

Scientific Report

Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies

Workshop *The electronic revolution? The impact of the digital on cataloguing*

– Purpose of the visit

I participated in the workshop *The electronic revolution? The impact of the digital on cataloguing*, organised by COMST Teams 3 (Digital approaches to manuscript studies) and 4 (Cataloguing), held in Copenhagen on the 7-8 June 2012.

The workshop interested me in the context of two research projects. First, I have been participating in the Archimedes Palimpsest project, which concerns a 13th century Byzantine prayer book made of reused parchment from at least six older manuscripts. The palimpsest includes three groups of rare or even unique texts: works by Archimedes, two speeches by Hyperides, and an otherwise unknown philosophical commentary on Aristotle *Categories*. The manuscript is catalogued in a printed form (CUP, 2011), but images, transcriptions, and metadata are available online. That raises many questions about relations between the two forms of catalogues.

Second, I have a long-term project on Greek manuscripts of Constantine Tischendorf, a 19th century German biblical scholar and palaeographer. Most of his manuscripts come from monastic libraries in the Near East; many were probably produced in the region; several are bilingual (Greek-Arabic), and some are palimpsests (Greek on Greek, but also Greek-Arabic and Greek-Georgian). The workshop was particularly relevant for my work on the palimpsests with upper Oriental scripts, where contacts established with experts in Oriental manuscripts will be of great help; and for making an online catalogue of the Tischendorf Greek manuscripts parallel to a printed publication.

My main purpose for participating in the workshop was to learn about the best current practices of electronic cataloguing of different kinds of manuscripts.

– Description of the work carried out during the visit

During the workshop, I attended all sessions and participated in the discussions as well as in informal talks during breaks and joint meals. I had valuable discussions about electronic cataloguing, databases, online publications, best software to use and current standards on encoding and cataloguing, as well as discussions about pros and cons of different forms and models of catalogues.

– Description of the main results obtained

I learned about XML encoding language and possibilities it offers; about the newest TEI standards; made numerous connections with scholars in the field; and contributed to the discussions about relations between printed and digital catalogues, a topic I have been involved with since 2000.

During the workshop, I consolidated my contacts with COMST members (A.Bausi, Hamburg; C.Macé, Leuven; J.Gippert, Frankfurt; E.Nyström, Uppsala), and made valuable new contacts (with M.Driscoll, Copenhagen; E.Kropf, Michigan; Ch.Flüeler, Fribourg; and E.Pierazzo, London). Particularly useful was making contact

with E.Pierazzo, who is currently the chair of the TEI Manuscripts SIG, and with M.Driscoll, who has valuable experience in digital catalogues of manuscripts using TEI – conformant XML, which I envisage using in my current and future projects.

– Future collaboration with host institution

Very fruitful have been exchanges with my host J.Gippert, expert on Georgian manuscripts. Some of the Tischendorf palimpsests have Georgian upper scripts, and I will resort to J.Gippert's expertise for identification of scripts and texts.

– Projected publications/articles resulting or to result from your grant

I shall mention the ESF support received for the attendance of the workshop in publications on the Tischendorf Greek manuscripts. Also, I agreed to contribute an article of the project to the COMST newsletter.

– Other comments

The workshop was very well organised and was particularly interesting thanks to participation of scholars from different fields, backgrounds, and countries.

Bibliographic and personal databases created during COMST project, which are available on its website, are very useful. The planned final handbook on comparative manuscripts would be an extremely valuable tool for scholars outside the network and should be distributed widely or made available on-line.