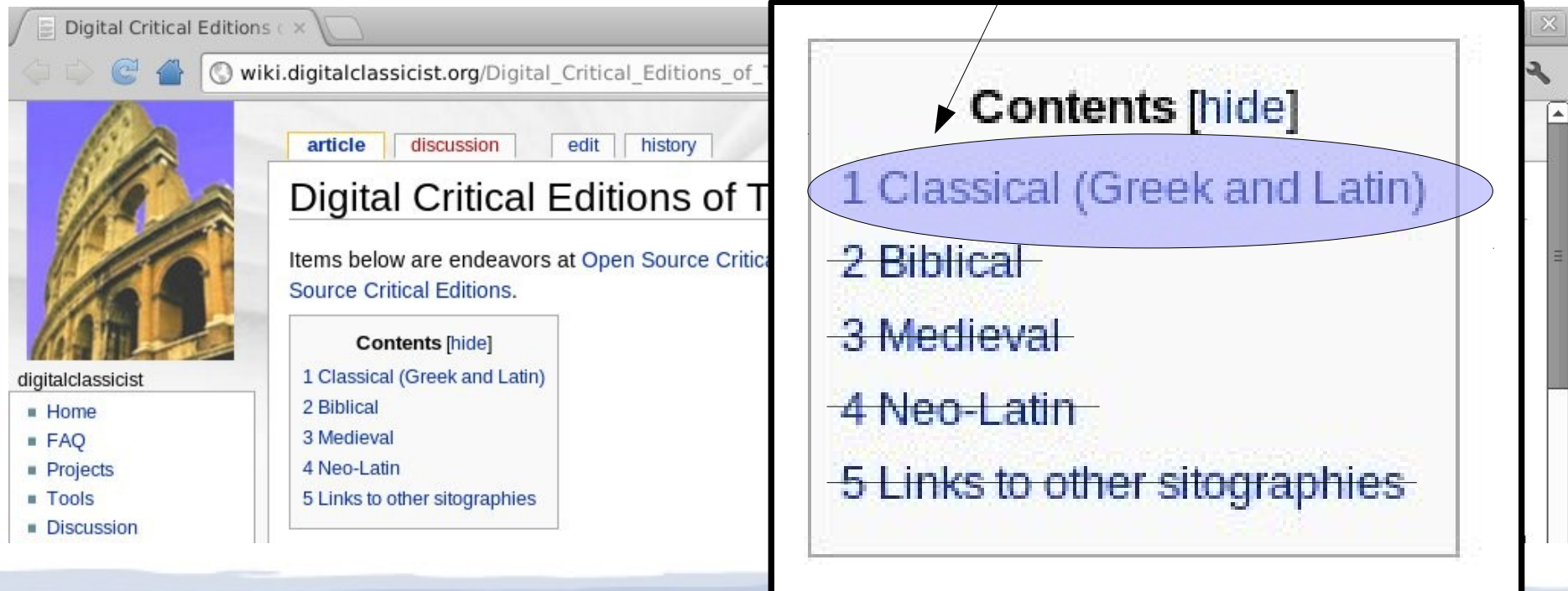
<http://www.unipa.it/paolo.monella/lincei/why.html>
paolo.monella@gmx.net

Classicists, we have a problem

- No (not one) text of the **classical “canon”** with a multi-testimonial textual tradition has a **digital scholarly edition**

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The image shows a screenshot of a web browser displaying a digital scholarly edition page. The browser's address bar shows the URL wiki.digitalclassicist.org/Digital_Critical_Editions_of_T. The page features a navigation menu with options: article, discussion, edit, and history. A sidebar on the left includes a navigation menu for 'digitalclassicist' with links to Home, FAQ, Projects, Tools, and Discussion. The main content area displays the title 'Digital Critical Editions of T' and a list of items below, which are endeavors at Open Source Critical Source Critical Editions. A 'Contents [hide]' section is visible, listing five categories: 1 Classical (Greek and Latin), 2 Biblical, 3 Medieval, 4 Neo-Latin, and 5 Links to other sitographies. A blue oval highlights the first item, '1 Classical (Greek and Latin)', and a black arrow points from the text 'classical “canon”' in the slide above to this highlighted item.

Digital Critical Editions of T

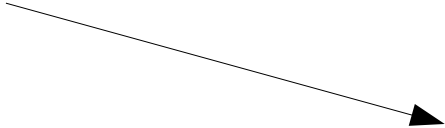
Items below are endeavors at Open Source Critical Source Critical Editions.

