

Choosing publics as a scholarly act: challenges for creators of digital editions at the point of inception

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If creating a digital edition that meets the needs of scholars was not challenging enough in itself, editors need to make it both functional and attractive for their audiences as well. What does this imply for the traditional tasks of the editor? Elena Pierazzo argues that scholarly editors are typically the main public for their own editions. Her argument is confirmed by many current digital scholarly editions, which generally prioritise content above presentation and offer many complex tools for textual research that serve only the most advanced user. What other audiences should creators of editions attempt to engage with and how can they achieve a broader impact? The potential pedagogical value of using a digital edition in a classroom is one area that is regularly emphasised in such discussions. An editor needs to have a clear idea of the intended audiences right at the outset in order to structure their edition effectively. In other words, a predetermined public influences editorial decision-making about the shape and structure of an edition.

How do you create a digital edition that is potentially of interest to a larger community of users, while at the same time producing a product that is deemed to be 'scholarly'? Is there a conflict of interest between audiences that can be reached? Is it possible or even worthwhile to reach a multitude of publics, or should there be a solitary user group who are the intended focus? To what extent can the editors be in conversation with the potential audience to help shape the final output? From the point of inception of an edition project, editors must consider their specific (textual) material and the best modes to disseminate the work to their intended publics.

In this paper, we will discuss some of the issues and challenges listed above using a case in practice. We are currently at the outset of creating a new digital edition of a collection of Dutch language stories, *Sheherazade* (1932), by the Flemish author Raymond Brulez. By using a comprehensive and diverse set of surviving materials that form the basis of *Sheherazade*, we intend to represent its textual development on a detailed level. At this early stage we are confronted with a number of interesting conceptual and ethical challenges regarding publics and purposes. In this paper, we talk about the issues

we face, the approach and model we hope to apply, and some preliminary observations we can make. In conjunction with this paper, we will give a related poster presentation in which we identify a number of practical and technical issues regarding the structure of edition. The challenge is to find a representation or combination of representations by which the edition can be both useful for scholarly purposes while also potentially providing wider pedagogical and societal value.