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SUBMERGED ROCKS, OR READING AN EDITION ON A SMALL SCREEN

Abstract. Anyone who uses sophisticated digital nautical charts is aware of the dangers posed by the standard 'zoom' function. Users of the digital scholarly editions do not risk their lives. However, the conflict between the amount of information and the size of the screen can lead to an intellectual disaster. In manuscript and print culture, the size of the page and the layout of the text determined the publication's function. E-readers and smartphones have become how students engage with historical and literary sources. Due to the size of the screens, this creates information gaps and/or spikes, which become more pronounced the more sophisticated the source and its edition. The proliferation of mobile apps for scholarly editions of classical texts encourages scepticism about whether new possibilities have also resulted in losses.

Keywords: digital edition; handheld device; interface; reader experience; commentaries; apparatus; multiple textuality

PODWODNE SKAŁY, CZYLI CZYTANIE EDYCJI NA MAŁYM EKRANIE

Abstrakt. Każdy, kto korzysta z zaawansowanych cyfrowych map nawigacyjnych, zdaje sobie sprawę z niebezpieczeństw, jakie niesie ze sobą standardowa funkcja „powiększania". Użytkownicy cyfrowych edycji naukowych nie ryzykują życiem. Jednak konflikt między ilością informacji a rozmiarem ekranu może prowadzić do intelektualnej katastrofy. W kulturze rękopisu i druku rozmiar strony oraz układ tekstu determinowały funkcję publikacji. Czytniki e-booków i smartfony stały się sposobem, w jaki studenci obcują ze źródłami historycznymi i literackimi. Ze względu na rozmiar ekranów powoduje to luki i/lub nadmiary informacyjne, które stają się tym bardziej wyraźne, im bardziej złożone jest źródło i jego edycja. Rozpowszechnienie aplikacji mobilnych dla naukowych edycji tekstów klasycznych skłania do sceptycyzmu wobec pytania, czy nowe możliwości nie przyniosły również strat.

Słowa kluczowe: edycja cyfrowa; urządzenie przenośne; interfejs; doświadczenie czytelnicze; komentarze; aparat krytyczny; wielotekstowość

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This article does not align with the widespread optimism generated by the excellent research and dissemination opportunities that have opened up in the digital humanities. The speed of digitisation and the emergence of new software tools require a qualitative shift. It must happen at the conceptual level, not only at the technological level. It is crucial to highlight some well-known circumstances and facts, as this apparent obviousness is often the reason they are seldom considered and even less frequently challenged. However, first, let me clarify some personal experiences. During my initial meeting with the web developer working on the digital scholarly edition (further, DSE) project that I curated, I was asked: Are we going to adapt it for smartphones? I instinctively shook my head in response.

I did so despite having already heard the plenary presentation by Elena Pierazzo, past chair of the Board of Directors of the *Text Encoding Initiative* and author of widely used books on digital scholarly editing,[1] at the symposium *Writing and Revision Stages.* During her presentation, she called to develop DSEs for small screens. According to Pierazzo, editions designed for small-screen use would spark the interest in multiple textuality for a broader audience and enhance the overall application of DSEs. Popular websites such as *DigiPal*[2] or *Jane Austen's fiction manuscripts*[3] have around 50% of visitors using the *iPhone* and *Android* operating systems.[4] Similar optimism was expressed for the first time, to my knowledge, at the *Digital Humanities* conference in Montreal in 2017 by Barbara Bordalejo and Peter Robinson. They claimed that "the new breed of mobile device (tablets and smartphones), combining ease of use and powerful interfaces, present an extraordinary opportunity to make new kinds of books to reach new readers."[5] Smartphones have improved significantly over the past seven years. Attempts to adapt DSEs and other digital resources for these devices have increased. However, my scepticism regarding this trend has only grown. My teaching practice determined this scepticism, which I chose here as a reference point.

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[1] Elena Pierazzo, *Digital Scholarly Editing: Theories, Models and Methods* (Farnham: Routledge, 2016).

