18.

Digital scholarly editing in the early modern curriculum

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We wish to open this essay with a contention: a learning experience centred on the collaborative creation of a digital scholarly edition presents an ideal context for humanities students to not only gain a deeper appreciation of editorial practices, but also to develop a wide range of transferable skills. This is a theory that we first put to the test in the 2021–2 academic year when we launched 'Digital Scholarly Editing: Theory and Practice', a 10 ECTS module aimed at MA students in the School of English and Creative Arts at the University of Galway. Students in this class worked together over the course of a semester to create a new digital edition of an early modern play, James Shirley's *The Royal Master* (1638). In so doing, participants cultivated valuable transferable skills not only in areas like research and digital literacy, but also in project management, critical thinking, decision-making, teamwork and communication.

In conceiving 'Digital Scholarly Editing: Theory and Practice', our aim was to establish an experiential environment in which students would engage in active, participatory learning both in and outside of the classroom. The broadly constructivist approach that informs this module is best characterised as project-based learning, 'a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem or challenge' (Buck Institute n.d.). This type of learning experience positions

teachers as facilitators and typically cumulates in the construction of what has been called a 'concrete artefact' that requires 'the student or student team to think through the steps of the construction process' (Helle, Tynjälä and Olkinuora 2006).

Digital scholarly editions serve as excellent artefacts in a project-based learning curriculum for three primary reasons. Firstly, a digital scholarly edition can be flexible in scope and ambition. This pliability is key in a student-led project, where it is difficult to predict precise completion timelines or fully anticipate hurdles that may slow or stall progress. When creating a digital scholarly edition, students can identify a minimal set of core tasks, yet there is always room for further expansion or elaboration should time permit. This might include developing a wider array of paratextual materials (for example, expanded critical introduction, more detailed textual annotations), extending the granularity and precision of the encoding or increasing the sophistication of the digital interface (for example, improving navigability, greater customisation) if the project progresses more rapidly than anticipated. Secondly, the creation of a digital scholarly edition requires students to engage in a wide variety of distinct activities. They must closely study a text and gain some appreciation of its broader contexts. They will quite possibly need to grapple with texts that exist in more than one version. They will need to exercise research skills to locate and analytical skills to assess relevant scholarship. They will need to familiarise themselves with methods and practices that will likely be new to them, such as Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) encoding and version control and, in order to make their edition publicly accessible, they will need to achieve a reasonable level of proficiency using appropriate digital publishing tools and/or software. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, digital scholarly editions make pedagogically useful artefacts in student-centred learning environments because they are the direct products of a critically informed, multistage decision-making process. Creating any scholarly edition involves making a sequence of consequential choices, both large and small. It means weighing alternative theoretical approaches but also making decisions about matters of selection, interpretation and presentation that can some-

times manifest in questions as minute as whether or not a comma may be warranted. Directly involving students in the creation of a scholarly edition brings this decision-making process to the fore; they must engage with texts in new ways as they consciously make and seek to justify their own editorial choices.

Early modern plays make especially good fodder for student editing projects because they transparently present so many decision-making opportunities. As they engage with primary source material, students must contend with typographical features such as ligatures or the use of the long 's', and they encounter unfamiliar textual features like catchwords and signature marks. The alterity of the language and cultural reference points requires consideration of what might be modernised or what requires glossing. Inconsistencies in how act and scene divisions, speech prefixes or stage directions are represented require careful thought, as do omissions or conspicuous absences of features that a modern reader of a dramatic work might expect to see. Beyond the above, it also bears noting just how deeply intertwined the study of early modern drama has been with the history of modern scholarly editing in the Anglo-American tradition: many of the proponents of the 'New Bibliography' in the first half of the twentieth century – A. W. Pollard, Ronald B. McKerrow, W. W. Greg and, later, Fredson Bowers – were early modernists, and their influence has been paramount in the subsequent development of scholarly editing (Tanselle 2009).

