Decameron Web

Decameron Web, Michael Papio, Massimo Riva (ed.), 1995. https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/ (Last Accessed: 15.06.2021). Reviewed by ⒾⒹ Eleonora Peruch (Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna), eleonoraperuch@gmail.com.

Abstract

Decameron Web (DW) offers an online digital edition of Boccaccio's *Decameron* both in Italian and English language. It is a comprehensive information portal about the Decameron and the cultural, historical context of the time in which it was written. Thanks to its high usability and consolidated sustainability, DW has reached sufficient maturity and consistency to be a valuable resource for research. Nonetheless, the technological methods adopted for the encoding, exploration, and visualisation of the text should undergo major improvements in order to consider DW as a state-of-the-art scholarly digital edition (SDE). The author describes and evaluates DW from a philological and methodological point of view. After a general introduction, the author goes into more detail on the subject and content of the project, focusing on the aims and methods pursued during its realization. Particular attention is devoted to the quality of the presentation of the edition. The description of the edition's main features is supported by some personal suggestions for improvement.

Introduction

1   *Decameron Web* (DW)[1] is a project-focused online edition of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. It has been realized by the Virtual Humanities Lab of the Italian Studies Department at Brown University.[2] The project offers an Italian and an English version of

the Decameron, including over 300 documents and dozens of images for the study of the text. DW was originally conceived as a "participatory hypertext project used to teach the Decameron" (Brown University n.d.), started between 1994 and 1995, and it still considers itself as a learning resource. It attempts to provide a 360-degree educational experience of the Decameron to a wide and various audience, by adopting an interdisciplinary perspective. In the presentation of the project, it is stated:

> Through a creative use of technology, our project provides the reader with an easily accessible and flexible yet well-structured wealth of information on the literary, historical and cultural context of the *Decameron*, thus allowing a vivid yet rigorously philological understanding of the past in which the work was conceived.

> (Brown University 1995)

2   The general parameters followed in the realization of the project are easily accessible. This review will discuss whether these self-imposed principles have been respected and, using RIDE's *Criteria for Reviewing Scholarly Digital Editions* as a reference (Sahle 2014), I will determine whether DW can be considered a proper scholarly digital edition. It is important to notice that DW does not state anywhere that it is intended to function as a digital scholarly edition: hence, this review is testing it for a scenario for which DW might not have been originally intended. Nonetheless, educational resources need to fulfil many of the requirements of digital editions, especially if they are intended for use at university.

3   From the very beginning, the responsible co-editors of the project have been Massimo Riva, professor of Italian Studies at Brown University, Providence and Michael Papio, professor of Italian Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Information about the other directors, the project staff, the Editorial and Advisory Board are included in the section 'Project' of the website. DW received funds for the development by the National Endowment for the Humanities' two-year grants. An important event that marked the historical evolution of the project was 'The Boccaccio AfterLife Prize for Best Translation and Adaptation of a Decameron novella into any Media', an award won in 2013 that brought new updates to the project.[3]

4   Considering the fast evolution of technologies in the digital world, the fact that the website is still alive and growing in terms of content, thanks to the collaboration between

the creators and the users, could surprise at first. However, it should be remarked that the technologies adopted are extremely simple. The text of the Decameron contains PHP hyperlinks that allow jumping from the English to the Italian version and vice versa. An XML encoding of the text is not available, hence it is not possible to see which tags are used to enrich the text. Image-based resources are generally included in JPG format and do not adopt any particular standard for digital images, such as the IIIF technology.[4] These are just a few examples showing that, on the one hand, the project maintenance is currently not heavily endangered by complex technologies, but on the other hand, the technologies used are often no longer up-to-date.

Fig. 1: Home page of the website with the indication of the last updates.

5   Given the long history of the project, continuous updates have been necessary. On the home page of the website, users are told that "the updates are complete" (Brown University 1995). However, no date of the last modification is specified here, which would be useful, whereas specific updates are indicated at the bottom of each section of the website. The last update that can be retrieved, under the sections "Syllabus" and "Pedagogy", was done in 2018 (see Fig. 1).

6   As a learning resource, DW is not restricted to the academic field; it offers educational material for teachers, besides being a useful tool for students and a source of knowledge for any passionate reader of Boccaccio. Therefore, its target audience is made of "students, teachers, scholars and readers of the *Decameron*" (Brown University 1995). In terms of usability, DW is suitable for all of them.

7   The project offers a great variety of external resources reachable from the website, avoiding to overload the website with information that already exists. Links to external resources are disseminated throughout DW, according to their content and the reason why they have been included. There is a network of hyperlinks to resources managed by Brown University, such as the pages of *The Sheridan Center*, the *Virtual Humanities Lab* and the *Center for Digital Scholarship*. Interlinkage is also present among the different sections within the website: words identifying other sections are serving as hyperlinks to that section. Finally, an extensive bibliography is provided both for the website at large and for its individual sections. DW makes wide-ranging and efficient use of linked resources.

Subject and content

8   Although already rich in content and functions, DW presents itself as a growing reference resource for scholars of the Decameron. The selection of the material is based on the motivation of reaching a wide audience who can be interested in different aspects of the work. The variety of sources and documents is declared in the 'About' of the project:

> […] we believe that our project can provide its beneficiaries with a sort of specialized bookshelf or mini-library generated from and existing alongside a reading of Boccaccio's masterpiece. This mini-library or virtual encyclopedia includes the text in its established critical edition (Branca), sources, translations, annotations and commentaries, bibliographies, a growing selection of critical and interpretive essays, as well as visual and audio materials.

> (Brown University 1995)

9   The quotation suggests, first, the type of printed edition adopted for the project, which is a critical edition; second, the variety of resources 'surrounding' and enriching the digital edition of the Decameron. The selection of documents included in the website is reasonable for the aim pursued by the project.