[2] *DigiPal: Digital Resource and Database for Palaeography, Manuscript Studies and Diplomatic*, project director Peter A. Stokes (2011–2014), https://digipal.eu/.

[3] *Jane Austen's fiction manuscripts*, project director Kathryn Sutherland (2012), https://jane austen.ac.uk/.

[4] Elena Pierazzo, "The Plural Text and the Digital Edition: Plenary Talk," in *Writing and Revision Stages: International Symposium* (University of Lisbon, June 6-7, 2019).

[5] Peter Robinson, Barbara Bordalejo, "A Scholarly Edition for Mobile Devices," *Zenodo* 1 (2017), https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2595585.

In the introductory course on the theory of literature, my students are asked to read theoretical works by Aristotle, Gaston Bachelard, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Algirdas Julius Greimas, and others, either in their original language or translation. They are also required to have specific poetic works at hand. I insist that all the texts be present on each table during the seminar, and no single anthology that would contain all of the seminar readings. More than a dozen years ago, students would usually ask, 'Can I have texts on my laptop?', while for the last seven to eight years, I kept hearing the question, 'Is it okay to have texts on my smartphone?' Exactly ten years ago, in 2014, smartphone usage overtook desktop usage.[6] What materials do students have on handheld devices and how do they use them? Mostly, it is a series of JPG scans of a paper book taken with the same smartphone, or a PDF document created with the OCR software. Yet, my observation is also valid concerning non-amateur copies, available online or downloaded from *Project Gutenberg*[7] or similar repositories.

The difference between students using printed books and those using small screens in the classroom becomes evident when I ask them to locate a concrete passage in the text or when they have to say precisely which place in the text they quoted. Small-screen users either take significantly longer to respond or are unable to complete the task at all. A scanned document that is difficult to read on a small screen is enlarged at the expense of the margins. This resizing issue means that the document in digital formats, which can adjust the number of characters per line, often only allows users to see the text from one side to the other without any margins. Moreover, in digital files of different formats, such 'trifles' as standard numbering,[8] paragraph or page numbering can be omitted. While paragraph numbering may exist in proper digital editions (standard or other), when it is placed in the margins, small-screen users may not see it when they enlarge the text and eliminate the margins. Suppose the numbering or other marks are inserted between paragraphs or in the text. In that case, we have the problem of structural graphic homogeneity of an original text. This issue textual scholars have not raised once when criticised various editorial inserts that "interrupt the reader's linear progression."[9]

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[6] Cf. "The U.S. Mobile App Report" (2014), https://www.comscore.com/Insights/Presentations-and-Whitepapers/2014/The-US-Mobile-App-Report; based on data for February 2025, mobile / desktop / tablet internet share was: 62,23% / 35,91% / 1,85%, "StatCounter" (2025), https://gs.statcounter.com/platform-market-share/desktop-mobile-tablet.

[7] *Project Gutenberg*, https://gutenberg.org/.

[8] Standard numbering was established decades ago as a customary element of high school and college readers in the traditional form.

[9] David C. Greetham, *The Pleasures of Contamination: Evidence, Text, and Voice in Textual Studies* (Indiana University Press, 2010), 76.

Whichever form of digitalised work students use, they often encounter confusion when navigating text segmentation, which is implemented graphically even with the most basic tools like lines, paragraphs, or chapters. Small screens limit viewing, and scrolling can further complicate the recognition of the original segmentation. This issue leads to a 'two-speed' mode in the classroom, where argumentation requires a commentary, a bibliographic reference, or something beyond the main text. Even the least skilled newbies who probably encounter a scholarly edition for the first time can find the peritext in a paper book. Half of smartphone users, after some attempts, sadly conclude that their file does not contain any appendices which have not been copied. Others, looking at their small screens, struggle to identify the relation between the main text and an editorial entry. These students get confounded faster than book users when trying to follow the general flow of thought of the seminar, even if the hypertextual relation between the commented place and the commentary is correctly implemented in their file. I am specifically referring here to the challenges of using academic editions displayed on small screens, rather than addressing the general trend, perhaps best demonstrated by Anne Mangen and her team, that those who read the analogue form of the text had a greater comprehension rate than the readers of the digital version of the text.[10]

