

INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE LEGAL PAPERS OF KARL KRAUS : A DIGITAL SCHOLARLY EDITION

© Vanessa Hanneschläger
Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities / Austrian Academy of Sciences
vanessa.hanneschlaeger@oeaw.ac.at

“Retro-editing” : The edition of an edition of the Karl Kraus legal papers

IN THE PROJECT “INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE LEGAL PAPERS OF KARL KRAUS. A SCHOLARLY DIGITAL EDITION”, THE LEGAL PAPERS OF THE AUSTRIAN SATIRIST KARL KRAUS (1874-1936) ARE BEING EDITED AND WILL BE PROVIDED DIGITALLY AND CONTEXTUALIZED WITH KRAUS’ OEUVRE AS A WHOLE. IN THIS POSTER, THE DIGITIZATION AND EDITING PROCESS OF THE PROJECT ARE DESCRIBED. AS THE PRECONDITIONS OF THIS DIGITAL EDITION ARE QUITE UNIQUE, THE POSTER FOCUSES ON THE PROJECT’S SPECIFIC INITIAL SITUATION, THE AVAILABLE MATERIAL, AND ITS PROCESSING AS WELL AS ON THE AIMS, GOALS, AND THE INTENDED OUTCOME (I.E. THE PLATFORM PROVIDING ACCESS TO THE DIGITAL EDITION) OF THE PROJECT.

Introduction: Historical context

While the Austrian Karl Kraus (1874-1936) is most commonly perceived as a satirist, writer, and editor of the magazine *Die Fackel*, his intensive preoccupation with justice was often observed and Walter Benjamin even declared: “No one will understand this man, unless one realises, that everything, without exception, language and purpose, for him happens in the sphere of law.”^[1] Although Kraus’ attitude towards the courts in the Habsburg period had been predominantly critical, the constitutional reform of the Austrian Republic in 1919 and the abolition of death penalty marked a decisive break for the author. He especially welcomed the reform of the Press Law of 1922, which marked the beginning of a growing fondness for litigation. In the same year, Oskar Samek became his lawyer. In the course of the following 15 years (until Kraus’ death), they were involved in over 200 court actions together. Despite of Kraus’ commitment to the law, the influence legal proceedings had on his satire and the other way round was barely thoroughly researched – which was on the one hand due to the fact that cultural and literary historians often shy away from the interpretation of legal documents. Only Reinhard Merkel, a professor of criminal law, attempted to understand the connection of “Strafrecht und Satire” in Kraus’ *Fackel* from a jurisprudential point of view.^[2] The second reason for the lack of research in this area is that the complex history of the Kraus papers, which were split up into several personal collections and taken to exile by Kraus’ (often Jewish) friends and associates when they were forced to leave Austria during the time of the Nazi regime, was responsible for the long-lasting unavailability of the material documenting Kraus’ involvement with the law. The project described in this paper aims to bridge this gap by (re-)editing the papers documenting Kraus’ and Samek’s actions and making them available in an open access / open data / open source digital edition.



Karl Kraus and Oskar Samek in court.



The Kraus legal papers at the Vienna City Library.