In what follows, our discussion of digital scholarly editing in the classroom unfolds across three distinct sections. In the first, we address the design of 'Digital Scholarly Editing: Theory and Practice' in its first iteration, focusing particular attention on the variety of transferable skills that we deliberately sought to embed in the curriculum. The second provides a brief survey of related pedagogical projects that inspired and/or emerged in approximately the same time frame as our own. Our third and final section focuses on student feedback, including participants' personal reflections on the transferable skills that they cultivated, along with our own thoughts on refining delivery in future iterations of this module.

Module design

The thirteen MA students recruited onto 'Digital Scholarly Editing: Theory and Practice' for its inaugural run in the 2021–2 academic year had no particular expertise in early modern drama or scholarly editing practices, though all had academic backgrounds or interests in literary studies.[1] Given this student demographic, we opted to design the module with a bipartite structure. In the first half of the 12-week semester, we deliberately frontloaded lectures, group discussions and activities that would provide all students in the class with a common set of conceptual foundations and relevant skills. Course delivery involved interactive discussion and workshop-based in-person seminar meetings as well as a modest suite of prerecorded video lectures that students were asked to watch outside of the scheduled class time. The semester commenced with an introduction to Shirley and *The Royal Master* (with a particular focus on reading the play and analysing its plot, setting, characters and themes). Students were additionally provided with basic contextual information about early modern printing conventions, language and stagecraft, and consideration was given to Shirley's use of (irregular) blank verse. In weeks 1–6, students also received an introduction to the principles and practices of documentary and diplomatic editing, and they gained an awareness of the typology of scholarly editions as well as the purpose and principles of TEI encoding. In tandem with these conceptual, analytical and theoretical foundations, all students were made aware of a range of helpful online resources,

1 The majority of the students on the module were registered in the University of Galway's MA in Literature and Publishing, with one student from the MA in English. We are very grateful to these students for their contributions to the first iteration of this module and for their permission to quote from their final assignments: Órla Carr, Aron Daly Jones, Isabel Dwyer, Leilani Garcia, Megan Johnson, Liam Maguire, Enejda Nasaj, Clodagh O'Donnell, Sheridan Peña, Barbara Petrovcic, Julia Pinka, Sonja Reinke and Yashika Gulshan Sharma. We are similarly indebted to David Kelly, Digital Humanities Manager of the University of Galway's Moore Institute, for his technological instruction and assistance in supporting this module.

including *Early English Books Online* (EEBO), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (ECCO), *Historical Texts*, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB), the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* and the *English Short Title Catalogue* (ESTC), and they were introduced to GitHub, oXygen, and Edition Visualisation Technology (EVT).

The early modern play that we used for the first iteration of our module was selected with great care. We wanted to focus on a text with an Irish cultural connection, and *The Royal Master* is known to have been staged in Dublin during Shirley's time with the Werburgh Street Theatre in the late 1630s (Dutton 2006; Williams 2010; Lublin 2017; Hadfield 2018). It is also a play with an interesting publishing history: the first edition of 1638 was printed in quarto format with variant title pages (STC 22454 and STC 22454a) designed for distinct London and Dublin markets. *The Royal Master* was reprinted in octavo format in 1793, and, in the early nineteenth century, it was edited by William Gifford and Alexander Dyce for inclusion in the six-volume *Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley* (1833). No more recent edition of the play exists (though this will soon be rectified with Oxford University Press's publication of *The Complete Works of James Shirley*). In addition to the digital images and transcriptions of STC 22454 and STC 22454a available for consultation via EEBO, an encoded version of the full 1638 text is available via the EEBO-TCP initiative. *The Royal Master* was also an attractive choice, as high-quality, openly licensed digital images of the British Library copy of STC 22454 are available via *Historical Texts*.