It is important to note that we are dealing with a generation that holds smartphones in their hands constantly and much more frequently than books.[11] The basic elements of an edition meant for initial studies are mentioned, rather than parallel comparisons of variants, reconstructions of a genetic sequence, or sophisticated analytical indexes of several levels. When teaching first-year students, I always explain the problems posed by digital versions on small screens; however, very few students pay attention to these warnings. One could object that, when students are given more specialised tasks for seminars and in writing their bachelor's or master's theses, they inevitably become acquainted with traditional and digital scholarly editions. However, a huge sociocultural and psychological difference exists in training a specific type of humanitarian consciousness. This difference arises when the simplest elements of critical apparatus are constantly

[10] "[…] reading linear narrative and expository texts on a computer screen leads to poorer reading comprehension than reading the same texts on paper. […] If texts are longer than a page, scrolling and the lack of spatiotemporal markers of the digital texts to aid memory and reading comprehension might impede reading performance", Anne Mangen, Bente R. Walgermo, Kolbjørn Brønnick, "Reading Linear Texts on Paper Versus Computer Screen: Effects on Reading Comprehension," *International Journal of Educational Research* 58 (2013): 67, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2012.12.002.

[11] Cf. Laura Dietz, *E-books and 'Real Books': Digital Reading and the Experience of Bookness* (Cambridge University Press, 2025), 107–113.

within one's field of vision, in the margins of the texts being read. Students develop quite differently if they only encounter the efforts of textual scholars during a special visit to the department of scholarly editions, which feels like a zoo or a museum of curiosities, separate from the usual environment of literature, history, and philosophy. Based on a statistical user study conducted for the DiXiT project[12] that combined quantitative and qualitative questions, Aodhán Kelly observed: "users would like to see more responsive design approaches to building digital editions on the Web so that they function better across devices."[13]

It may seem that the reflection on students is only a naïve illustration of the disappointment frequently felt in the environment of textual scholars regarding the many works accessible on the Internet. These works are merely digitalised analogues of traditional books, if not worse. In my turn, I seemed to agree with Pierazzo, Bordalejo, and Robinson, who say that an obstacle in disseminating a contemporary scholarly understanding of texts is nothing more than the lack of DSE modifications properly using the possibilities of the digital medium and operating features of various devices. In fact, I qualify using mobile phones to read academic texts as *perpetual opportunism*.[14] The purpose of this article is to question the exaggerated expectations surrounding the benefits of reading contemporary editions on small screens and to encourage editors to look for ways to address the shortcomings I have identified in the transition of DSE to iPhone and Android platforms. The expansion of these or similar platforms seems inevitable. Of course, it is possible to look at the other side of the coin, i.e., to consider what educational measures could be taken to encourage small-screen users to understand better the limitations of the publications available on their devices. However, I consider this task to be utopian, and a more detailed reflection on it is beyond the scope of this research.

I will elaborate on two assumptions regarding why handheld devices, at least at the moment, are difficult to adapt for scholarly editions. The first assumption is based on understanding of psychomotor and social inertia: "All technologies, writing and print no less than the digital medium, result from a process of discovery of their social uses more than they are technological inventions."[15] People

[12] Digital Scholarly Editions Initial Training Network (2013–2017), https://dixit.uni-koeln.de/.

[13] Aodhán Kelly, "Tablet computers for the dissemination of Digital Scholarly Editions," *Manuscrítica: Revista de crítica genética* 28 (2015): 138, https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2596-2477.i28p123-140.

[14] Cf. Daniel Miller, Laila Abed Rabho, Patrick Awondo et al., *The Global Smartphone: Beyond a youth technology* (UCL Press, 2021): 103–34, https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781787359611.