Initial position and starting point

The material documenting Kraus’ and Samek’s court actions is held by the Vienna City Library. As this corpus consists of roughly 8000 sheets of paper, transcribing and editing all these documents in the course of a three year project with three persons (i.e. full time equivalents) staff would be unfeasible. Luckily, transcription is only a minor part of the project members’ tasks: In 1995, Hermann Böhm published the records of cases from the Karl Kraus papers as a ‘mixed edition’ (“Mischedition”) in four volumes^[3] (of roughly 300 pages each). However, Böhm made a number of editorial decisions which are today out of date and not suited for a digital format, which is why a new edition of this material has become a desideratum among Kraus researchers as well as a wider research community interested in historical legal documents. While Böhm did a tremendous service to the research community by making the previously unpublished records available in book format for the first time, the aim of his edition was to create a laywo/man friendly version of the texts in order to serve as large a readership as possible. This had a number of consequences. For instance, Böhm chose to leave out addresses, dates, salutes, and signatures in his transcriptions of the letters included in the corpus. For numerous other document types (e.g. summons, formal announcements of court dates, requests), Böhm only included metadata but no transcriptions; he wrote short introductions for each court action which include information on hearing dates etc., but did not include the transcriptions of the summons that provided him with this information. In the case of accompanying material (such as denigrative newspaper articles Kraus took to court), Böhm followed an inconsistent approach and transcribed it in some cases, but not in others, obviously making the choices of what to include on the basis of a personal rating of the documents’ significance. In addition to these problems, the history of the collection lead to the loss of individual documents Böhm was still able to include: The documents, which are today part of the library’s manuscript department, were kept at the printed matter department for several decades (because they are predominantly papers that were typed with typewriters, where security precautions are more loose - which is most likely the reason for the disappearance of individual papers. On the other hand, the move of the material to the manuscript department and the rearrangement of the entire Kraus collection in the course of the *Karl Kraus Online* project^[4] (see below) lead to the discovery of further documents previously placed elsewhere in that collection which were unknown to Böhm at the time of editing. Since 2012, Katharina Prager (who is also the lead of the project described in this paper) has worked with the Kraus collection at the Vienna City Library in order to build the platform *Karl Kraus Online*. This (anti-)biographical project describes various “roles” Kraus impersonated during his lifetime by making facsimiles of topical sub-collections of his documents available and arrangeable by filter functions. One of the roles is “Kraus as a legal person”. There, facsimiles of the entire Kraus legal papers collection are presented. However, the searchability of the documents is limited as no full text is available. While *Karl Kraus Online* offers structuring that helps users navigate through the material presented, the vocabularies and other metadata structures used by the platform do not follow standards commonly applied in digital humanities projects. Therefore, one of the tasks of the project described here is to build on the structuring work done in the *Karl Kraus Online* project and transforming its filters and metadata into structured vocabularies and making them compatible with other standards such as the CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model (CIDOC CRM)^[5], and linking them to other sources already available in digital form (see 4: Digital resources to enrich the edition).

Workflow of the text creation process

The Böhm edition, which is out of print and today exhausted, was digitized and OCRed by the project team as a first step towards a digital edition that will serve today’s users’ needs. All four Böhm volumes were cut up and scanned at the Digitization Centre of the Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities. Subsequently, the scans were processed with OCR software to create a digital version of the text. The result of this process (carried out with *Tesseract*^[6]) serves as the basis for the transcription to be used in the new, digital edition. The transcriptions of the documents will be presented together with the facsimiles available via *Karl Kraus Online*, thus providing a junction between the platform and the Böhm edition and extending them both. The OCRed text is transformed into XML- and subsequently TEI-files, which are edited using the oXygen XML editor^[7]. In a first step, OCR mistakes are corrected and the text state of the Böhm edition is restored. While *Tesseract* provided reasonably accurate results, this first reading and correction is still necessary due to a number of systematic mistakes by the software (e.g. special characters: mistaking § for @) and other layout problems (e.g. the failure to recognize italic text and headings). Once the Böhm text has been restored, it will be preserved in order to offer users of the digital edition a “non-scholarly”, reader friendly entry point on the one hand, and to properly document the source of the project team’s subsequent work on the other. In a second step, the Böhm text will be compared to the facsimiles (respectively the original documents, to which the Vienna City Library, which is one of the institutional project partners, provides access). While Böhm had left out parts of the texts and even entire documents (as described above), the digital edition’s aim is to provide the corpus in a more complete form. Most importantly, our aim is to offer a more consistent structure than Böhm was able to provide for pragmatic reasons (space) in his print edition. While we may decide to follow Böhm in some respects (e.g. forgo including transcriptions of standard forms with no “literary” value such as summons and only provide the facsimiles and metadata to be extracted from such documents), we will complete the corpus of newspaper article transcriptions only partly provided by Böhm and add all missing text parts (letter headings etc.) of partly transcribed documents in the Böhm edition. At the same time, mistakes (typos) made by Böhm will be corrected and normalisations reversed. As a result, the digital edition will also provide a more accurate account of the historical state of the German language that these papers document, which will broaden its potential scholarly user community by considering linguists’ interests.



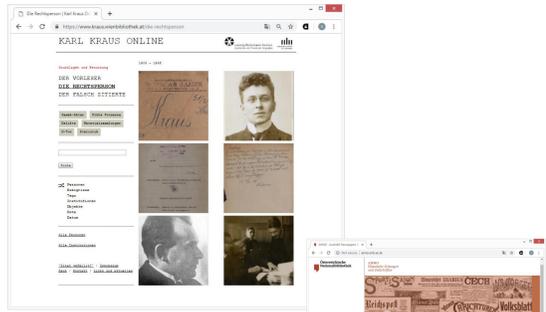
The Böhm edition.



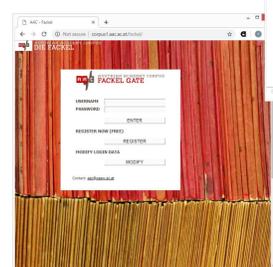
The Böhm edition (prepared for OCR).

