

# Book Reviews

*Edited by Heather Allen*

CLIVAS, Claire, Andrew Gregory, and David Hamidović, eds. 2014. *Digital Humanities in Biblical, Early Jewish and Early Christian Studies*. Boston: Brill. 978-9-004-26432-8. Pp. 276. \$142.

Though digital materials for the study of early Christian and Jewish texts have existed for many years, typically the best texts are packaged in expensive software suites while the analytical tools are rather primitive. So I was excited to see the volume *Digital Humanities in Biblical, Early Jewish and Early Christian Studies*, to discover how far scholars in these fields have come in remedying this situation. This review will discuss the papers in three distinct groups: those dealing with 1) new corpora, 2) new methods, and 3) the state of the disciplines. It will then close with an overall description of the digital state of the disciplines to which the volume is dedicated. Since the papers focusing on specific corpora are of primary interest to that section of the community that uses these corpora, I will only mention them briefly here. Pnina Shor discusses an effort to digitally preserve the Dead Sea Scrolls in their current condition, Elie Dannaoui describes the creation of an online digital corpus of the Arabic translations of the Gospels, and Charlotte Touati describes a project to digitize a corpus of manuscripts and reports concerning the Falasha people. Those who are interested in these corpora can find more precise information in the papers themselves.

Of more general interest to early Christian and Jewish studies are those papers that focus on methodological advances. The method advanced in David Hamidović's paper is for using Corel Draw to document writing patterns of individual scribes and then using this information to track a scribe's activity and theological tendencies. The only weakness in this paper is its use of an expensive software suite instead of finding an open-source alternative that could achieve similar results.

H.A.G. Houghton describes the use of automatic manuscript collation tools and TEI XML in the preparation of the *Editio Critica Maior* of the New Testament. The detailed description of the XML markup used, along

with descriptions of the limitations of XML, the possibilities to overcome these, and detailed descriptions of important decisions made while designing the project make the information here useful to any digital edition considering the use of TEI XML.

Ory Amitay describes a project to study the spectrum of monotheism in the ancient world. Methodologically this paper focuses on the use of MediaWiki, the system behind Wikipedia, to improve scholarly collaboration, and the use of tools such as the Google N-gram Viewer to do exploratory data analysis that leads to further questions concerning the topic at hand. Such collaboration and experimentation are two important aspects in digital research.

Laurence Mellerin's paper discusses how the information contained in the BiblIndex portal could be used to answer long-standing questions about the Bible and its text and the church fathers and their texts. This is a very useful article since it presents both the resource and real use cases, showing concretely how it can benefit scholarly research.

"Aspects of Polysemy in Biblical Greek" by Romina Vergari presents the heuristic utility of the Septuagint Word Clustering Database (SWCD) focusing on how its distillation of lexical data allows the scholar room for interpretation. This is closely related to the exploratory data analysis described by Mr. Amitay above.

Andrew Gregory's article starts by considering several basic advantages of the digital book, including that it remains open for content. The bulk of the article then considers how one large press, the Oxford University Press, fails to make full use of these advantages in their digital offerings. This review sets out an agenda for the digital offerings for publishers and others interested in digital publication.

Sara Schulthess's article describes the effect of the internet on research into the Arabic New Testament manuscripts. The essential observation is that widespread availability of the manuscripts and texts and the global interaction made possible by the internet have led to scholarly advances in textual criticism and interpretation. The article serves as a strong argument for the openness of data and discourse, which often lead to serendipitous discovery.

The last three articles reviewed that consider the digital state of early Jewish and Christian studies are of the most general interest since they also discuss strategies to move the disciplines forward. Juan Garcés' paper sets out a vision for open research based on the example of the digital resources of CATSS (Computer Assisted Tools for Septuagint Studies). The article ends with a call to continue the same types of methodological advances

described in other papers in this collection: making resources openly available, developing advanced analytical methods, and promoting a culture of scholarly collaboration.

Claire Clivaz' article focuses on the collaborative possibilities the internet provides to change the culture of textual criticism. It also sets out three conditions for the continued success of online collaboration: 1) scholars need to see a benefit for themselves, especially for tenure and promotion, 2) communities need shared methods that can be used to resolve disputes, and 3) all "data and scientific knowledge" must be open.

And, finally, Russell Hobson's critical comparison of the closely related fields of Old Testament scholarship and Assyriology shows how the openness of resources and tools of the latter can act as a call for reform and a model for the former. The article focuses especially on how open-source tools are more "responsive to real usability" and how the open-access publication of data on the web, especially through APIs, allows data to be reused in multiple formats, freeing it from the constraints described in the introduction to this review.

In the end, this volume presents the state of three disciplines that stand more at the beginning than in the middle of the digital turn. As Mr. Hobson's closing article makes clear, even the basic resources for good computational research, the texts and the tools, are lacking in biblical, early Jewish, and early Christian studies. If we take the state of the disciplines described in this collection to represent reality, then it should be clear that those articles that lay out the requirements and the plans to improve the impoverished digital state described (Garcés, Clivaz, and Hobson) are of greatest importance while the other papers serve to give concrete examples of how these improvements can be accomplished. It is these calls and these plans that, if realized, could help to digitally enhance the three fields to which this collection is dedicated.

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STOKES, John and Mark W. Turner, eds. 2013. *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, vols. VI and VII, Journalism Parts I and II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 978-0-19811964-7, 978-0-19811963-0, Pp. lxiii+430, xi+622. \$237.50 ea.

As the titles suggest, these latest volumes from the Oxford English Texts series of *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* cover Wilde's journalism.