[15] Adriaan Van der Weel, "New Mediums: New Perspectives on Knowledge Production," in *Text Comparison and Digital Creativity: The Production of Presence and Meaning in Digital Text Scholarship*, ed. Wido van Peursen, Ernst D. Thoutenhoofd, Adriaan van der Weel (Brill, 2010), 253.

generally approach the new *extensions of man*, particularly those developed for intuitive use, by relating them to their most common activities. This is especially true for handheld devices with a touch user interface. Therefore, the most popular apps for various purposes are those operated similarly to *Twitter* (*X*), *Facebook*, and games such as *Candy Crush*. Regardless of the sophisticated features a digital edition for smartphones may offer, it will be positioned alongside apps like *Tinder* and *Uber* in the *App Store* and *Google Play*. Users are likely to scroll down the facsimiles of that edition as they would on *Instagram*, and they will likely give up if they fail. Very few users will train their thumbs for the refined use of an app, much like learning to play the guitar. While there are certainly some curious ones who explore all the features of new software and devices, technology geeks are hardly a substantial addressee of DSEs. Implementing a *Facebook-like* interface at the scale of DSEs requires significant compromises. This is hardly compatible with the view that "an interface [of DSE] should rather be conceived as an aggregate of means by which the user can interact with the text, commentary, and ancillary material."[16] It is worth mentioning that some years ago, out of almost 250 digital publishing projects, only 16% passed the *Google* mobile-friendly test.[17]

The second assumption confronting scholars' enthusiasm for occupying small screens is based on experience with operational and truly smart digital projects adapted to handheld devices. Some drawbacks or gaps in using primitively digitised texts on smartphones are also characteristic of the access to the DSEs, specifically created for different screens. These drawbacks would be more subtly expressed, but they stem largely from the limited reading area presented by smaller screens. Modern screens do not lack high resolution or touch sensitivity, but the sharpness of human vision is limited. On a small screen, we can view only a third to a quarter of the characters that would fit in larger formats used for reading and writing. According to a famous web designer and developer, Scott Jehl, "a mobile-first workflow helps us to prioritize content, since there's not enough room on a small screen for non-critical content."[18] The more additional elements an interface has, the more the visible segment of the

[16] Edward Vanhoutte, "Defining Electronic Editions: A Historical and Functional Perspective," in *Text and Genre in Reconstruction: Effects of Digitalization on Ideas, Behaviours, Products and Institutions*, ed. Willard McCarty (OpenBook Publishers, 2010), 120, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0008.

[17] Greta Franzini, Melissa Terras, Simon Mahony, "Digital editions of text: Surveying user requirements in the Digital Humanities," *Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage* 12, no. 1 (2019): 16, https://doi.org/10.1145/3230671.

[18] Scott Jehl, *Responsible Responsive Design* (A Book Apart, 2014), 55.

main text shrinks.[19] Only jotters and souvenir books can be compared to small screens in their writing and reading areas.

Opposing voices would respond by emphasising that 'zoom' and other image rendering functions allow the user of a handheld device, similar to digital maps,[20] not only to enlarge the desired part of the facsimile, but also to switch to a broader view of the text and access a commentary or alternative variant with a simple click. However, this analogy with road maps is misleading in this case. While navigating a complex viaduct is indeed comparable to reading a complicated text—both require intense focus, despite the option to take breaks while engaged with literature—the comparison falls short. A small-scale map does not allow us to convey details; however, you will see these details in the real world when approaching an object invisible on the road map due to scale. Therefore, it is better to use the analogy of nautical charts to understand what happens to a text that requires comments on a small screen.