The foundational skills and ideas that we introduced in the first half of the semester were reinforced by a series of small assessments completed by students outside of class time. Our aims were realistic: we had no illusions of transforming the group into subject experts in both early modern drama and digital scholarly editing in the short span of six weeks. Rather, we sought to bring the students to a place where they would be able to participate with confidence in the process of creating a meaningful class artefact. All students were required to complete short plot synopsis and OED assignments, as

well as a slightly more detailed transcription and TEI-encoding assignment that involved working with a single, individually assigned page from STC 22454. These take-home assessments were complemented by a key in-class activity that asked the students to collaboratively identify what they considered to be 'notable features' of STC 22454. The group's observations about the text – which included things like typographical errors, unfamiliar spellings, punctuation choices, unexpected uses of capital letters, font changes and the appearance of catchwords and signature marks – were compiled in a shared document. This student-generated document served as an important touchstone, helping participants to appreciate and assess the decisions that had been made nearly two centuries earlier by the nineteenth-century editors of Shirley's play while also priming them for the decision-making process that would inform their own editorial work.

Halfway through the semester, regularly scheduled class meetings ceased. Students were divided into four smaller groups, each of which was assigned a particular work package (WP) and a set of prompts:

Work Package 1: Introductory materials

- Look at introductions in various modern editions of early modern plays (editions in the Arden Shakespeare, Oxford Shakespeare, Folger Shakespeare, New Mermaids or Revels Plays series may be particularly useful to seek out). What do you like, and what do you find useful? What would you like to replicate? What could your edition do without?
- Decide on the subsections and features you'd ideally like to include in your introduction. Prioritise (you may not have time to tackle all of these, so devise a list from most to least important and work through them in that order).
- Think about how you would like your introductory materials to be displayed in the edition: with different pages for different sections? On one continuous page? What method of presentation would

be most helpful for the reader? Liaise with WP4 on appropriate website layout.

- Find and read as much relevant scholarly literature as possible! You can use the MLA International Bibliography, Google Scholar, the library catalogue, archive.org and so on to search for material.
- Liaise closely with WP2: are there things you've found in the scholarly literature that you think might be better presented as annotations rather than included in the introduction?
- Liaise closely with the other WPs: do they have information about their approach (for example, any specific decisions they've made or policies they've used) that could/should be mentioned in the introduction?
- Review the list of 'Notable Features of *The Royal Master*' that you produced earlier this semester. Are any of these features worthy of comment in your introductory materials?
- Research and write!

Work Package 2: Annotation

- Look at annotations/notes in various modern editions of early modern plays (editions in the Arden Shakespeare, Oxford Shakespeare, Folger Shakespeare, New Mermaids or Revels Plays series may be particularly useful to seek out). What kinds of notes do you find interesting/helpful?
- Review relevant TEI Guidelines, with particular attention to chapter 3.9 (Notes, Annotation and Indexing). Also review EVT documentation for advice on requirements for encoding notes.
- Decide on the types of annotations you'd ideally like to include in your edition. Prioritise (you may not have time to tackle all of these, so devise a list from most to least important and work through them in that order).
- Devise a house style and policy for annotations to ensure that you're presenting information in consistent ways throughout the edition. Looking at examples from other editions (digital or print) will be very helpful here. Write a short instructional document on your annotation policy, types, methods and so on, that can be shared with WP1.

- Review the list of 'Notable Features of *The Royal Master* that you produced earlier this semester. Are any of these features worthy of comment in your annotations?
- Liaise closely with WP1 and WP3: communicate your annotation encoding policy; discover whether they have identified anything that might be worthy of annotation.
- Research and write!

Work Package 3: Structural encoding

- To begin, confirm details with other WPs about the type of edition to be completed (documentary?, critical?) and the text(s) to be encoded.
- Review relevant portions of the TEI Guidelines, paying particular attention to chapters 4 (Default Text Structure) and 7 (Performance Texts).
- Decide on appropriate structural encoding policy for the edition. Check EVT documentation, liaising with WP4, to confirm that your encoding policy conforms to EVT's requirements.
- Write a short instructional document on encoding policy for WP members; this may also be adapted and published in the edition to document your encoding methods for readers, and you should liaise with WP1 about whether a version of this would be useful to include in the introductory materials.
- Look carefully at the stage directions throughout the play. Are there obvious missing stage directions, for example, for any character entrances or exits? Are there places where additional stage directions might be useful? Develop a policy about whether or not you will make editorial interventions to clarify action and communicate this policy to other WPs. Consider similar editorial questions such as whether to add a list of characters and whether to provide full speaker names.
- Review the list of 'Notable Features of *The Royal Master*' that you produced earlier this semester. Are any of these features worthy of special treatment in your encoding?

