

Proposal for the establishment of a TEI SIG Correspondence

Peter Stadler, Joachim Veit (Detmold/Paderborn)
March 29, 2008

1 Introduction

In connection with a musicological conference dealing with problems of editing letters (organized by the Academy of Sciences and Literature at Mainz) in 1994¹ a workgroup called „Musikerbriefe“ had been established in the same year. One of the first initiatives of this group was the development of recommendations for scholarly editions of Musician's Correspondences. As a result of scrutinized discussions by colleagues from the editions of Christoph Willibald Gluck, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Robert Schumann, Richard Wagner, and Carl Maria von Weber a small brochure with guidelines for printed publications of letters had been published in 1997².

Another conference at Mainz in 2006 devoted to „Digital Media and Editions of Music“ led to the foundation of yet another study-group concerned with the edition of correspondences, though this time under the auspices of the new „digital era“ and no longer restricted to letters of musicians. In September 2007 a first meeting of this interdisciplinary study-group took place under the patronage of the Academy of Sciences and Literature at Mainz. The new group was called: „TEI-workgroup Letters and Diaries“³. Based upon the paper from 1997 the editor of the correspondence of Carl Maria von Weber and members of the Edirom-project presented a detailed hand-out in which they had endeavoured to adopt the TEI P5-guidelines to the field of correspondence without crossing the limitations of the pre-defined elements and attributes⁴. This encouraged a thorough discussion about different types of texts and special concepts of the text-type „letter“ which need to be reflected in the TEI-guidelines. Further discussions followed at the 6th „philtag“-workshop in Wuerzburg⁵, the workshop „Digital Editions“ in Berlin in October 2007⁶, and the Paderborn conference „Digital Edition between Experiment and Standardization“ in December 2007⁷. One of the results of the Paderborn meeting was the urgent plea for the foundation of a Special Interest Group „Correspondence“ within the TEI⁸.

2 Primary Concerns

New editorial projects concerned with correspondences have some basic problems when trying to adopt the TEI P5-guidelines:

1. There are not enough instructive examples for encoding letters to be found in the internet (in many cases the structure or content of the letter is mirrored only very superficially in the examples given).
2. The TEI often allows different ways to reach one's target – this has many advantages but often embarrasses the beginner.
3. There is no opportunity for an exchange of experiences between the editorial projects concerned with letters.
4. Besides existing XML-editors (like Oxygen or XMLSpy) there are no „easy-to-use“ interfaces which allow tagging within a familiar working environment.

A newly founded SIG Correspondence has the chance to meet all these requirements and to promote the usage

-
- 1 Hanspeter Bannwitz, Gabriele Buschmeier, and Albrecht Riethmueller (editors), *Komponistenbriefe des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Bericht des Kolloquiums Mainz 1994, Mainz 1997.
 - 2 Bernhard R. Appel and Joachim Veit (editors): *Richtlinien-Empfehlungen zur Edition von Musikerbriefen*. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz 1997; <http://home.wtal.de/dmw/fffi/richtlinien.pdf>.
 - 3 Founder members of this workgroup: G. Buschmeier and A. Kuczera (Mainz, Academy of Sciences), A. Rapp and Th. Burch (University of Trier), R. Kamzelak (German Archive of Literature, Marbach), W. Wegstein (University of Wuerzburg), D. Roewenstrunk, P. Stadler (Edirom-Project Detmold/Paderborn), J. Veit (CMvWeber-Complete Edition, Detmold). Further members of the second meeting at Paderborn: B. Fuellner (H. Heine-Edition, Duesseldorf), K. Gaertner (University of Trier), N. Gertsch (Henle music publishers, Munich), F. Jannidis (Technical University of Darmstadt).
 - 4 Published at: <http://www.adwmainz.de/index.php?id:492>.
 - 5 Cf. www.edirom.de/fileadmin/Literatur/Roewenstrunk_Stadler-Philtag6.pdf
 - 6 Cf. <http://www.akademienunion.de/digital/druck.html>.
 - 7 Cf. <http://www.edirom.de/en/conference-2007.html>.
 - 8 Cf. the notes from the workgroup session in: <http://www.adwmainz.de/index.php?id:492>, „Protokoll der 2. Sitzung am 8. Dezember 2007“; the proceedings are projected for the end of this year.