10   The online digital edition of the Decameron provides the full transcription of the text. The print editions used for the creation of the online digital edition of Boccaccio's masterpiece are:

- the Decameron edited by V. Branca for Einaudi ([1992](#)) for the Italian version, which is "an established critical edition" ([Brown University 1995](#)), based on Boccaccio's autograph Hamilton 90;[5]
- *The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio*, translated by J. M. Rigg, London (1921) for the English translation. The website defines this edition as reliable and faithful, due to its "highly literal approach to translation" ([Brown University 1995](#)). In this case, the user cannot find a specification of the type of edition created by Rigg;
- partly English translations attributed to John Florio (Decameron, 1620).

11   In the 'About' of the project, DW declares its use of a critical edition of the text for its Italian version. However, the critical apparatus of Branca's print edition, documenting the known variations among different witnesses to the text, is completely missing on the website.[6] As declared in the introduction to the project, the texts of reference were selected to facilitate the approach to a medieval text to the project's main audience: high school teachers and students. Whether the paratext was excluded from the website for this reason or not, certainly the lack of inclusion of the critical apparatus of both the Italian and English version of the Decameron means that the text presented is ultimately incomplete. By comparing the Italian version of the Decameron in DW with Branca's referenced printed edition, some sparse errors can be detected in the former, supposedly mainly due to transcription errors.[7]

12   Moreover, it should be remarked that the text chosen for the Italian version is not the most recent existing critical edition of Boccaccio's Decameron. A new edition of the work, edited by Giancarlo Alfano, Maurizio Fiorilla and Amedeo Quondam, has been published by the Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli (BUR) in 2013.[8] Both Fiorilla's and Branca's editions are based on the Hamilton 90. However, according to Fiorilla ([Decameron, 2013](#)), as explained in the introductory notes to the text, the comparative analysis of the three most reliable witnesses of the Decameron, which are the Hamilton 90 (B), the Parigino Italiano 482 (P) and the Laurenziano Plut. XLII 1 (MN), led him to make some changes to Branca's edition. The changes concern several readings, some printing errors, punctuation, the adoption of the form 'sè' rather than the usual 'se' as the second singular person of present indicative of the verb 'to be'. Besides, Fiorilla decided to reproduce in part the graphic system of capital letters used by Boccaccio, which is represented in the Hamilton 90, to catch the reader's attention in specific moments of the narration.[9]

13   In terms of the structural organisation of the text, the Decameron's structure resembles a series of frames that merge into each other; the external narrator tells the reader about ten internal narrators who in turn tell stories that occasionally contain characters who tell stories. To navigate the text, DW gives the possibility to choose, first, among 'Proem', 'First Day' to 'Tenth Day', 'Author's Epilogue'. Then, while the 'Proem' and the 'Author's Epilogue' do not present further nested levels, each of the ten days presents the same nested structure: an 'Introduction', 'Novel I' to 'Novel X', and a 'Conclusion'.

Textual resources: a 'mini-library'

Fig. 2: Webpage of the section 'Boccaccio'.

14   Moving on to the variety of available resources, the project offers textual and non-textual resources. The textual material is accessible in two forms: the user can either read the textual content given on the website, including the text of the Decameron, sources, translations, annotations, commentaries, bibliographies, critical and interpretive essays, or use the hyperlinks to access external textual resources. Some of Boccaccio's minor works, *Corbaccio* and *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*, are also included in DW in their Italian version. The XML-encoded version of *Corbaccio* is based on the edition by

Giorgio Padoan (1994), while the XML-encoded version of *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta* is based on the edition by Carlo Delcorno (1994). Unfortunately, the XML encoding of these texts is not available to the user. This might be due to copyright restrictions. The option 'Boccaccio' offers chronologically organised information about the author's biography and works (see Fig. 2). The visualisation of this content could be optimized: *The Charles Harpur Critical Archive*,[10] for instance, could help to convey a more efficient and intuitive image of Boccaccio's life and works.

Other resources

Fig. 3: Webpage of the section 'Maps'.

PROEMIO.

DEL DECAMERONE DI .M. GIOVANNI
BOCCACCIO PROEMIO.

VMANA Cofa, è, lhauere compaffione agli af-
flitti, & come che ad ciafcuna pfona ftia bene, ad
coloro maximamente, è, richiefto, liquali gia hāno
di conforto bauuto meftieri, & bannolo trouato in
alcuno, fra iquali fe alcuno mai nbebbe, o gli fu cha
ro, o gia ne ricauette piacere, Io fono uno diquegli, perciò che dal-
la mia prima giouaneza infino ad quefto tépo, oltre a modo effen-
do ftato accefo da altiffimo, & nobile amore forfe piu affai, che alla
mia baffa cōditione non parrebbe, narrandolo io, fi richiedeffe, quā-
tunque appo coloro, che difcreti erano, & alla cui notitia peruenne,
lone fuffi lodato, & da molto piu reputato. Non dimeno mifu egli
di grandiffima fatica à fofferire, certo non per crudeltà della donna
amata, ma p fuperbio amore nella mente concepto da poco regolato
appetito, ilquale perciò à niuno regolato, o cōueneuole termine mi
lafciaua contento ftare, piu di noia che dibifogno non era, fpeffe uol
te fentire mi fu ceua, Nellaqual noia tanto refrigerio gia mi porfe

Page 1 recto (small)

Photo 1 of 6   Close X

Fig. 4: Black and white high-quality photographic reproduction of wood engravings from
three early editions of the Decameron taken from the collection Harvard College Library.