- Complete structural encoding of play text, using (and correcting) available transcriptions of the text.
- Work with WP2 to: decide on an appropriate method for encoding annotations; pass on anything to them stemming from your encoding activities that you think might be worth mentioning in the annotations.

Work Package 4: Design and publication

- As a priority, decide on what pages/sections will be included in the edition website (liaise with WP1, in particular).
- Review EVT documentation in full and run early tests with sample WP3 files to check for compatibility with the EVT system.
- Make decisions (in consultation with other WPs) about preferred design and customisation of EVT. Are there particular elements that need to be displayed in certain ways?
- If these are being incorporated, source and prepare facsimile image files for inclusion in the edition: decide on appropriate folder structure and file-naming conventions for image files. Ensure image file names are used consistently in WP3.
- Make recommendations about integration of introductory material within the edition and liaise with WP1 about this.
- Liaise with WP3 to ensure correct integration of files into EVT.
- Liaise with module instructors about servers, domains and so on.
- Write a short document outlining design and publication decisions; liaise with WP1 about whether a version of this would be useful to include in the introductory materials.

During this second phase of the module, each student kept a relatively informal weekly worklog documenting the specific activities in which they had engaged and commenting on issues arising or problem solving that occurred. As a guideline, we estimated that each student should devote approximately 10 hours per week to working on the project (inclusive of scheduled meetings, correspondence and time spent documenting their activities). In order

to streamline communications, each WP was asked to elect a team leader who would be the primary liaison for interactions with the course instructors and other WP teams. Students were encouraged to work on a largely independent basis and to troubleshoot amongst themselves whenever they encountered hurdles, but they were also advised that their team leader could contact the module instructors for guidance or assistance if issues arose that they could not resolve.

We are happy to report that, by the end of the 12-week semester, the students working across the four WPs did indeed succeed in collaboratively producing a credible class artefact: a new digital edition of *The Royal Master*.[2] The editorial team ultimately adopted what they describe in their introductory materials as 'a mixed documentary and critical approach'. This involved encoding (and making appropriate corrections to) the EEBO-TCP transcription of STC 22454 in conjunction with the British Library's digital images to create a facing-page digital edition. As the team notes in their introduction, the edition 'incorporate[s] a number of critical features, namely the inclusion of annotations and the amendment of old-fashioned letter use'. While they did decide to retain STC 22454's catchwords and its use of italics to indicate proper names, they corrected what they agreed to be 'spelling mistakes' and made some 'conservative' modifications to punctuation for clarity. Beyond this, the student team decided to incorporate additional stage directions from the 1833 edition of *The Royal Master*, as they felt this 'ma[de] it easier to follow the story and visualise the stage'. The 1833 edition also furnished some annotations. The students devised a sophisticated colour-coding system to delineate between: annotations reproduced from the 1833 edition; etymological notes; contextual notes; textual notes; and intertextual notes.

It feels a bit like stating the obvious to observe that students working on a digital scholarly edition of an early modern play can expect to develop their research and digital literacy skills. The range of trans-