The key difference between maps and nautical charts is that nautical charts indicate underwater objects that are invisible to the navigator. If these objects, such as shoals, submerged rocks or wrecks, are not clearly displayed on a chart, it can lead to tragic collisions. Paper nautical charts, even with their small markings, thoroughly identify dangerous objects, and they are usually large enough for the navigator to view both the general layout of a channel and the individual obstacles within it. In contrast, digital charts often lack detail in their overall view, necessitating constant zooming to see the markers for submerged obstacles; otherwise, an accident will occur. Similarly, a less experienced reader, seeing only a small portion of the main text on a small screen, is not encouraged to switch between different display modes and jump to footnotes and comments, which remain submerged. This results in the work or historical source being skimmed over as if there were no complications or ambiguities.[21] Can we speak of tragic consequences? In case of missing a single comment, maybe not, but

[19] Cf. "Digital texts […] are given to us only partially and piecemeal while we have them on our screens", Krista Stinne Greve Rasmussen, "Reading or Using a Digital Edition? Reader Roles in Scholarly Editions," in *Digital Scholarly Editing: Theories and Practices*, ed. Matthew James Driscoll, Elena Pierazzo (OpenBook Publishers, 2016), 130–1, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0095.

[20] In particular, cartographic terminology has been widely adopted in both the humanities and computer science. We are talking about concept maps, text, data and information mapping.

[21] Explaining the difference between textons ('strings [of signs] as they exist in the text') and scriptons ('strings [of signs] as they appear to readers'), Espen Aarseth provides an example where a small number of textons are realised (converted) into a huge number of scriptons. However, DSE forms the opposite relationship on a small screen—textons hidden beyond the screen do not generate scriptons, so their asymmetry is reversed, cf. Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 62.

persistent neglect will have costs. The habit of not switching to a larger scale, because in a small field of vision you cannot see signals offered to discover more, eventually leads to a primitive understanding of the analysed works. A relatively long time ago, Michael Reeve warned that neglecting the scholarly apparatus when reading digitised editions encourages an overconfidence in the text, which is unjustified, even if handled with care.[22]

In addition to the "annihilation" of the apparatus, obvious stipulations regarding script or font, and various graphic nuances of the main text could be mentioned. Many works of literature cannot be displayed on a smartphone, retaining the same model of perception that has existed from their creation up to the reading practice of recent years. It is evident that in written culture, the reception of a text is influenced by its graphic configuration. There is no need to explain why a line of a poetic text in publications should be retained as it is, and how the strophes of a poem, when viewed at a glance, shape the expectations tied to genre recognition and specific reading. While prose is theoretically linear, the reader's perception is undoubtedly influenced by the expectations that, for example, a dialogue might start or a chapter may end, etc., which are caused by peripheral vision. On a small screen, the number of stanzas in a poem, the length of paragraphs in a novel, and the more nuanced graphical effects of text can remain beyond the reader's vision and perception. More attention should be paid to the extent that the principal graphic configuration of a text, established at the time of the appearance of the work and reflecting a particular genre along with reading practices, can differ from the graphical conception of the view on a smartphone to a high degree. Is this mismatch not even more radical than changing a bibliographic code, because the active digital interface "has an undeniable impact on the way the user reads and understands the edition?"[23] Isn't it the case that the quality of the edition varies so much when the reading area shrinks that we could unreservedly agree that the DSE on the small screen "represents the editor's best thinking?"[24]

One of the assessment criteria for such editions is whether it does not blur the work's singularity. Although a smartphone is an expensive device, the text on it is subject to the conditions of austerity: a small screen does not offer possibilities

[22] Michael Reeve, "Cuius in Usum? Recent and Future Editing," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 200, https://doi.org/10.2307/300207.

[23] Wout Dillen, "The Editor in the Interface: Guiding the User through Texts and Images," in *Digital Scholarly Editions as Interfaces*, ed. Roman Bleier et al. (Herstellung und Verlag, 2018), 35.

