

DIGITAL RESOURCES FOR THE HUMANITIES

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Conference Abstracts

Digital Critical Editions. The Case of the Swedish National Edition of August Strindberg's Collected Works

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The international standards family SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language, ISO 8879), HyTime (Hypermedia/Time-based Structuring Language, ISO 10744), and DSSSL (Document Style Semantics and Specification Language, ISO 10179) opens new opportunities in the humanities. SGML offers the opportunity to create common principles for structuring, encoding, and exchanging material. HyTime offers the opportunity to create common principles for addressing and hypertext linking, as well as principles for structuring multimedia information (more precisely: time-dependent information as audio or video). DSSSL offers the opportunity to create common principles for the processing of SGML-encoded material (i.e. principles for portable style sheets).

The elaboration of these principles is not given by SGML, HyTime, or DSSSL, though, which are languages—or rather meta-languages. They are merely internationally agreed ways to define principles for describing and organizing material, and for exchanging it across the boundaries between computer platforms, applications, and national languages. In every single domain the concerned specialists have to work out the principles in accordance with their own needs. In the humanities the most significant attempt in this direction is the guidelines developed by the international project TEI (Text Encoding Initiative).

The paper will present experiences from the application of the TEI guidelines to the Swedish National Edition of August Strindberg's collected works. In this context the encoding has been used as the source for the creation of both a digital version and some volumes in the ordinary printed book edition (via LaTeX to Postscript delivered to the printing house). It is a relatively large edition (70 volumes + commentary volumes), half of which had already been published by use of traditional typesetting. There were of course strong demands that the printed volumes to come should mimic the design of the previous ones in every detail. Thus,

the encoding scheme had to be underpinned by a set of rules reflecting on the one hand the particular typographic design principles (created by Sweden's most celebrated book designer Karl-Erik Forsberg), and on the other hand the philological and editorial principles governing this particular critical edition.

The optimal combination of scholarly editorial and visual presentation aspects was rather difficult to achieve. You run the risk of having to choose between two bad alternatives: either a rather unorthodox (partly presentation-oriented and therefore less useful in other respects) SGML-encoding, or a more pure descriptive encoding which means time-consuming and arduous work within the layout programme. This problem and possible solutions will be discussed in the paper, as well as other lessons learned from the Strindberg project.

The paper will also touch upon the program for the consortium NOLA (Networking of Literary Archives), the aim of which is to make material in European archives — mainly unpublished primary sources from major novelists, philosophers, musicians, painters, etc. — available in portable digital versions. The TEI recommendations for encoding and meta-description of manuscript materials will be the particular focus of NOLA, which will assess their suitability and recommend their extension and modification as necessary. A major emphasis will be placed on development of procedures for the integration and use of TEI-aware tools for the creation, management, documentation, analysis, and dissemination of archival resources.