2 The edition is currently hosted at https://dh-nuigalway.github.io/Early-Modern-Plays/.

ferable skills that might be gained through a learning experience of this nature is far more profound than this, however. As the WP descriptions above make clear, our students were explicitly challenged to hone their project management skills. To complete the activities with which they were tasked (and do so with efficiency, given our relatively tight semester time frame), each WP needed to establish leadership structures, to devise systems for keeping themselves organised, to set interim goals and to prioritise and delegate work as needed. Furthermore, the many interrogatives in our WP descriptors illustrate just how consciously we tried to position critical thinking and decision making at the core of the learning experience. Ideally, when student groups are presented with successive opportunities to make informed choices, they exercise their abilities to critically analyse and weigh the consequences of varying options. This means gathering and assessing information, taking others' perspectives into account, and balancing ideology with pragmatics before deciding on a shared course of action. Beyond the above, the sheer number of times the word 'liaise' appears in the WP descriptions speaks volumes about the extent to which collaborative work on a digital scholarly edition offers students an opportunity to cultivate skills in areas such as teamwork and communications. This includes developing strategies for reaching consensus (and potentially for dealing with interpersonal friction), as well as ensuring that key decisions are effectively relayed to stakeholders once made. Taken together, all of this constitutes valuable experience that can be applied by the students in other contexts as they move forward in their careers. Moreover, the wide range of transferable skills that they were cultivating is something that we aimed to make visible to our students by asking them to write a final essay reflecting on their experience in the module.

Initiatives in (digital) scholarly editing pedagogy

'Digital Scholarly Editing: Theory and Practice' did not emerge in a vacuum. Our inspiration for creating this module arose largely from our own recognition of the pedagogical possibilities of digital

scholarly editing in the early modern studies curriculum. This view was reinforced, however, by our awareness of a recent surge of interest in the affordances for teaching and learning at the intersections of early modern studies and digital scholarly editing. Shortly after we began preliminary planning for this module, the conference programme for the 2020 Renaissance Society of America (RSA) Annual Meeting was released, and we were enthused to see the inclusion of two panels on 'Editing Early Modern Texts and/as Pedagogy'. After the pandemic necessitated the cancellation of the RSA's 2020 Meeting, we sought to continue the conversation in a different context by inviting several of the panellists to participate in a dedicated online webinar hosted by the University of Galway in February 2021 (*Editing Early Modern Texts in the Classroom* 2021).[3]

Colleagues from North America comprised the majority of the 2020 RSA panellists, and a survey of published literature in this area confirms a preponderance of activity in Canada and the United States, with a smaller number of case studies from the United Kingdom. One of the earliest examples of editing early modern drama in the postgraduate classroom comes from England. Lisa Hopkins of Sheffield Hallam University begins her account of a student-created scholarly edition by noting the relative scarcity of reliable or user-friendly editions of Renaissance plays, while also highlighting the rich textual idiosyncrasies and problems of the genre. Hopkins's postgraduate students edited in analogue, not digital media, and while her report does not address the transferable nature of editorial skills, she notes that the different editorial tasks demand 'an extraordinary number of skills' of participating students. Moreover, she concludes with the remarkable detail that the module has generated a number of peer-reviewed journal publications by participants (Hopkins 2006).

3 This webinar was made possible because our project received funding from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education as part of the 'Re-Making the Creative Arts Canon, Re-Imagining the Creative Arts Curriculum' initiative at the University of Galway.

Another British initiative in nondigital editing is described by Rebecca Bailey, who designed and implemented a six-month internship programme for undergraduate students in the Humanities at the University of Gloucestershire. Coincidentally, Shirley also featured here, as participants edited a scene from *The Young Admiral* (1637), collated variants and produced an accompanying scholarly commentary. Bailey describes her motivations in running the programme as being directed towards giving students the opportunity to gain 'an understanding of current cutting-edge scholarly editing principles' and 'insight into the world of publishing and editing'. Notably, the internship model was strongly focused on employability, as students completed the programme with 'a portfolio of their work to show to future employers' (Bailey 2014).

At Northwestern University, Whitney B. Taylor also reports using nondigital editorial techniques in an undergraduate Shakespeare class. With a particular focus on empowering first-generation students and setting the goal of 'finding strategies to give students authority in the classroom' (Taylor 2019), Taylor's assignment is primarily concerned with annotation and glossing as critical and analytical activities. Students identified an audience for their edition, selected a scene, annotated it and wrote an introduction to explain and justify their editorial choices. In a focused assignment of this kind, the key skills that Taylor highlights are similar to those required for an essay: 'attend to particular features of the language, develop academic writing skills, frame an argument built on close readings, and link local readings to larger themes or questions about the material' (Taylor 2019).