15   Several other kinds of resources included in the website help to reconstruct a
general overview of the social, political, cultural and spiritual life in the Middle Ages, thus
allowing a deeper understanding of the Decameron. Among these, there are images,
audio and linked video clips. The variety of the images is remarkable: images of texts
and scanned images of maps, maps enhanced with hyperlinks (see Fig. 3) and
paintings. Textual images include "early manuscript illuminations, woodcut prints from

early printed book editions, photogravures in a more recent edition, and paintings" (Brown University 1995).[11] The user can access 60 black and white high-quality photographic reproductions of wood engravings from three early editions of the Decameron taken from the collections of the Harvard College Library (see Fig. 4). Detailed and technical explications of the process of creation of this content and a link to the guidelines are available (Brown University 1995). Unfortunately, only a selection of images is available due to copyright and access issues; moreover, the user cannot find the images representing the Decameron in whole. Some of the maps are enriched with hyperlinks linking to new pages: these pages contain information about the significance of some of the locations mentioned in the Decameron, and also hyperlinks to the pertinent textual passages.

16   It would be an improvement, especially for a scholarly audience, to enrich DW with the images of the autograph Hamilton 90, which is preserved in Berlin's Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Berlin's Staatsbibliothek also has high-resolution graphical representations of the codex in its online portal.[12] To enrich the digital edition with the visualisation of the autograph, either a connection could be created from DW to already existing external sources such as the latter or a parallel view of the text with the corresponding picture of the codex could be added within DW. The simultaneous representation of text and image of the manuscript is already offered by other SDEs (e.g. *The Digital Vercelli Book*), and has become state of the art.

17   In addition to images, the project also offers audio clips of medieval music, as well as a link to a YouTube clip of Pasolini's cinematic adaptation of the Decameron. Although different media are offered to the user, they are mostly isolated and retrievable through links directing to different pages. They could be used more effectively through better integration. Using a variety of media to visualise the work offers new perspectives to interpret it, enriching the information that can be extracted at the level of the text by going beyond it. However, in this context, music and movies are mainly intended for teaching purposes. Their contribution to the understanding of the digital edition is limited to giving an illustrative presentation of the stories.

Aims, methods and data modeling

Aims

18   DW goes beyond the creation of an online edition focused on the Italian version and English translation of Boccaccio's masterpiece: the editors intend to give the user the possibility to reach a thorough grasp of the work by exploring other fields of study. Massimo Riva recognizes that the nature of the Decameron is itself multidisciplinary: "The *Decameron* defined the standard of Italian prose narrative for four centuries and deeply influenced Renaissance drama. It is also a goldmine for information about everyday life in the late Middle Ages." (Brown University 1995). Starting from this assumption, an interesting parallel is drawn between the past and the present. In the general introduction to the project, we read:

> A true encyclopedia of early modern life and a *summa* of late medieval culture, the *Decameron* is also a universal repertory of perennially human situations and dilemmas: it is the perfect subject for an experiment in a new form of scholarly and pedagogical communication aimed at renewing a living dialogue between a distant past and our present.
>
> (Brown University 1995)

19   The Decameron constitutes an open window to life in the Middle Ages as well as in the Modern Era. Having said that, a lot of improvements, on the technological side, could still be made to align DW with the most recent and updated scholarly digital editions. The creators of the project aimed at understanding how to exploit the tools provided by new technologies to facilitate this transition: "The guiding question of our project is how contemporary informational technology can facilitate, enhance and innovate the complex cognitive and learning activities involved in reading a late medieval literary text like Boccaccio's *Decameron*" (Brown University 1995).
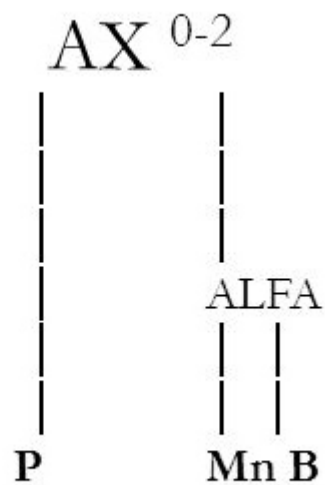
Methods

Fig. 5: Hypothesis of the Decameron stemma codicum by Fiorilla.
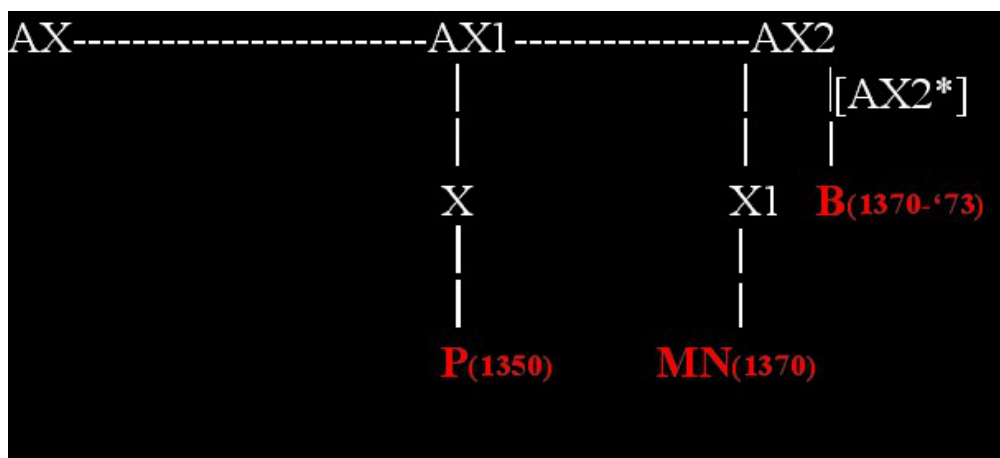

Fig. 6: Hypothesis of the Decameron stemma codicum by Branca.

20   DW does not provide amendments to the text of the Decameron, nor a different type of edition. Regarding textual criticism, while the project provides a detailed description of each manuscript cited as a resource on the website, an overall explication of Decameron's textual tradition is missing. The difficulties around the definition of Decameron's textual tradition cannot be neglected. Although we possess an autograph of the author (Hamilton 90, datable 1370), we know that the Decameron was written before and with considerable differences. Moreover, most of the witnesses of the work are lost. Establishing a *stemma codicum* is not an easy attempt; nevertheless, both Fiorilla ([Fig. 5](#)) and Branca ([Fig. 6](#)) drew their hypotheses. Some explicative information shedding light on this situation could be included under the option 'Texts' or 'Literature', making it directly accessible to the user who is approaching the text.

