Michael Poston and Rebecca Niles, eds., Folger Digital Texts. Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 2012–2013, http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org.

In December 2012, the Folger Shakespeare Library (http://www. folger.edu) announced the launch of the Folger Digital Texts, describing them as "reliable, expertly edited, and free digital Shakespeare texts for use by researchers". With this resource, the Folger Shakespeare Library has added an essential component to its offerings, which besides the physical library itself and its many research, teaching and outreach activities, includes a Digital Image Collection of more than 50,000 Shakespeare-related items as well as a complete series of single-volume editions of Shakespeare's plays and poems. The Folger Digital Texts are a welcome addition, as well, to existing Shakespeare texts available online: The Internet Shakespeare Editions offers plays in different editions, but does not provide full text downloads (http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/); The Shakespeare Quartos Archive offers many different editions and copies with facsimiles and transcriptions, but is currently limited to Hamlet (http://www.quartos.org/). The Oxford Text Archive's Plays of William Shakespeare provides downloads in various formats, including XML, EPUB and plain text; here, the first folio edition's text is reproduced without any normalization or modernization (http://www.ota.ox.ac.uk/desc/3014).

The Folger Digital Texts are based on the existing single-volume reading editions originally edited by Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine. These are modernized editions with textual and explanatory notes aiming at a general reading public, and are available in both print and electronic formats. They purport to give "what the editors consider the best early printed version" of each play (as stated on the "About the Editions" web page on the single-volume editions, at http://www.folger.edu). However, the new digital texts differ from their model in that they only offer the text itself and do not currently include the full textual notes (although these are announced for a later release). Therefore, readers or users need to refer back to existing critical editions of Shakespeare's plays for any questions of a text-critical nature. Also, the digital texts discussed here do not and will not include the extensive explanatory notes and the illustrations of the Folger Library's single-volume reading editions, in a publication strategy which follows a "freemium" business model.

The Folger Digital Texts are published under a CC-BY-NC license and currently include all of the plays, with the sonnets and other poems dueto be made available in the course of the year. The website provides a reading view of each play, with some useful search functions as well as a basic way of making some editorial interventions visible; it is also possible to download PDF versions of each play. However, the real strength of these digital texts lies in the fact that they are also available for download in an XML-based encoding which conforms to the latest version of the Text Encoding Initiative's Guidelines (http://www.tei-c.org). After a simple registration, the texts may be downloaded, individually or in bulk, by researchers or developers wishing to go beyond close readings of the text.

The download includes the TEI documents themselves as well as XSL and CSS files for display in a browser. While the documents are valid TEI P5 documents, the download does not include or link to the relevant schema file; however, generating such a schema file from any one document shows that the encoding scheme is in fact structurally quite simple and only uses a small portion of the TEI's vast offerings. The documents' header section ("teiHeader" element) contains, beyond the usual metadata, an adequately detailed editorial declaration as well as a tags declaration, with useful

explanations concerning the treatment of structural units such as division, stanzas, stage directions, and lines, as well as the function and possible values of a number of attributes.

The main part of each document (the "body" element) contains the plays' text itself, with simple but efficient encoding. For instance, two types of editorial interventions are currently made explicit in the encoding: first, editorial emendations to the text; these are signalled in the "back matter" section of each TEI document, where each emendation is characterized as to its type and refers back to the words concerned in the main text (using a "ptr" element). Second, the encoding indicates a small number of places in each play where the Folger Digital Text edition differs from the single-volume reading editions; these modifications are signalled using in-line apparatus elements ("app"). Structural or other units, such as scenes, acts, speeches, lines, and pages from the print editions, are all marked up. For example, stage directions are encoded with their type (e.g. entrance, exit, delivery, location) as well as the dramatic figures concerned. In this way, it would be possible, for example, to automatically track the presence on stage of any given figure at any given point in a play. In addition, each individual word, punctuation mark, or other character is encoded as such (using "w", "pc" and "c" elements, respectively) and given a unique identifier ("xml:id" attribute). This allows for referring to each segment of the text in a "stand-off" manner, i.e., in a place separate from the text, and without directly interfering with the text. This seems indeed important as a "groundwork for new features in the future" (as stated in the "About Us" section), although it also enables some current features of the edition.

Aspects of the encoding such as the ones just mentioned have sparked a lively debate on the Humanist Discussion List (animated by Willard McCarty; see the archive for 2012 at http://dhhumanist. org/). The debate centered around the question of whether elaborately encoded texts such as the Folger Digital Texts hinder or foster the preservation and use of our cultural heritage. A look at the documents discussed here shows several things: first, the complexity of the markup is only apparent and is mainly caused by the omnipresent "xml:id"'s. Second, the fact that the markup conforms to the TEI's Guidelines means it follows a standard which is understood by many people around the world (and which is extensively documented for those who are unfamiliar with it). And third, simple transformations using standard X-technologies allow researchers to extract exactly that portion of the text which they are interested in (say, the character speeches only), or to split the text into structurally meaningful segments (say, scenes or acts). All of this can be of great value for many methods of computational text analysis or other re-uses of the texts. Finally, the fact that every element of the text has its own „xml:id" means it becomes possible to refer to and annotate any particular segment of the text without intervening in the document itself, even after the document has been modified. To this reviewer, it seems these affordances are worth the angle brackets and clearly justify the time and effort invested by the Folger Library to produce these digital editions. The Folger Library deserves praise not only for making this considerable effort, but also and above all for making the results, including the XML files themselves, freely available to researchers and developers. Hopefully, further text-critical annotation will be included in later releases of the texts. This would make it possible to automatically reconstruct various historical versions of each play. More importantly, it would also mean that the TEI encoding is really brought to its true potential, which is not to be a derivative format built from a print edition, but to be a full-fledged pivot format for the production of various electronic and print versions of the text.