Taken together, these three examples of more traditional nondigital scholarly editing illustrate the extensive pedagogical possibilities of editing in both undergraduate and postgraduate classrooms. The range of outcomes and skills for students is similarly broad, but may be developed further by editing for and within a digital environment. One of the earliest examples of this kind is found in Salt, Muri and Cooley's description of their 'project-based senior undergraduate course in electronic scholarly editing' (Salt, Muri and Cooley 2012).

Like our own module, it took place in the course of a semester. In two groups, students produced type-facsimile documentary editions of two seventeenth-century works lacking modern editorial treatment or transcription: the anonymous *Eighth Liberal Science: or a New-found Art and Order of Drinking* (1650) and Edward Whitaker's *Directions for Brewing Malt Liquors* (1700). Students produced editions for the web using HTML; though the authors acknowledge that this language is not the standard for digital scholarly editions, this decision did not preclude students' acquisition of key technological skills in markup, web design and version control. The editions contained scholarly apparatus whose guiding principles were designed to be 'helpful to senior undergraduate and graduate student users', forgoing an apparatus of variants as 'a concession to the time constraints of a 13-week course' (Salt, Muri and Cooley 2012). The time constraint of the academic semester, as we also learned first hand, is a crucial element of the projects, resulting in 'a delicate negotiation among editorial, web design, and learning goals'; however, that restriction had the associated benefit of offering 'a valuable exercise in team problem solving, time management, and responsibility division' (Salt, Muri and Cooley 2012).

Accounts of student-produced digital scholarly editions tend to highlight the technical skills that students acquire, though not to the exclusion of a solid focus on editorial principles and practices. For example, students at Oregon State University collaborated on producing a Creative Commons-licensed digital scholarly edition of *Romeo and Juliet* (Olson 2021). Their primary goal was to edit Shakespeare with the high-school student in mind, and their editorial decisions were therefore oriented towards making the text 'more relatable, modern and understandable'. What resulted was an eclectic edition, with students collating three early versions and then 'selecting the best-fit line for the play'. Enumerating the variety of editorial tasks involved, academic coordinator Rebecca Olson has reflected on the interactive nature of the learning experience, which arose from the specific motive of editing *for* students (Rosenquist 2019). Publishing online was the natural and accessible choice for an edition prepared with such a broad audience in mind.

A recent article by Mark Kaethler focuses specifically on the inclusion of TEI assignments in literary classrooms, offering guidance on 'how to introduce text encoding to novice users' (Kaethler 2020). Kaethler's undergraduate students are given introductory lessons on book history and textual editing and contextual classes on relevant subject matter and genres before embarking on TEI encoding of two seventeenth-century lord mayor's shows written by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Heywood. The focus of the assignments was primarily on the theory and practice of text encoding and what this offers to the study of literature. No digital edition arose from the encoding, but Kaethler's pedagogical approach and learning outcomes chime with the experiences and challenges we encountered in our own classroom.

Ashley Howard's digital documentary edition of Ralph Knevet's play, *Rhodon and Iris* (1631), is a different undertaking from ours in a number of important ways. A three-year project completed for a Master's thesis, the edition is conceived as a 'pedagogical partnership' (Howard and Jenstad 2022) in which the student collaborated with supervisors, a research committee and academic experts rather than peers. Howard was able to acquire the suite of skills required for editorial work through coursework and a research assistantship at the University of Victoria. While, in this case, it took 'a village to train a digital editor', Howard and Jenstad reach familiar conclusions about scholarly editing's capacity to furnish students with 'transferable skills [that] are valuable as tools for potential or continuing graduate studies, and for work within and beyond academia' (Howard and Jenstad 2022).