Data modeling
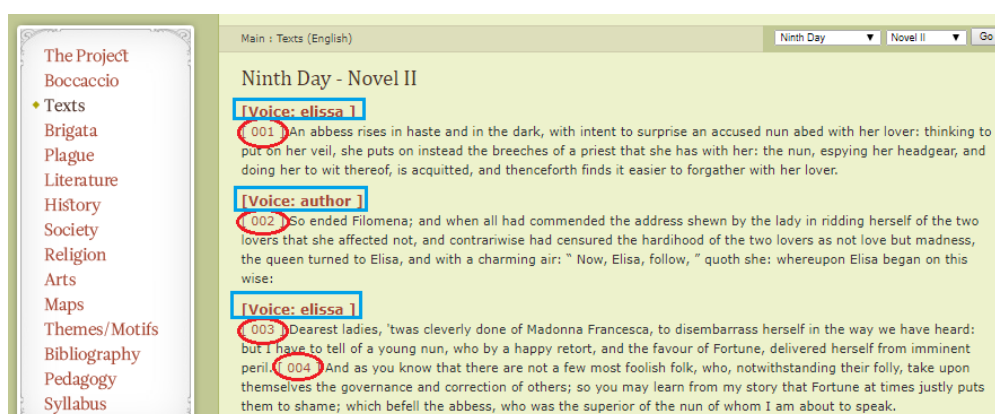
Fig. 7: Interactive labels in the text of the Decameron.

21   In collaboration with the Brown University Scholarly Technology Group (STG), the original HTML version of the Decameron was initially encoded using SGML, served by the Dynaweb software. The DTD schema created by STG was based on TEI-Lite, a specific customization of the TEI tagset. Both, the English and the Italian versions of the Decameron, as well as the text of *Corbaccio* and *Elegia a Madonna Fiammetta*, have been converted from SGML to XML. Information concerning the encoding is quite poor. Besides the specification of the schema that was used, the project does not provide any formal documentation of the data modeling adopted, nor the possibility to retrieve the XML encoding. By exploring the 'Texts' section, it can be deduced that the text of the Decameron was organized in structural units, such as whole text, frame, *novella*. Inside these, named characters and geographic locations were tagged and identified through attributes useful for scholarly research and teaching, compliant with the scope of the

project. However currently, it is not possible to access these elements interactively from within the text itself. Additionally, labels are used to identify the portions of the text and the voice of who is telling that part of the story. As for the portions of the text, clickable numbers easily allow switching to the page with the text in the other language. Labels can be hidden (see Fig. 7). This labelling strategy allows the user to jump from the Italian to the English version at any point in the text. Finally, metadata is used to classify secondary sources and interlinkage is provided between the text and the resource materials.

Publication and presentation

Interface, sustainability and usability

Fig. 8: Navigation menu.

22   The organisation of the content is clear, linear and straightforward. All the options for research on the website are displayed on the home page and menu on the left of each other page. The same standard structure is adopted for every page of the website. On the top right there is the Google search function, which works efficiently. This search function is case-insensitive. To navigate through the text of the Decameron, the user has to go to the 'Texts' section, choose the language version and then select the portion of the text from two drop-down menus, one for the *Giornata* and one for the *Novella*. The user can easily navigate on the website and inside the text, being

constantly aware of the content currently displayed and of its position in the overall architecture of the website (see [Fig. 8](#)).

23   The interface of the edition is extremely simple and intuitive. The first impression is that the website was created a long time ago. A great effort has been made at modernising it, as explicitly declared in the page of the Brown University's Center for Digital Scholarship: "In 2009 and 2010, the Decameron Web was redesigned and updated to have a more contemporary look, to conform to current HTML standards, and to work with updated HTML technologies such as javascript." (Brown University, n.d.). However, since 2009 a decade has passed, and the interface could be made more modern and attractive. Nevertheless, the website works and has already proven to be able to readapt to the technological changes of the digital world, suggesting good prospects for long-term use.

24   To guarantee DW's sustainability, a plan for the long-term preservation of the website is urgently necessary. Besides, the possibility to access at least the XML files of the Decameron should be granted. In terms of future development, there is only a reference to the project's contents, not to the technologies adopted, nor to the methods employed for the data storage, as stated in the section 'The Project': "This collection of materials will continue to grow in years to come, as students and scholars at Brown University and other institutions contribute syllabi, successful teaching strategies, new essays, interpretations, images, and so forth" ([Brown University 1995](#)). The lack of information concerning plans for the website's preservation and where and how data is stored makes it difficult to assess the DW's sustainability.

25   In terms of usability, the project could attempt to provide the user with both the Italian and English versions of all the contents. At the moment, it is not possible to choose on the home page which language version should be used for the entire website; the main language is English and, except for the text of the Decameron, only a few sections offer the option of switching to Italian. For instance, for the two texts *Corbaccio* and *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*, an additional menu giving the possibility to change the language could be included, as it is already available for the other textual resources. Indeed, the current button intended for this function does not work properly: once clicked, it redirects to the page containing the text of the Decameron. Since this very probably disorientates some users, I would suggest deactivating or removing the button as long as the English versions of *Corbaccio* and *Elegia* are not present. Assuming that the main

community for Decameron studies is Italophone, making available both the languages for each page would increase the usability of the website and open it up to a wider audience.

