Scientific Report: Istanbul Workshop on Electronic Textuality

On June 15 and 16, 2010, the invited participants from a wide range of fields such as literary and cultural studies, communication, sociology, media and graphics design, aesthetics and art history, new media technologies, presented their views on the new forms of textuality, fictionality, historicity, and rhetoricity that came into being with the emergence of electronic texts under these session headings: Social and Cultural Impact of Information and Telecommunication Technologies; Narratives, News, and Art in the Age of Computer Games and New Media; The Impact of the Medium: Reading, Writing, and Interpreting Electronically; The Future of Books, Literature, and Literacy; Digital Scholarly Editing and Publishing.

After the completion of the presentations and discussions, the participants worked in smaller groups to produce answers to the following questions:

1. What are the problems/challenges literary and cultural studies face in relation to electronic texts and digital technologies?
2. What are the new opportunities/possibilities electronic texts offer for literary and cultural studies?
3. What policy recommendations and proposals of research areas/programs can be made to meet the challenges and take advantage of the new possibilities?

The answers to these questions and the scientific outcome of the workshop in general can be summarized as follows:

Challenges: quantity and quality of text and information; changes in writing, record-keeping, reading; the necessity for social/interdisciplinary perspectives on reading/writing issues; language barriers (translation); the need for new questions about 'ficticity' and fictionality in relation to simulations and cyberspace; the need for a new set of strategies for dealing with technologies that are "born digital" (e.g., Twitter, IM, texting, electronically-created texts), e.g., how to search/preserve/migrate texts created on digital media; authorship and intellectual property; polarization of scholarship; deskilling of scholarship; unsolved problems at the level of language (e.g. imperialism vs. extinct languages) and of copyright as a result of the automatic internationalization of digital texts; preservation of digital objects; the status of e-textuality as an unrecognized scholarly outcome even when it is original work of outstanding international value

Opportunities: increase in actual texts in circulation and in the number of readers online; availability of audio and visual imagery; increased possibilities of publisher-ship and sharing; greatly enhanced means of preservation, dissemination, distribution; books/texts in every language—automatic translation

Policy and Research Proposals: understand layers of texts and reading, format, genre, emotion; enable reskilling; foster awareness of developments in media-technological research in order to shape ICTs according to end-users' needs; make recommendations for restructuring production processes in ICTs; enhance life long learning for academics; provide funding to allow younger researchers to cross disciplinary boundaries; make the issue of academic on-line publishing visible and address the problem of legitimacy with the aid of agencies such as ESF and COST; promote public debates among scholars and publish the outcome in alternative formats (video, sound…); create mixed models of publication (print and online); recognize collaboration as a proper academic output; develop 'high level' literacies – not use of computers, but use of language and media forms facilitated by computers.