Digital resources to enrich the edition

As mentioned above, the *Karl Kraus Online* platform is not (or only rudimentarily) interconnected with other digital resources. The platform provides metadata for the documents presented (date, place, type of document, persons involved, institutions involved), but apart from the person data (which are connected to the records of the German National Library’s authority file for the German speaking area *Gemeinsame Normdatei GND*^[8]) none of them are connected to structured digital data resources (e.g. places are named as places, but do not contain geo information). In the digital edition, we will therefore build on the work done in *Karl Kraus Online* and use the data already collected by enriching, expanding, and interconnecting it with other resources (e.g. GeoNames). As suggested by the project title, “Intertextuality in the Legal Papers of Karl Kraus”, the underlying research question that is driving the development of the digital edition described focuses on the interconnections of Kraus’ legal papers with other texts. As mentioned above, many of the court actions developed out of Kraus’ protest against denigrative reports and newspaper articles about both him personally (often referencing his Jewish heritage and the fact that he converted from Judaism to Catholic faith) and his work as a writer, satirist, and performer. In the majority of cases in which Kraus sued authors or publishers of such texts, the legal documents include the newspapers containing them or at least the individual article cut out from the paper. However, in some cases the articles were lost or stolen from the physical collection. Thanks to the applications mentioning defendants etc., the articles in question can still be identified. Luckily, the Austrian National Library has successfully implemented a large scale historical newspaper digitization project (*AustriaN Newspapers Online - ANNO*^[9]), which offers a IIIIF interface. We will use this resource to enrich and complete the digital edition at hand, fetching and including the articles missing in the physical Vienna City Library collection from ANNO. By thus including all articles that ever were subject to Kraus’ legal attention as well as the applications arguing their illegality, we will be able to learn more about Kraus’ and Samek’s ways of legal arguing, but also about the types of texts that sparked Kraus’ attention and protest. The most interesting resource for learning about Kraus’ way of thinking and mode of (literary) argumentation is his aforementioned magazine *Die Fackel*, which was a periodical published, edited, and (at the time of the court actions) exclusively authored by Kraus. The author did not only act legally against his offenders, but also made their offenses the topic of his own articles and writings. Investigating similarities, differences and interconnections between his *Fackel* articles and the applications, the correspondences with (potential and actual) defendants, and of course the rulings by the courts will therefore give the most meaningful insights into questions of intertextuality. Again, the project team can rely on a valuable resource already available in digital form: *Die Fackel* was fully digitized, edited and made available online by the Austrian Academy of Sciences’ institute *Austrian Academy Corpus AAC* in 2007. However, to date the AAC’s *Online Fackel*^[10] required users to register and log in, which disabled direct links to individual issues, respectively pages of the *Fackel*. Recently, the AAC was transformed into the department *Academie Corporae AC*, which hosts the *Online Fackel* today. AC is currently reworking and updating the *Online Fackel*. When this process is finished (presumably before the end of 2018), this resource will be available openly and direct links to individual issues will be enabled. For our project, these developments are a veritable stroke of luck that we were not able to anticipate at the time of the funding application, which is why the project plan had to be updated and restructured considerably when we learned these happy news). Thanks to the modernization of the *Online Fackel*, we will not only be able to investigate intertextualities between the legal papers and the *Fackel*, but also to make them available to users of our edition in a structured form.



Karl Kraus Online.



Die Fackel Gate (Austrian Academy Corpus AAC).



AustriaN Newspapers Online ANNO.

Conclusion and outlook

As the project is still in its beginning stages (it began in September 2018 and will run until August 2021), the structure of the interface that will present the edition (to be created is not yet fully developed. However, a number of basic decisions have already been made. Most importantly, we have agreed on two initial entry points for users: One possibility will be to enter directly into “expert view”, another to browse and read the Böhm version of the text. Users that choose the Böhm entry point will encounter a more laywo/man friendly interface, but still have the possibility to switch to expert view if they wish to learn more about the documents. The expert view will enable a more in-depth analysis of the material, providing facsimiles, transcriptions, and commentary (including extensive metadata) in a joint presentation. Most importantly, the metadata to be attached to the documents will allow us to offer complex filter functions and search functionalities, which will offer a valuable addition to the full text search enabled by the transcriptions. At the end of the project, we hope that we will have created a digital edition that does not only exploit the current means digital technology is able to offer, but also joins together the accomplishments of Böhm’s edition, *Karl Kraus Online*, ANNO, and the *Fackel Online* and benefits the Kraus community as well as other fields of research by not only connecting these resources, but extending them.

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