Search

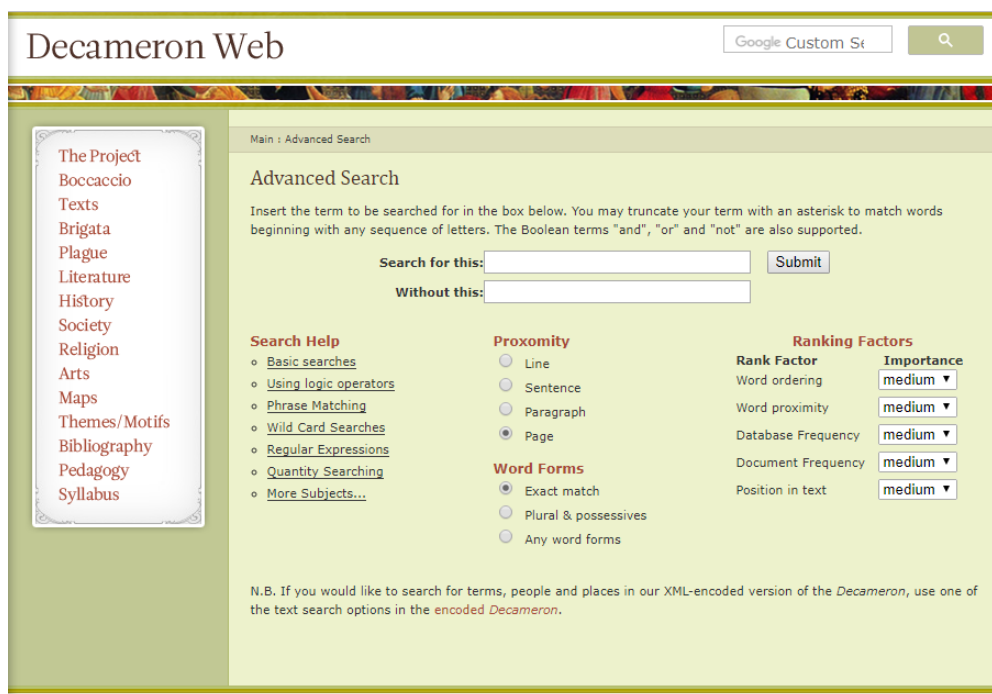Fig. 9: Lexical index realised by using the KWIC format.

Fig. 10: Webpage of the 'Advanced Search' section.

26   The following indexes are available on the website for exploring the text:

• *Lexical index*, realized by using the KWIC format, accessible from the 'Text Research Tools' in the 'Texts' section.[13] The tables with the concordances are available either in pdf format for online consultation or in zip format for download (see Fig. 9). An icon for downloading the Acrobat Reader and a hyperlink to a help page are also provided;

• *People and places* in the Decameron, accessible from the 'Text Research Tools' in the 'Texts' section.[14] The list of places, listed either alphabetically or by the story number, is accessible from the section 'Maps', as well;

• *People, Place and Word* for the Italian version, only *Word* for the English one, accessible through the search function directly from the text;

• *Motif index*, accessible from the 'Themes/Motifs' section;

• *Advanced Search* (see Fig. 10).[15]

27   I encountered a number of issues when trying to query the text through some of these options. The *Advanced Search* does not work, nor does the Search for *People, Place, Word* from the Italian text version and for *Word* from the English one. Moreover, being disseminated throughout the website, sometimes the same option is accessible through different pages, causing redundancy. To optimize the search interface, research options strictly linked to the text could be made accessible directly from the text itself. Despite the multitude of search options on the website, many of them are currently not

functional: it seems that the proprietary search functions have been abandoned and functionally substituted by the google search bar.

Social media integration

28   In terms of social media presence, DW does not seem to integrate with any other social media or virtual research platforms, except for a Twitter pod dating back to 2016 and the *Decameronweb Blog* ([Brown University 2018](#)) whose Archives' last updates date back to 2018. However, these two resources require Brown members' authentication. The online digital edition with all its functions is suitable for a mobile device. On the website, there is a strong invitation for users to give their active contribution to improve the project, by directly contacting the two co-editors, whose contact information is easily available. The wish to create a knowledge-sharing community of students and readers of the Decameron emerges in various passages: "Our group and classroom at Brown University will serve as the gateway to a virtual community of readers and students of the Decameron" ([Brown University 1995](#)), and again:

> […] we conceive of this corpus and its basic structure as a point of departure for a wide range of collaborative activities which will enhance the project's future growth according to the interests and contributions of the virtual community of students, teachers, scholars and readers of the Decameron.

([Brown University 1995](#)[16])

29   However, so far DW's social integration and opportunities to interact with the project are restricted, thus limiting the establishment of the desired community and external discussion about the Decameron.
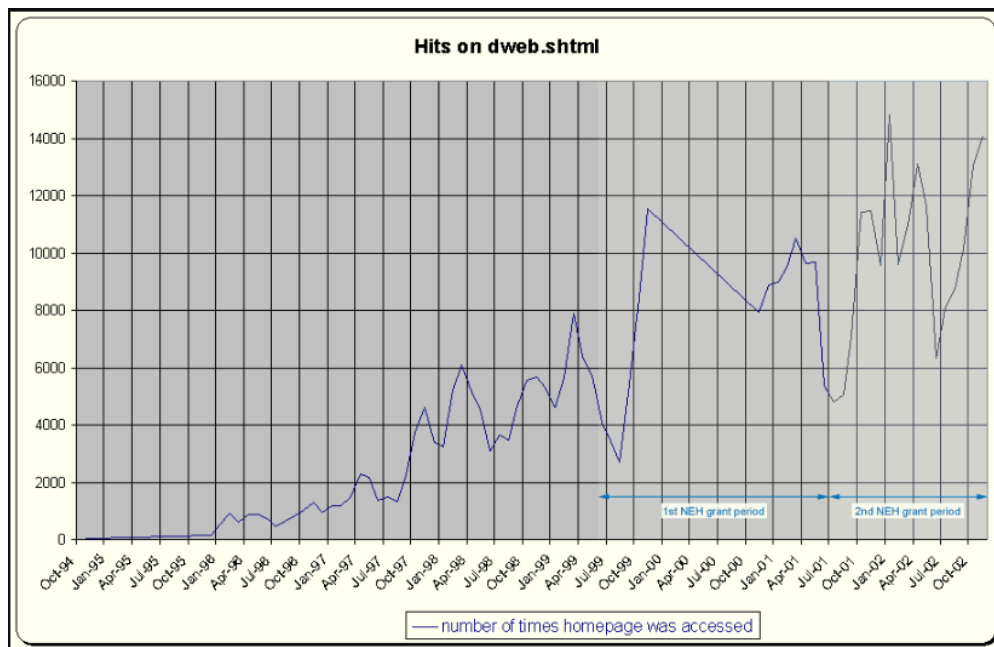
Reliability

