2013-04-30

EEBO-TCP Old Words for Your New Tools

Welzenbach, Rebecca

http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/98977
EEBO-TCP: Old Words for your New Tools

Rebecca Welzenbach | tcp-info@umich.edu
Machines can’t read this text
TCP: Creating Searchable Text

Rebecca Welzenbach | tcp-info@umich.edu
Why? Three major Functions

• **Search**: depends on accuracy at the character, word and phrase level

• **“Distant reading”**: depends on some measure of accuracy, but mostly a huge sample size generated from a known corpus

• **Electronic text edition**, legible in absence of page images: depends on accuracy, completeness, and sensible structure
What can one do with it?

Create a digital edition

Holinhshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland was at once the crowning achievement of Tudor historiography and the most important single source for contemporary playwrights and poets, above all Shakespeare, Spenser, Daniel, and Drayton. Popularly known as Holinhshed’s Chronicles, the work was first printed in 1577. The second, revised and expanded, edition followed in 1587. In both its incarnations, the Chronicles was a collaborative venture. Among the authors and revisers were moderate Protestants (Raphael Holinhshed, John Hooker), militant Protestants (William Harrison, Abraham Fleming), crypto-Catholics (John Stow), and Catholics (Richard Stainhurst, Edmund Campion). The upshot was a remarkably multi-vocal view of British history not only because of the contrasting choices of style and source material but also because the contributors responded very differently to the politics and religion of their own age.

The importance of Holinhshed’s Chronicles for the understanding of Elizabethan literature, history, and politics cannot be overestimated. Yet despite the recent growth of interest in the chronicle tradition, the politics of historiography, and the use of the past by imaginative writers which has led, for instance, to a proliferation of studies of Peach’s Book of Martyrs and an impressive online edition, Holinhshed’s Chronicles has not properly benefited from this scholarly re-awakening. The vast scope of the book, and the lack of a complete scholarly edition, has meant that it has eluded systematic analysis. With one or two exceptions such work on Holinhshed as we’ve got centres on the sections dramatized by Shakespeare.

Our aim is to stimulate a comprehensive reappraisal of the Chronicles as a peak of Elizabethan scholarship.
What can one do with it?

Build a digital hub/collection around a certain theme
What can one do with it?

Digital humanities/text analysis projects

Launch of the Zeugmatic

My project for Summer 2013 is to design a text-analysis algorithm capable of recognizing Shakespeare’s rhetorical figures. For instance, this repetition of ‘farewell’ in Othello is called an anaphora:

That’s a pretty straightforward anaphora, and is just the kind of linguistic feature that a pattern-recognition algorithm could detect. I could show you more complicated examples, but first let’s imagine the higher-order interpretations that this algorithm would enable.

Start with that idea of recognition. The average schoolboy in Renaissance England was rigorously trained to recognize rhetorical figures, in order to imitate them in his own writing. This was formalized analysis according to classical precepts, adapted for the English language. John Milton’s copy of Hariotson’s translation of Aristotle’s Orlando Furioso is thick with marginal annotations on its rhetoric — recognizing not only its argumentative stages but also the fineness of speech in the Rhetorical ornaments, as

Rebecca Welzenbach | tcp-info@umich.edu
What else can you do with it?

- Have students produce editions or do other assignments
- Request texts to be keyed
- Request raw files for one or many texts

Rebecca Welzenbach | tcp-info@umich.edu
Thank you!

Rebecca Welzenbach | tcp-info@umich.edu