[24] Peter Shillingsburg, "Hagiolatry, Cultural Engineering, Monument Building, and Other Functions of Scholarly Editing," in *Voice, Text, Hypertext: Emerging Practices in Textual Studies*, ed. Raimonda Modiano, Leroy F. Searle, Peter Shillingsburg (University of Washington Press, 2004), 419.

for variety. Without an original design, headers, and other features that might reduce the area of the main text, this kind of digital edition can resemble a cheap anthology that is densely packed with numerous works presented in the same flat and compact layout. Peter Shillingsburg's remark can be applied *mutatis mutandis* to a small screen: "The fact that the works included in the anthology are all printed in the same type font suggests that there is an equality of value."[25] Due to these factors, a publication viewed on a small screen decreases the 'resolution' of the work; extracting a work as a unique mental construct from a copy on a smartphone is less successful than when using a larger screen or a printed book. When graphic features that help the reader to mentally organize the work as a whole and differentiate it from others are minimized, the recognition of individual works becomes less distinct.

Jerome McGann reasonably predicted that "in the next fifty years the entirety of our inherited archive of cultural works will have to be reedited within a network of digital storage, access, and dissemination." Therefore, he called for "young people well trained in the history of text transmission and the scholarly method, as well as the theory and practice of editing." Above all, these young scholars should understand "the complex mechanisms of book technology so that they can create digital environments of similar complexity. Consider how brilliantly the bibliographic interface organizes our experience of reflection and understanding. It can accommodate vast amounts of data and information of all kinds."[26] It is essential to remember that the book interface is the outcome of centuries of civilisation, that the *pagina optima* has evolved through a lengthy process of searching for the most convenient formats and layouts. Given this context, it is hard to believe that the transition to DSEs, especially those targeting small devices, will occur without a loss of meaning and awareness. Most web designers would agree with Google's product director, who stated: "reduction is the best layout approach available to you on mobile."[27]

On a larger screen, plain text is one of the options available when a DSE is appropriately implemented. However, on a smartphone, a display mode without margins is unavoidable. With a larger screen, one can access commentary or alternative variant zones, a pop-up window that appears when a cursor is placed or clicked, and other tools allowing the reader to switch their focus from one element to another easily. On a small screen, these features are only theoretically

[25] Peter Shillingsburg, *Textuality and Knowledge* (Penn State University Press, 2017), 3–4.

[26] Jerome McGann, "A Note on the Current State of Humanities Scholarship," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 410–1, https://doi.org/10.1086/421142.

[27] Luke Wroblewski, *Mobile First* (A Book Apart, 2011), 117.

possible, as the space of the main text shrinks. If there is a lengthier peritext, it might not be fully visible, or the entire commented section may not be accessible, or both. This issue is evident even in the impressive *Touch Press* experiments with T. S. Eliot[28] or Robinson and Bordalejo's rendering of Geoffrey Chaucer for handheld devices.[29] In the latter application, the image is automatically moved after each line, which is displayed in three ways in a combined frame: in facsimile, in the original transcription, and in translation to modern English. The original text is read synchronously by an actor.[30] However, when the commentary window is activated, longer comments do not fit on the screen, and the other text displays are reduced to a single line.

This situation leads to commentaries being shortened or reduced. Several textual scholars involved in adaptations of editions for secondary schools have reflected on this outcome. The model utilized by webpage technology—hypertext links—allows users to click on a marked place and be directed to a new window. In a smartphone edition, this process resembles a traditional edition that features commentaries or variants at the end of the book, i.e., those which a reader hardly ever checks. Such observations evoke a sense of *déjà vu*; perhaps, textual scholars may soon experience another self-critical awakening reminiscent of the one that happened in the late twentieth century. That is, despite the preparation of sophisticated editions, both literary scholars and students often resort to using paperbacks for their analyses.[31] Creating an interface that is "*invitingly* available to critics"[32] poses a much greater challenge on a small screen compared to a larger display, making it difficult, if not impossible, task.

In early books, e.g., for biblical studies, special layouts were created to allow the main text and various commentaries or translations into several languages to be arranged in separate blocks. This was feasible only on large pages and page spreads. It is important to emphasise the dimensions of books here. Although microtype and miniature publications existed, they were not practical for students. We cannot easily dismiss the importance of peripheral vision, since graphic

[28] Thomas S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (Touch Press & Faber, 2011), https://apps.apple.com/us/app/the-waste-land/id427434046; the latest version of the app is now available as a product of The Red Green & Blue Co Ltd, as the publisher Touch Press has changed its business focus.