Fig. 11: Graphical representation of Decameron Web hits by considering the number of times it was accessed.

30   Several aspects affect the reliability of DW. For instance, the website offers a graphical representation of its hits by considering the number of times it was accessed (see Fig. 11). However, the graph covers a period that is relatively short and distant from today, between 1994 and 2002. To provide reliable data, the graph should be constantly updated, or replaced by more elaborate parameters. Updates could also be implemented on some other incorrect information emerging during the website navigation. For instance, some pages' updates date back to 1969.[17] Knowing that the project was created during the mid-90s, it could be either assumed that the update was not yet defined, according to the UNIX Epoch time, or that this is a typo, probably for 1996. In both cases, it would be recommendable to adjust this information. One more suspicious element is a page reachable from the hyperlink 'View Italy in US 2013 announcement', placed at the bottom of the page dedicated to the Boccaccio AfterLife Award. The content of the page is not exactly what a user would expect from a scholarly edition.[18] Few modifications to these aspects could significantly increase the reliability of DW.

Conclusion

31   The description and evaluation of DW realized in this review have revealed some issues concerning its conformity with the principles of the "digital paradigm" (Sahle 2016,

26-27)[19] and therefore, its classification as a scholarly digital edition. According to Sahle, the digital paradigm consists of a series of principles, such as hypertextuality, multimediality, transmediality, modularity and fluidity.

32   The many resources used on the website and the representation of the text do not reflect an organisation of the edition into multiple layers of textual representation originating from the same abstract modeling of the text. Hence, the facilitation of the multiple texts on the theoretical, methodological and practical level and the "multipurpose representations" which characterize "the shift from media orientation to data orientation" (Sahle 2016, 32) that, according to Patrick Sahle, represents the real revolution of the digital paradigm, is not achieved.

33   In general, the potential of a digitally encoded text, distinguishing a digital edition from a mere digitised text, is not fully exploited. DW uses a printed edition as the reference text for the digital online edition but lacks the inclusion of paratextual information. The XML encoding used to model the text is not available to the user, the search functions do not work and the indexes are given as static pdf pages, organised alphabetically. The mark up of the text only encompasses names and numbers in order to switch between languages; the user cannot visualise the text in both languages in parallel, nor visualise the text accompanied by the image of the manuscript in parallel, which is a common feature among other SDEs.[20] Overall, the encoded text does not offer different views and presentations of the text. A printed edition of the DW would not result in a significant loss in contents and functionality, apart from its hypertextuality, which is indeed inherently digital. A synoptic edition with the Italian text on one side and the English one on the other, further enriched with the critical apparatus, would certainly be more informative.

34   Moving on to Sahle's principles and, specifically, to the principle of fluidity, the edition as a publication is rather static, fixed on a distinct moment of publication and based on a single (and not the most recent) edition of the text. DW conveys the idea of the Decameron as a finished product rather than as an ongoing process. Despite the inclusion of a variety of contextual material, some important editorial information, such as the critical apparatus and a reflection over the problems concerning the text's tradition, is missing. Therefore, improvements could be done to obtain a more modularised structure of DW as well. It cannot be said that the hyperlinks employed restructure the contents of the edition; they rather offer a way to reach useful resources enriching these contents. As

for multimediality, the website offers a multitude of different media to experience the text from a variety of perspectives; however, these media are not wholly integrated within the text, remaining mere links to other pages.

35   Given all the considerations above, DW does not seem to fully conform to digital scholarly standards, nor does it fulfil the digital paradigm as defined by Patrick Sahle. Therefore, it can hardly be considered as a state-of-the-art SDE at the moment. Having said that, the current evaluation could surely be re-discussed after the architecture of the edition has been improved.

36   Nonetheless, some positive aspects are worth mentioning. DW is very open to changes and encourages active use. It invites not only current collaborators but any user to contribute to the project by sharing their knowledge and suggestions. The multiple aims and the interdisciplinary nature of the edition, self-stated in the project's aims, are fully achieved. The project's creative and pedagogical use of technology aiming at delivering an "educational experience based on a literary text that is open to a variety of cultural interests and levels of learning" (Brown University 1995) is stated and fully fulfilled. Each new content is provided with a technical and detailed explanation of its features and an extensive bibliography, providing the user with a critical understanding of both the Decameron and the context in which it was written.

37   In terms of usability, every aspect of DW is carefully considered and explicitly explained, taking into account the type of audience, their level of knowledge of the Decameron and possible issues they can encounter on the website. In this way, the edition becomes easily accessible even for a non-specialized user. Nonetheless, the organisation of the contents is not very intuitive. It could be improved by making a clearer distinction between the edition itself, commentary and apparatus sections and related resources, and by reducing redundancy. Extra value could be added to DW by making the graphic visualisation of the Decameron's autograph Hamilton 90 through pictures directly available and by updating the referential print edition with the most recent existing one. These changes could also make DW better suited to an academic audience. Nevertheless, DW offers a huge quantity of contents and functionalities of high academic quality, thanks to the project staff's constant effort to provide updated and reliable content.

