Workshop

Theory and Practice of Literary Annotation in the Context of Digital Humanities

May 8 & 9, 2015
Gästehaus der Universität (Lessingweg)

Convenors:
Prof. Dr. Matthias Bauer & Dr. Angelika Zirker

Starterprojekt Annotating Literature
Englisches Seminar
Philosophische Fakultät
Friday, May 8
9:00 Welcome

Collaboration and Annotation

9:15-10:15 Ray Siemens (University of Victoria):
Social Knowledge Creation and Its Discontents: Contexts for Open Annotation

This talk explores contexts related to the application of open, crowd-based annotation — as well as its building blocks in and among the area(s) associated with social knowledge creation. It approaches recent crowd-based trends in academic work by seeking to situate them in the context of reflective and reactive tradition, surveying also some contemporary tools, projects, and arising issues toward their intellectual engagement. Elements of this talk draw on “Social Knowledge Creation: Three Annotated Bibliographies,” Scholarly and Research Communication 5.2 (2014): http://www.src-online.ca [120pp].

10:15-10:45 Coffee Break

10:45-11:45 Susan Schreibman (National University of Ireland Maynooth):
Annotation, the Crowd, and Big Data

Annotation in the print world was a specialist activity carried out by scholars who were both expert in the author, the text, and the literary tradition as well as in scholarly editing. Editors typically spend years apprenticing to create critical scholarly editions, typically marrying detailed knowledge of the text with familiarity of the minutia of an author’s life, times, and literary influence. First generation critical scholarly editions in the digital world typically followed this model. Over the past decade the development of new web-based technologies that facilitate greater interactivity and collaboration challenge the strict delineation of roles between expert and lay person and between reader and contributor. This talk will explore these shifts in the area of annotation, from encoding to creating metadata to writing notes.

11:45-12:45 Angelika Zirker, Matthias Bauer & Timo Stösser (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen): Explanatory Annotation of Literary Texts: From Practice to Theory – and back again. A Case Study

In our peer-learning project students annotate literary texts and thus acquire and practice scholarly methods, improve their writing and research skills; annotating texts furthermore helps them understand them better. But in the course of the undertaking we have also found more and more that the practice of annotation is a rather difficult task. The reason for this is the sheer lack of a theory of literary annotation. We have therefore supplemented the student project with a research project in which we are trying to develop such a theory and establish models of best practice. The relationship between theory and methodologies (as ways of organizing the practice of annotation) is by no means obvious. Still, we believe that the medium (a digital space for text and annotations) and the practices it entails makes us realize the need for establishing certain methodological principles, which will in turn require some conceptual clarification as to why and wherefore texts should be annotated, i.e. a theory of annotation. Practice will lead to methodology and theory, and back again. Our example will be based on annotations by the student peers of First World War poetry.

12:45-14:00 Lunch break
The Reader and Annotation

14:00-15:00 Sascha Schroeder (Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung):
Effects of Text Properties on Students’ Reading Behavior and Comprehension Performance

I will present data from a study investigating effects of different linguistic variables on the word-, sentence-, and text-level on student’s comprehension performance and their online reading behavior. Results show that students’ question answering performance is only minimally affected by linguistic properties of the text, but strongly by characteristics of the questions. By contrast, students’ self-paced reading data show that their reading behavior is heavily influenced by local characteristics of the text, in particular word- (word length and frequency) and sentence-level variables (syntactic predictability, integrational demands). Most importantly, the quality of student’s text processing predicted their final comprehension scores.

15:00-16:00 Dirk Roorda (Data Archiving and Network Services (DANS)):
Queries-As-Annotation: Annotating the Hebrew Bible as Database

If researchers can save their carefully crafted queries as annotations then others may encounter them when they are reading a passage. Just as readers encounter ordinary annotations by other scholars in printed books, they will encounter results of queries of others when they are browsing a work. With a single click they are led to not only the query instruction itself but also the provenance, motivation and other results of the query. We show how we have realized this idea in case of the Hebrew Bible and what hurdles were there to take.

References: The Hebrew Bible as Data: Laboratory - Sharing - Experiences (http://arxiv.org/abs/1501.01866)

16:00-16:15 Coffee break

Editing and Annotating

16:15-17:15 Valerie Rumboldt (Birmingham University):
Annotating Pope’s Dunciads

Pope’s annotations to the 1729 Dunciad Variorum and the 1743 Dunciad in Four Books both model and critique different modes of annotation: elements of the commentary are attributed to a variety of fictitious, fictionalised or actually existing annotators, and the deployment of the material is significantly engaged with questions of print technology and mise-en-page. Where does this leave the oft-commended distinction between annotatory information and interpretation, and what can (or should) the modern editor do about it?

17:15:18:15 Jürgen Leonhardt (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen):
Annotation between Information and Formation: Two Basic Aspects of Dealing with Texts

It is obvious that many commentaries do not (or not only) provide information needed for a better understanding, but also aim to form the reader’s opinion in a certain way. This is normally the case with commentaries of authoritative texts (biblical commentaries etc.), but similar structures can be observed even in grammatical explications. In my talk I will analyze some historical examples in order to demonstrate that “formation” and “information” cannot be separated from each other, but are present in every act of annotation.

19:00 Dinner
Saturday, May 9

**Hermeneutics and Annotation**

9:00-10:00 **Evelyn Gius & Janina Jacke** (University of Hamburg):

*The Hermeneutic Profit of Annotation*

Due to the polyvalent quality of literary texts, literary analysis that deploys annotation requires hermeneutic markup. This kind of markup supports the understanding of literary texts, and it must be flexible to allow for different research questions and competing interpretations. In our talk, we demonstrate how hermeneutic annotation can work in practice. Taking the project heureCLEA as an example, we will show how the collaborative use of hermeneutic markup can help find a balance between the intersubjectivity and the plurality of interpretations and how it initiates theorizing about the concepts upon which textual analysis is based.

10:00-11:00 **Vera Hildenbrandt** (Trier Center of Digital Humanities):

*Can Digital Technologies Boost Traditional Hermeneutical Approaches?*

Literary annotation is time-consuming. It requires a close reading of the texts, a thorough analysis of the text passage to be annotated and careful consideration of the context. The so-called digital turn in the humanities implies new requirements in the field of literary annotation insofar as the nature of the internet culture (accessibility, linking, dissemination, dynamics of texts, digital tools etc.) change the object of research itself, as well as the academic working environment and methods of research. Based on the project “Epistolary Networks" the paper will focus on the question whether and how quantitative methods can support qualitative analysis and annotation.

11:00-11:30 Coffee break

11:30-13:00 **Matthias Bauer & Angelika Zirker** (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen):

*Roundtable Discussion: Distant Reading vs. Close Reading in the Digital Humanities*

The discussion of Digital Humanities in the context of literary studies has been dominated in recent years by the paradigm epitomized in Franco Moretti’s *Distant Reading* (2013): digital humanities will lead us to new insights about literature not by studying a single text or a group of texts but by corpus-based analyses of large quantities of texts. This has produced fascinating results especially about cultural preferences and processes. But we think that by Distant Reading so far only one half of the new world of DH in literary studies has been opened up. In this hemisphere, you start with a mass of data and think about questions to be answered by data that you have to interpret. In the other, largely unexplored hemisphere, you start with a single datum and think about the data you need to answer the questions suggested by it.

In other words, while the catchphrase of Distant Reading has suggested that its counterpart, Close Reading is a matter of the past and the solitary scholar working with books and pencils only, it has made us forget that DH may do at least as much for close reading as distant reading does for the understanding of literature.

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