[29] Geoffrey Chaucer, [*The Canterbury Tales*:] *General Prologue*, ed. Richard North, Barbara Bordalejo, Terry Jones, Peter Robinson (Scholarly Digital Editions, 2020), http://www.sd-editions.com/CantApp/GP/.

[30] Cf. Barbara Bordalejo, Lina Gibbings, Richard North, Peter Robinson, "Making an Edition in an App," *Digital Medievalist* 14(1), no. 3 (2021): 10–3, https://doi.org/10.16995/dm.8067.

[31] Paul Eggert, *The Work and the Reader in Literary Studies: Scholarly Editing and Book History* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 66.

[32] Shillingsburg, *Textuality and Knowledge*, 131.

signals in the field of vision pointing to the existence of a peritext or versions influence the reading experience and perception of the status and nature of the work. Such editions, according to Paul Eggert's concept, surfaced in theoretical discussions of recent years, are "Editions as Argument about the Work."[33] Even having the same layers, but being unable to demonstrate them more diversely and, above all, synchronically, an edition on a small screen serves as a weaker "Argument about the Work." This argument is not just "embodied in the reading text", but is also "supported by apparatus and other editorial matter."[34]

Finally, let us recall the tendencies of the development of scholarly editing in recent decades. Digital editions, particularly those that have moved to the level of digital archives, have strengthened the positions of historical-critical editions oriented to the textual whole of the work, as the necessity to economise on paper has disappeared. Not due to some theoretical conceptual motifs, but because of the practical nature of usability, editions on a small screen have led to a preference for critical editions that prioritize a single best-text or copy text. Consequently, alternatives, ambiguities, equivocations, and other results of scholarly work, regardless of their detailed shape in the background, are pushed outside the margins because there are no margins—both literally and figuratively—on a small screen.

Recently, John Rodzivilla made the optimistic assumption that online text archives and the *Internet of Things* provide egalitarian access to sources for studies and different paratexts and unconstrained layouts.[35] I would say that this declaration of egalitarianism, like some other declarations of sociocultural egalitarianism, is deceptive. It gives consumers the impression that they no longer need to go to an academic library and that everything fits in their pocket. In reality, what they are consuming on their smartphones is what in traditional publishing would be taken as a low-cost paperback. It is perhaps even more disappointing when a digital publishing product embodies significant academic value, but functions *de facto* on the small screen only as a teaser for a critical edition.

> That so many critical editions are printed suggests that readers still value this format, and that the principal activity involved in using an edition—reading—is still best realised

[33] Paul Eggert, "Writing in a Language Not Your Own: Editions as Argument about the Work—D. H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad and Henry Lawson," *Variants: The Journal of the European Society for Textual Scholarship* 9 (2012): 163.

[34] Eggert, *The Work and the Reader in Literary Studies*, 64.

[35] Cf. John Rodzivilla, "The Digital Architexture of E-readers. How the Internet of Things Adds Layers of Meaning to Text," in *Der Text und seine (Re)Produktion*: Beihefte zu *Editio* 55, ed. Niklas Fröhlich, Bastian Politycki, Dirk Schäfer, Annkathrin Sonder (De Gruyter, 2023), 55–68.

> using print. That so many digital editions have purpose-built interfaces suggests that editors are straining to break free from the old paradigms and lack adequate turnkey solutions to help realise their visions.[36]

Homer's epics underwent a transformation from oral recitation to rolled papyrus and parchment, and then to leafed codex and scrolled screen. Some other literary works probably will not lose their vitality, having been transferred from a book to a smartphone. The more accurate the transfer, the more it will benefit an attentive reader and promote and popularise scholarship. However, there are reasons to be sceptical about whether efforts towards small-screen interfaces can significantly expand the audience for DSEs.[37]

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