38   Some other technological improvements could be made to DW, such as allowing for the parallel visualisation of the text in the two languages, making the XML encoding

available and rendering some contents such as maps and indexing options interactive. Contents should be better integrated with the text and the interface should undergo a process of modernisation. These changes would bring DW closer to state-of-the-art scholarly digital editions. Having said that, it should be remembered that DW was not originally intended as a scholarly digital edition, but rather as a mini-library, a sort of encyclopaedia of information concerning Boccaccio's masterpiece. In this sense, it is undeniable that DW fully accomplished its original educational purpose. Ultimately, it is extraordinary that this edition started at the end of the last century is still available online.

Notes

1. URL of DW: https://web.archive.org/web/20210617211957/https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/.

2. On the bottom of DW's home page, the expressions 'Italian Studies Department', 'Virtual Humanities' and 'Brown University' are hyperlinks to the webpage of the Brown University's Italian Studies Department, the Virtual Humanities Lab (VHL) and the Brown University, respectively.

3. 'The Boccaccio AfterLife Prize for Best Translation and Adaptation of a Decameron novella into any Media' was a prize awarded by Decameron Web, Brown University in collaboration with the Italian Consulate General in Boston, Massachusetts and the Ente Nazionale Giovanni Boccaccio of Certaldo, Italy to celebrate the 700th anniversary of Giovanni Boccaccio's birth and the year of Italian Culture in the United States. See https://web.archive.org/web/20211013083033/https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/the_project/afterlife.php.

4. URL to the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF): https://iiif.io/ (Accessed January 16, 2021).

5. The manuscript shelf marked as 'Hamilton 90', which represents the final redaction of Boccaccio's Decameron, is now preserved in Berlin's Staatsbibliothek.

6. As a personal suggestion, the TEI standard, which could be adopted for the XML encoding of the text, includes a specific module for the encoding of a critical edition which is called the TEI Critical Apparatus. URL to the *TEI Critical Apparatus*: https://web.archive.org/web/20210902053823/https://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/TC.html (Accessed January 16, 2021).

7. Some of the errors found in DW compared to Branca's printed version of the Decameron: *dieci* (DW, Proemio, [001]) - *diece* (Branca, v. I, p. 3). The latter is defined by Branca as the most common form in the Decameron; *un tempo* (DW, Proemio, [003]) - *contento* (Branca, v. I, p. 6); *d'essaa'* (DW, Prima Giornata, Introduzione, [010]) - *d'essa a'* (Branca, v. I, p. 15); *piazza* (DW, Quarta Giornata, Novella Seconda, [001]) - *Piazza* (Branca, v. I, p. 487); *pallidi* (DW, Quarta Giornata, Novella Seconda, [005]) - *palidi* (Branca, v. I, p. 498); *osservata* (DW, Quarta Giornata, Novella Quarta [026]) - *observata* (Branca, v. I, p. 524); *ad* (DW, Conclusione dell'Autore, [002]), - *a* (Branca, v. II, p. 1254).

8. Hereinafter referred to as the Fiorilla edition.

9. Given that Fiorilla's 2013 edition of the Decameron represents the most recent critical edition available and given the significant modifications compared to Branca's 1992 edition and its reliability, I would suggest using Fiorilla's as the reference print edition for possible future updates of the Decameron Web.

10. URL to the timeline in *The Charles Harpur Critical Archive*: https://web.archive.org/web/20211013083340/http://charles-harpur.org/Biography/Timeline/ (Accessed October 21, 2020).

11. See some samples of scanned images of maps at: https://web.archive.org/web/202211013083501/https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/images/maps/decworld/paris.php and https://web.archive.org/web/20190318080209/http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/images/maps/decworld/polimaps.php (Accessed June 16, 2021). See some samples of images of the Decameron printed book editions embedded in a php page at: https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/arts/visualizing/fior1516_intro.php (Accessed June 16, 2021).

12. URL to Ms. Ham. 90 in Berlin's Staatsbibliothek *Digitised Collections*: http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0000A07E00000000 (Accessed April 2, 2021).

13. URL to the 'Lexical index': https://web.archive.org/web/20190201165753/https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/concordance.php (Accessed June 16, 2021).

14. URL to 'Browse People and Places' in the Decameron: https://web.archive.org/web/202211013083850/https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/dec_ppl_plces/ (Accessed June 16, 2021).

15. URL to the 'Advanced Search': https://web.archive.org/web/20211013083942/https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/search/ (Accessed June 16, 2021).

16. https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/the_project/about.php (Accessed June 16, 2021).

17. Maps and Geography: https://web.archive.org/web/20211030062336/https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/images/maps/maps.php (Accessed 30 October 2021).

18. URL to the Boccaccio AfterLife Award page: https://web.archive.org/web/202211013083033/https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/the_project/afterlife.php. The user is redirected to a Blog, 'Italyinus'. (Accessed October 21, 2020).

19. "It can be said that digital editions follow a *digital paradigm*, just as printed editions have been following a paradigm that was shaped by the technical limitations and cultural practices of typography and book printing" (Sahle 2016, 26-27).

20. See URL to *Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts*: http://www.janeausten.ac.uk/index.html (Accessed March 27, 2021), URL to *Codice Pelavicino Edizione Digitale*: https://web.archive.org/web/20211013084207/http://pelavicino.labcd.unipi.it/ (Accessed March 27, 2021); URL to *The Digital Vercelli Book*: https://web.archive.org/web/20211013084421/http://vbd.humnet.unipi.it/beta2/ (Accessed March 27, 2021).

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http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0095.02.