Recent scholarship continues to demonstrate the efficacy of digital scholarly editing and editions in the classroom. Vigilanti et al. describe a digital scholarly editing initiative involving a collaboration between undergraduate students in Argentina and the United States. They frame the experience as an opportunity to train students in minimal computing and text encoding skills, while also engaging with 'different technological and academic contexts around the world by addressing issues and perspectives related to

infrastructure, language, digital literacy, and Open Science' (Viglianti et al. 2022). Anastasia Logotheti approaches instruction from the opposite direction, using a range of digital platforms, including digital scholarly editions, to demonstrate the constructed and multilayered textuality of Shakespeare's works so that her students better understand 'the complexity of constructing Shakespeare on the page and of performing his plays on screen and stage' (Logotheti 2020). Sarah Connell provides a useful bridge between these two pedagogical perspectives, examining four TEI editions of Shakespearean drama with students to show 'some of the ways that they function as reading interfaces' and how such interfaces 'condition our encounters with Shakespeare' (Connell 2022).

These international case studies serve to affirm our own conviction that the potential for (digital) scholarly editing as a pedagogical activity is vast. As academics continue to explore the use of editing activities in classroom environments, we will undoubtedly see the emergence of more project-based modules like our own 'Digital Scholarly Editing: Theory and Practice'. Interest in this area is clearly in the ascendant, especially amongst those working in early modern literary studies, and the modest but expanding number of relevant articles and book chapters that we have surveyed (including some pieces published concurrently with our own module's design and launch) offer a useful range of theoretical perspectives as well as practical insights for instructors to build upon.

Student reflections and the next iteration

We now wish to conclude with some practical insights of our own. In this final section of our discussion, we seek to share some of the vital student feedback we received in the 2021–2 academic year, as well as how we have used this feedback to refine 'Digital Scholarly Editing: Theory and Practice' in its second iteration (currently under way). As the inaugural version of this module progressed, we inevitably became aware of strengths and weaknesses in our course design, and we sought to corroborate our views with the perspectives

of our students. Our collection of comprehensive student feedback was facilitated via the module's final assessment, a piece of reflective writing in which students were invited to critically and analytically reflect on their learning experience. This assignment was instructive in outlining students' expectations and motivations for taking the module: many described having little knowledge of scholarly editing before the semester began but pointed to the module's engagement with digital publishing and its provision of digital skills as appealing characteristics that influenced their decision to enrol.

In students' personal reflections on the transferable skills they gained through working on the edition, digital skills again feature prominently. Many students expressed a sense of initial trepidation about learning new skills in this area, yet most surprised themselves by quickly coming to grips with the project's technological demands. Thus, markup or encoding experience was one of the most frequently cited transferable skills that they identified, alongside proficiency in associated tools and packages. As one student put it, 'I have learned about XML, HTML and CSS, in addition to how to use EVT, oXygen, GitHub, and Bootstrap. Although these are quite specific hard skills, coding is ever growing and a wonderful skill to know and be able to add to my CV.'

While digital skills were widely seen as an asset for future employability, the project participants were perceptive about the broader array of transferable skills they had acquired. Some associated research skills, analytical skills and attention to detail as essential requirements for the scholarly editor that are also applicable in a range of other professions and domains. The independent learning aspect of the module, while not hailed as an unqualified success by all students, was cited as one which promoted a range of valuable soft skills like problem solving, decision making, and self-learning. The expectations placed on students to take charge of teamwork and effective communication were reflected in comments about the value of developing these skills. Some participants reported on the added confidence that they developed from these elevated responsibilities: 'I nominated myself as the [WP] leader, as this was a good

opportunity for me to learn leadership skills and become a more effective communicator, as this is an area I am lacking in and wanted to work on my anxiety in professional environments'. Overwhelmingly, students prized their ability to point to a completed and published artefact at the end of the module: 'The ability, for the time being, to point potential employers, or indeed anyone else, to a showcase of our skills is invaluable, and the finished project serves as just that.'