Contents [hide]

- 1 Classical (Greek and Latin)
- 2 Biblical
- 3 Medieval
- 4 Neo-Latin
- 5 Links to other sitographies

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“A digital edition should be based on **full-text transcription of original texts** into electronic form, and this transcription should be based on explicit principles”.
(Robinson 2006, Proposition 2)

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Non-“canonical”:
Biblical, Medieval, Neolatin
(*Galen, Nestle-Aland, Pseudoepigrapha*)

Not multi-testimonial:
Epigraphy, Papyrology
(*Homer Multitext*)

No textual variance:
TLG, Perseus

Not document-based:
Musisque Deoque
(*TEI AppCrit*)
Claudian, Propertius (HTML)

Why are there no digital scholarly editions of "classical" texts?

- 'General' Digital Philology issues
 - Lack of 'friendly' tools
 - Little digital literacy among 'traditional' editors
 - Time and money (number of witnesses)
 - Tenure

Why are there no digital scholarly editions of "classical" texts?

Medieval

Canterbury Tales
Roman de la Rose
Musical texts

Modern

Authorial variants
Genetic editions

Classical "canon"

...

Document-oriented

Document. MSS
Codicology
Epigraphy
Papyrology

Non-"canonical" (not MSS-based) ancient texts

Galen
Homer Multitext
Greek lyrics

Biblical

Nestle-Aland
Pseudepigrapha

Why are there no digital scholarly editions of "classical" texts?

- Because classicists just **don't feel they need** such editions
 - due to the peculiar nature of textual variance in classical texts
 - due to their “**canonisation**”

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No need?

- Digital scholarly editions are good at two things:
 - Document focus
 - Codicologists
 - Historians (editing documentary MSS)
 - Epigraphists
 - Papyrologists
 - Palaeographers
 - Textual variance
 - "Genetic" editors
 - Historical linguists

No need?

- Classical text editors:
 - ~~Document focus~~ → **Text** (not documents' texts)
 - Codicologists
 - Historians (editing documentary MSS)
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 - ~~Textual variance~~ → **Instrumental** to *const. textus*
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due to the nature
of textual variance
in classical texts

due to
"canonisation"

Canonisation and textual variance

- **Canonisation**

noun

(Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church) the act of admitting a deceased person into the ***canon of saints*** [syn: canonization]

WordNet® 3.0, © 2006 by Princeton University

Canonisation and textual variance

- Classical texts' “canonisation”
 - Linguistic model
 - Literary model
 - Cultural model
 - Moral model
- Specific features of textual transmission
- Peculiar nature of textual variance

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Canonisation and textual variance

- Peculiar nature of textual variance
 1. "Ancient" intentional textual variance disappeared
 - Authorial variance
 - 'Active' variance by editors in antiquity
 - Very wide
 - Ancient texts... are ancient (2000 years)
 - Normalisation tendency

Canonisation and textual variance

- Peculiar nature of textual variance
 1. "Ancient" intentional textual variance disappeared
 2. Later intentional variance discouraged by "reverence"
 - Gospel/Vergil: a medieval scribe would not dare to 'creatively' add text
 - Galen: a medieval doctor would add a recipe

Canonisation and textual variance

- Peculiar nature of textual variance
 1. "Ancient" intentional textual variance disappeared
 2. Later intentional variance discouraged by "reverence"
 3. "Medieval" textual variance largely unintentional
 - Distraction errors (diu → dii)
 - Attempts to correct alleged previous errors (dius → Deus, *lectio faciliior*, conscious or unconscious)

Canonisation and textual variance

- “**Meaningful**” (“ancient”) textual variance disappeared
 - Not replaced by later intentional variance, due to “reverence”
- MSS existing variance: considered of **little meaning/cultural interest**
 - Unintentional → “errors”

Canonisation and textual variance

- MSS textual variance
 - A hindrance
 - MSS → Waste bin (Renaissance editors)
 - A tool (**instrumental** to *constitutio textus*)
 - Variants → Recycle bin (Apparatus criticus)

Canonisation and textual variance

Instrumental

- **Print** app. criticus: OK
 - “Substantial” readings only (Text, not doc.)
 - Layout: one “authoritative” Text vs. “errors”
 - Falsification of process
- **Digital** scholarly edition: not worth it
 - Too many MSS

Culturally meaningful

- **Print** app. criticus: insufficient
- **Digital** schol. ed.: added value

An epistemological shift

Instrumental

- We (classicists) are still *into* “canonisation”
 - One “pure” language
 - One “authoritative” Text

Culturally meaningful

- A broadening of our research agenda is required
 - Historical Linguistics (plural, fluid language)
 - Literary Theory (plural, fluid text)

An epistemological shift

Culturally meaningful

- A broadening of our research agenda is required

Medieval scribes' linguistic innovations
→ **historical development of Greek** (Toufexis 2010)

- ← - **Historical Linguistics**
(plural, fluid language)
- Literary Theory
(plural, fluid text)

An epistemological shift

Culturally meaningful

- A broadening of our research agenda is required

Medieval scribes' linguistic innovations
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Each document's text is worth to be studied as **a historically determined cultural object**

← **Historical Linguistics**
(plural, fluid language)

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