of TEI P5 e. g. by a special Wiki for editorial problems in the context of correspondences; this could be done with systematically structured, step-by-step examples, background-information and a list of practical examples in ongoing projects as well as by the discussion of special cases emerging from our daily scholarly work.

One crucial point for the markup of correspondences occurs in the area of meta-data. In scholarly editions of letters we have typical fields like „writer“, „place of writing“, „addressee“, „residence of the addressee“, „position of the mentioned letter within the context of letters to the same or to other persons“ („=Kommunikationsort“), „answering letter“, „first publication of the letter“, „additional material“ (= „Beilagen“, e. g. another letter in copy, an article from a newspaper etc.), „type of correspondence“ (letter, telegram, billet, draft etc.), „provenience of the letter“, „facsimiles“, „summary of the content“ etc. For most of these data there is no fixed place within the <teiHeader> or no place at all (respectively no place for the usually combined presentation of most of these data).

The representation of the text of the letter leads to further questions: The *address-page* is often expatriated in the <front>-area – should it not be a part of the <body>-section? How do we handle with *envelopes*? The envelope is commonly described as a physical wrapper with postal information, whereas for encoding reasons physical appearance and logical information may be differentiated. (Here we risk to duplicate information which is already part of the meta-data!?) We have a necessity for *structural tagging*, e. g. in „units of writing“ (different writing days or times) or in „delivery units“ (if a letter is delivered in several fragments). And what about information on the *layout* of many details within letters, which seem to be more important here than with other sorts of text? Finally: nobody seems to have an idea of how to treat systematically with *enclosures*.

3 Baseline Encodings

Since our discussions on encoding correspondence (and those of the other above mentioned projects) at the moment deal mostly with 19th century composers, we strive for a maximization of coherent encodings in this area. Therefore, a major goal of the SIG should be the development of best-practice-models or defined baseline-encodings as proposed by the TextGrid-project or the Max Planck digital library CoLaboratory. This seems especially important in respect to the depth of markup since in letters by classical authors, musicians, performers or artists a lot of names and titles from various domains are mentioned. The normal mechanisms of P5 have to be thoroughly revised (too much has to be summed up under a single <name>-element at the moment) or extended in order to avoid dozens of individual solutions where three or four ways would lead to the same result (and thus make communication easier). Many problems result from missing ID's for persons, work-names, role-names, newspaper articles etc. (This is not a special problem for a SIG Correspondence but a very virulent one in this area!). Thus there are many aspects which may be discussed in this SIG as central points that may contribute to the general encoding-discussions within the SIG manuscripts where these aspects may be considered as of only marginal importance.

4 Summary

The proposed SIG Correspondence should first re-evaluate the modules 10, 11 and 13 of P5 (*Manuscript Description*, *Representation of Primary Sources* and *Critical Apparatus*) and then move on to presenting own tag sets for the encoding of various kinds of correspondence (but at the same time supply some basic container for all correspondences). It should focus on the description of the special physical appearances of the different types and the logical structure of letters and present baseline-encodings or best-practice-models (in the form of descriptive step-by-step construction kits) as a guideline for the users.

Practically, a first meeting of interested members of such a SIG Correspondence may be arranged in collaboration with the existing german „TEI workgroup Letters and Diaries“ at Mainz, perhaps later this year. The Edirom-team and the Weber-edition are prepared to take the first organizational steps in order to facilitate the establishment of such a new SIG. Some more technical details and the agenda may be discussed in advance via an email-list.