For all of the positive feedback we received about students' learning experiences and outcomes, the participants also provided some valuable critiques. Chief among these was the issue of communication. While some students embraced the module design as an opportunity to develop their leadership and communication skills, others cited communication problems as a hindrance to an effective workflow. Communication issues arose once the WPs were assigned their independent activities in the second half of the semester and the class ceased to meet regularly as a large group. WPs largely succeeded in fulfilling their own specific obligations, but activities that depended on regular communication and cooperation *between* groups sometimes suffered. Within individual IWPs, some problems also arose with respect to effective delegation, but cross-package tasks were those that were most impacted: 'The lack of communication and cohesive leadership led to issues at the end of the project where people were unclear of their responsibilities and there was no established authority to assign tasks.' Another important point mentioned by more than one student was a desire for more comprehensive instruction in some of the core technologies used to prepare the edition.

Building a final reflective assignment into the module has proven a very effective tool for assessing the efficacy of the course design. Certainly, much of the student feedback we received substantiates Amanda Gailey's assertion that teaching TEI brings important pedagogical goals into focus: 'students must pay careful, consistent attention to the text; they learn to understand the cultural record as malleable; they feel a clear sense of purpose, audience, and expertise when writing; they leave with transferable technical skills' (Gailey 2014). Further to this, however, these reflective responses also

provide a way of identifying challenges to the smooth and effective running of the module. Notably, the two main student critiques described in the previous paragraph – faltering communication across WPs and the need for more intensive technological instruction at the module's outset – were also shortcomings that we, as the instructors, independently identified as the semester progressed.

As Salt, Muri and Cooley describe, the compressed duration of a single-semester project – a mere 12 weeks, in our case – places some significant constraints on syllabus design (Salt, Muri and Cooley 2012). At the time of writing, we are partway through the second iteration of 'Digital Scholarly Editing: Theory and Practice: this time around, we have 23 students working on an edition of another play associated with Shirley's Irish period, *The Constant Maid*. For the 2022–3 academic year, we have retained a bipartite module structure that frontloads instruction in digital technologies, early modern drama and scholarly editing in weeks 1–6 of the semester, as we believe in the value and necessity of reserving an extended period for independent learning and project work in weeks 7–12. However, instead of devolving the scheduling of meetings entirely to WPs' discretion in the latter half of the semester, we have instituted a standing two-hour meeting in which the whole class continues to come together on a weekly basis. These meetings open with a brief oral report from each individual student outlining work completed and obstacles encountered in the past week. This format emphasises personal accountability; it also allows the instructors to provide timely advice on matters pertaining to the group as a whole and to efficiently follow up with individuals who are struggling with particular tasks. In the remainder of the scheduled time, WPs have dedicated group meetings in a shared classroom space. This ensures that there is a forum to facilitate regular group communication not just within but also between all WPs. Our experience to date suggests that this format is helping students to better plan and resolve cross-WP tasks. The issue of increasing the intensity of the classroom instruction in technologies like TEI, GitHub, and EVT admittedly remains challenging owing to time constraints. However, we have revised our syllabus design in 2022–3 to shift more of the

technology-oriented topics to earlier points in the semester, slightly postponing detailed discussion of the dramatic text and context in order to do so. A greater focus on practical, hands-on instruction centres on concrete examples keyed to the specific kinds of issues students are likely to encounter in their editorial work. Our resequencing of the topics covered in weeks 1–6 means that students now have more time to familiarise themselves with required technologies and to discern areas where they might benefit from additional advice from peers or instructors.

For a long time, scholarly editors have bemoaned the underappreciation of editions by tenure and promotion committees, arguing that their constituent research and contributions to knowledge are not sufficiently valued by the academy. Ironically, as universities increasingly urge humanities disciplines to elucidate their contributions to students' employability, digital scholarly editing offers an exemplary model for teaching critical digital competencies and a wide range of transferable skills. Within this bright future for digital scholarly editing, we hope our experience will encourage more academics to explore its potential in their own teaching practices.

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