TEI By Example

TEI by Example. Module 7

Edward Vanhoutte
Ron Van den Branden
Melissa Terras

Centre for Scholarly Editing and Document Studies (CTB) , Royal Academy of Dutch Language and Literature, Belgium, Gent, 9 July 2010

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When creating, generating or digitising a critical edition, it is of crucial importance to document the text witnesses whose transcriptions it contains. This can be done in a `<listWit>` (list of witnesses) element, which can be put either in the `<sourceDesc>` section of the TEI header (when creating or generating a critical edition), or a division `<div>` of the edition's text, usually in the `<front>` section (when digitising an existing critical edition). The `<listWit>` element should describe each text witness in its own `<witness>` element. This element can contain a prose description of the witness in one or more paragraphs `<p>`, or using a more specialised element for bibliographic description `<bibl>`, `<biblStruct>`, or `<biblFull>`). The witness definitions should provide a unique identification code in the `@xml:id` attribute. This code is used as a sigil in the critical edition, in order to connect the textual variants with the respective witnesses in which they occur (see 4. Encoding Textual Variants (p._______)). For example, the witness list for our critical edition of the TEI Guidelines could look as follows:
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Such bibliographic descriptions of course are easier for printed works than for manuscripts; for the latter type of witnesses, some kind of description inside `<listWit>` is advised, preferably with a pointer (using `<ptr/>` or `<ref>`) to a full description of the manuscript inside `<msDescription>`. Since this element is not discussed in these TBE tutorials, you are referred to TEI Guidelines, 10.2 The Manuscript Description Element for a discussion of this element, and TEI Guidelines, 12.1.4.3 The Witness List for examples of describing manuscript witnesses in a digital edition.

In a critical edition, it may make sense to discern groups of witnesses, that have many text variants in common in comparison to other witnesses, and can often be conveniently summarised in one sigil. In the witness list, witnesses can be grouped by wrapping their `<witness>` descriptions in nesting `<listWit>` structures. The common sigil then can be provided as the value for an `@xml:id` attribute of the group's `<listWit>` element. The nested witness groups can be labelled with a `<head>` element. For example, in our sample text witnesses it may make sense to discern those versions of the TEI Guidelines dealing with SGML, and those dealing with XML. This could look as follows:
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Summary

The different text witnesses included in a critical edition should be documented in a `<listWit>` element. Such a list may occur in the `<sourceDesc>` section of the TEI header (for electronic editions created or generated from scratch), or in a text division inside the actual text of the edition, usually in the `<front>` section (for electronic editions digitised from an existing edition). Each text witness should be described in a `<witness>` element, containing either a prose description inside paragraphs (`<p>`), or one of the specific TEI elements for bibliographic description (`<bibl>`, `<biblStruct>`, `<biblFull>`). An `@xml:id` attribute must be provided for each witness, which is used as the sigil for this witness in the edition. Witness groups can be distinguished in separate nested `<listWit>` elements.