Factsheet

Resource reviewed	
Title	Decameron Web
Editors	Michael Papio, Massimo Riva
URI	https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/
Publication Date	1995
Date of last access	15.06.2021

Reviewer	
Name	iD Peruch, Eleonora
Affiliation	Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna
Place	Bologna, Italy
Email	eleonoraperuch (at) gmail.com

Documentation		
Bibliographic description	Is it easily possible to describe the project bibliographically along the schema "responsible editors, publishing/hosting institution, year(s) of publishing"? (cf. Catalogue 1.2)	yes
Contributors	Are the contributors (editors, institutions, associates) of the project fully documented? (cf. Catalogue 1.4)	yes
Contacts	Does the project list contact persons? (cf. Catalogue 1.5)	yes
Selection	Is the selection of materials of the project explicitly documented? (cf. Catalogue 2.1)	yes
Reasonability of the selection	Is the selection by and large reasonable? (cf. Catalogue 2.1)	yes
Archiving of data	Does the documentation include information about the long term sustainability of the basic data (archiving of the data)? (cf. Catalogue 4.16)	yes

Aims	Are the aims and purposes of the project explicitly documented? ([cf. Catalogue 3.1](#))	yes
Methods	Are the methods employed in the project explicitly documented? ([cf. Catalogue 3.1](#))	yes
Data model	Does the project document which data model (e.g. TEI) has been used and for what reason? ([cf. Catalogue 3.7](#))	yes
Help	Does the project offer help texts concerning the use of the project? ([cf. Catalogue 4.15](#))	yes
Citation	Does the project supply citation guidelines (i.e. how to cite the project or a part of it)? ([cf. Catalogue 4.8](#))	yes
Completion	Does the editon regard itself as a completed project (i.e. not promise further modifications and additions)? ([cf. Catalogue 4.16](#))	yes
Institutional curation	Does the project provide information about institutional support for the curation and sustainability of the project? ([cf. Catalogue 4.16](#))	yes
Contents		
Previous edition	Has the material been previously edited (in print or digitally)? ([cf. Catalogue 2.2](#))	yes
Materials used	Does the edition make use of these previous editions? ([cf. Catalogue 2.2](#))	yes
Introduction	Does the project offer an introduction to the subject-matter (the author(s), the work, its history, the theme, etc.) of the project? ([cf. Catalogue 4.15](#))	yes
Bibliography	Does the project offer a bibliography? ([cf. Catalogue 2.3](#))	yes
Commentary	Does the project offer a scholarly commentary (e.g. notes on unclear passages, interpretation, etc.)? ([cf. Catalogue 2.3](#))	yes
Contexts	Does the project include or link to external resources with contextual material? ([cf. Catalogue 2.3](#))	yes

Images	Does the project offer images of digitised sources? (cf. Catalogue 2.3)	yes
Image quality	Does the project offer images of an acceptable quality? (cf. Catalogue 4.6)	yes
Transcriptions	Is the text fully transcribed? (cf. Catalogue 2.3)	yes
Text quality	Does the project offer texts of an acceptable quality (typos, errors, etc.)? (cf. Catalogue 4.6)	yes
Indices	Does the project feature compilations indices, registers or visualisations that offer alternative ways to access the material? (cf. Catalogue 4.5)	yes
Types of documents	Which kinds of documents are at the basis of the project? (cf. Catalogue 1.3 and 2.1)	Single manuscript
Document era	What era(s) do the documents belong to? (cf. Catalogue 1.3 and 2.1)	Medieval
Subject	Which perspective(s) do the editors take towards the edited material? How can the edition be classified in general terms? (cf. Catalogue 1.3)	History, Philology / Literary Studies, Art History
Spin-Offs	Does the project offer any spin-offs? (cf. Catalogue 4.11)	None
Access modes		
Browse by	By which categories does the project offer to browse the contents? (cf. Catalogue 4.3)	Structure, Dates, Persons, Places
Simple search	Does the project offer a simple search? (cf. Catalogue 4.4)	yes
Advanced search	Does the project offer an advanced search? (cf. Catalogue 4.4)	yes
Wildcard search	Does the search support the use of wildcards? (cf. Catalogue 4.4)	yes
Index	Does the search offer an index of the searched field? (cf. Catalogue 4.4)	yes
Suggest functionalities	Does the search offer autocompletion or suggest functionalities? (cf. Catalogue 4.4)	yes

Help texts	Does the project offer help texts for the search? ([cf. Catalogue 4.4](#))	yes
Aims and methods		
Audience	Who is the intended audience of the project? ([cf. Catalogue 3.3](#))	Scholars, Interested public
Typology	Which type fits best for the reviewed project? ([cf. Catalogue 3.3](#) and [5.1](#))	Diplomatic edition
Critical editing	In how far is the text critically edited? ([cf. Catalogue 3.6](#))	Transmission examined
XML	Is the data encoded in XML? ([cf. Catalogue 3.7](#))	yes
Standardized data model	Is the project employing a standardized data model (e.g. TEI)? ([cf. Catalogue 3.7](#))	yes
Types of text	Which kinds or forms of text are presented? ([cf. Catalogue 3.5.](#))	Diplomatic transcription, Translations
Technical accessability		
Persistent identification	Are there persistent identifiers and an addressing system for the edition and/or parts/objects of it and which mechanism is used to that end? ([cf. Catalogue 4.8](#))	DOI
Interfaces	Are there technical interfaces like OAI-PMH, REST etc., which allow the reuse of the data of the project in other contexts? ([cf. Catalogue 4.9](#))	None
Open Access	Is the edition Open Access?	yes
Accessability of the basic data	Is the basic data (e.g. the XML) of the project accessible for each part of the edition (e.g. for a page)? ([cf. Catalogue 4.12](#))	yes
Download	Can the entire raw data of the project be downloaded (as a whole)? ([cf. Catalogue 4.9](#))	yes
Reuse	Can you use the data with other tools useful for this kind of content? ([cf. Catalogue 4.9](#))	yes
Declaration of rights	Are the rights to (re)use the content declared? ([cf. Catalogue 4.13](#))	yes
License	Under what license are the contents released? ([cf. Catalogue 4.13](#))	No license