Писменото наследство
и информационните технологии

El'Manuscript–2014

Материали от V международна научна конференция
Варна, 15–20 септември 2014 г.

София · Ижевск
2014

Отговорни редактори: проф. дфн В. А. Баранов
                         доц. д-р В. Желязкова
                         д-р А. М. Лаврентьев

Редактори: Нели Ганчева, Веселка Желязкова (български текст)
               О. В. Зуга, В. А. Баранов (руски текст)
               Кевин Хокинс (Kevin Hawkins) (английски текст)

Сборникът съдържа материали от конференция, посветена на разработването и създаването на съвременни средства за съхраняване, описване, обработка, анализ и публикуване на ръкописни и старопечатни книжовни паметници и исторически извори, а също и на въпросите за подготвянето на електронни ресурси в областта на хуманитаристиката и тяхното използване в научните изследвания и преподаването.

Potential for the Use of Digital Technologies in the Scientific Description of Heterogeneous Manuscripts

Barbara Lomagistro

Codicology, description, non-homogeneous manuscript

This paper examines the structure and methods through which to present data manuscript descriptions from databases. It shows the limits of description of heterogeneous, especially Slavic, manuscripts. It proposes a protocol for cataloging these manuscripts in order to supply a more accurate and precise description and therefore to allow scholars to distinguish various strata in the structure of the manuscript. The topic shows how this protocol could be used by XML technology.

In recent years, in virtue of its great potential, information technology has been applied to the cataloging of manuscripts. On one hand, it permits users to get information more easily via the web, to search through indices, to publish more information with lower costs. On the other hand, it offers to catalogers new possibilities to present data and create relations among data. Current developments in XML technology will further improve cataloging. The goal of this paper is to outline ways that might facilitate methods of description which would reflect as accurately as possible the structure of the manuscripts, especially if they are not unitary.

Indeed, although much has been done, computer catalogs still have several limitations that are directly related to the cataloging method itself and therefore to the incorrect application of codicological theories in cataloging, or to the fact that catalogers do not work directly on manuscripts any more but instead on old printed catalogues or secondary publications. This sometimes causes the repetition of errors already present in their sources.

Specific studies have also identified a general limit on the functionality of databases of manuscript catalogs, namely a clear heterogeneity of the presentation of data and often deformity in search results, as well as involuntary repetition of mistakes, or too rigid a conception of a record, which sometimes serves too poor as an external description while imbalanced as an internal description [Andrist 2010]. This heterogeneity goes back to the way these databases were formed. For instance, often already existing catalog data are simply transmitted in electronic records, which, managed by appropriate programs, facilitate the use of data: access to them via the web and greater ease of indexing names, place names and so on, as well as ability to create interrelationships between tags and records. In creating these programs more attention has been devoted to general technical questions of programs that give structure to the record (namely, choice of the tags that have to be inserted) and organize the database [Andrist 2010, Giel 2010] than to the complexities of heterogeneous manuscripts. The solutions to these problems have to come from the collaboration between computer scientists and experts in cataloging, as indeed has occurred. Nevertheless, in order to overcome the heterogeneity of methods and results that still exist, we must start from a cataloging protocol more appropriate for the goals to be pursued

and in accordance with the most recent advances in codicology. Some of the deficiency, which still persists, indicates the need for further theoretical-codicological reflection. I am referring to the complex status of non-homogeneous or miscellaneous manuscripts and to the branched questions they pose [Gumbert 2004]. The user experience as well as the considerations already developed by experts in the field show that the data presented do not always allow users to understand the structure of the code, without which any further reflection on it (both on codicological or palaeographical aspects and on the texts cataloged) is distorted from the outset.

It is therefore necessary to specify from the very beginning the purpose of scientific cataloging, i.e., which data are necessary and how to supply them to a researcher, for whom the electronic catalog is created. The codicological study of miscellaneous manuscripts from a theoretical (if not yet from a practical) point of view showed that the delimitation of the constituent parts (codicological units) of a manuscript is one of the most important ways for proper use of historical data. In other words, this kind of approach helps reconstruct the genesis and stratification of the manuscript we are describing. This leads us to conceive of "scientific cataloging" as the creation of a collection of data, each of which systematically describes a manuscript, in order to allow the user to reconstruct, as far as possible, all the stages of its history, both from the point of view of its formation and circulation [Andrist, Maniaci, Canart 2013]. It is therefore clear that the protocol of cataloging taken as the basis of an electronic database must provide the clear identification of all the discontinuities present in the code and highlight each codicological unit and any other information present in the outer structure of the manuscript which can be useful for dating and for study of different aspects of its circulation (different dating, alternation of support, hands, various annotations). All these data of external description must not be mixed with the data of internal description, which regards the texts.

We must therefore draw a cataloging record based on the latest theoretical findings concerning the identification and description of miscellaneous codes. In Slavic studies the importance of such a specific approach to the study of miscellanies is still underestimated. This leads to quite a few errors in the dating of manuscripts and even more in the reconstruction of the genesis of the texts and the related process of circulation. In the final analysis, an incorrect codicological approach hinders the reconstruction of the stages of stratification in the structure of manuscripts and the identification of the elements that determine the production of the texts and manuscript books in the various Slavonic medieval communities [Lomagistro 2013].

After the clarification of these methodological aspects, the description should identify and report the various production units and, by means of comparing the discontinuity to the joints (connection with the end of the text and the end of the quire), identify units of circulation (indicating specific data, such as later annotations). It should be noted that the production of computer catalogs advances hand in hand with the desire to spread available information quickly; however, it should not ignore that the production of reliable information, which is essential for serious scientific work, presupposes the scrutiny of the manuscripts and the application of a specific protocol carried out by competent scholars.

The purpose of this topic is to present a suitable protocol of the description of heterogeneous manuscripts. It is suggested to use computer technology to compose a record describing the whole manuscript. It would be linked with specific records concerning identified codicological units and data that illustrate the discontinuities and specificities of the various strata of the codex. The study of the constituent elements of the manuscript would be accompanied by a search of the terms used in the manuscripts themselves, in order to reconstruct (and to establish) a lexicon of manuscript books in the process. A thorough examination of the issues of terminology is the first step in the question of languages to be used in the cataloging and indexing of the fields appropriate for the research.

References

Andrist, Patrick, "La description des manuscrits médiévaux sur Internet: un regard critique", *La descrizione dei manoscritti: esperienze a confronto*, edd. E. Crisci, M. Maniaci, P. Orsini. Cassino : Università degli Studi di Cassino 2010, 19–45.

Andrist, Patrick, Canart Paul, Maniaci, Marilena, *La syntaxe du codex: essai de codicologie structurale*. Turnhout Brepols 2013 (= Bibliologia, 34):

Giel, Robert, "Cataloguing for the Web. ManuscriptumXML and Manuscripta Mediaevalia", *La descrizione dei manoscritti: esperienze a confronto*, edd. E. Crisci, M. Maniaci, P. Orsini. Cassino : Università degli Studi di Cassino 2010, 47–60.

Gumbert J. P., "Codicological Units: Towards a Terminology for the Stratigraphy of the Non-Homogeneous Codex", *Il codice miscellaneo: tipologie e funzioni*. Atti del Convegno internazionale, Cassino 14–17 maggio 2003, (edd.) E. Crisci e O. Pecere, Cassino 2004 (= Segno e testo, 2 (2004), 17–42.

Lomagistro, Barbara, "Il codice medievale slavo: metodi di indagine e questioni terminologiche", Contributi italiani al XV Congresso Internazionale degli Slavisti, edd. M. Garzaniti et al., Firenze : Firenze University Press 2013, 93–120.