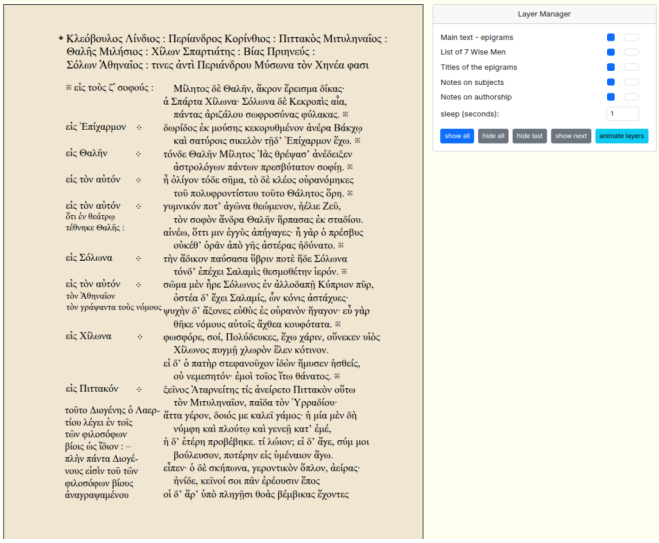
CASE STUDY DIPLOMATIC DIGITAL EDITION BUILDER



THE CLIENT

The PRIN project dedicated to ancient exegesis brings together a group of philologists, papyrologists, and scholars of the classical tradition committed to studying the relationship between text and paratext in Greek manuscripts. Within this framework, one of the primary objectives is the creation of a repertoire of hypertextual transcriptions capable of conveying the material complexity of the manuscript pages. To achieve this goal, the group has chosen to collaborate with eLabor, entrusting digital development with a central role in the construction of an innovative and scientifically rigorous tool.

NEEDS

The research team needed a tool that could not only reproduce the text, but also represent the manuscript page in its dynamic dimension. This meant, on the one hand, making visible the temporal stratification of the copying process and, on the other, clearly demonstrating the logical relationships between the poetic text and the exegetical annotations.
In particular, the main needs were:

- represent the diachrony of the copy, distinguishing between preserved text, additions, marginal notes and reference marks;
- visualize logical relationships between text and paratext through interactive links.

Added to these scientific needs was an equally important practical requirement: the tool had to be usable by humanities scholars without advanced computer skills. An intuitive interface was therefore essential, allowing for:

- easily import text from files;
- precisely position boxes and annotations on the page;
- Easily control fonts, spacing, and alignment.

Finally, the platform had to integrate with the project website and remain open to future developments, such as interaction with the lexicographic database.

THE PROJECT

The collaboration with eLabor led to the creation of the Diplomatic Digital Edition Builder, a web app developed in several phases. The first phase was dedicated to analyzing the needs and creating a technical prototype, which was used to define the tool's architecture and verify the feasibility of the required functions. The second phase was dedicated to transforming this prototype into a working environment that could actually be used by the project's editors. In this phase, the platform's key elements were introduced: the layer system, which allows the page to be broken down into overlapping layers like transparent sheets; the actions system, which allows the logical relationships between text and notes to be programmed; and box management, which allows the precise positioning of blocks of text within the diplomatic page. The third phase further refined the tool and integrated the platform with the lexicon of ancient exegesis. A subsequent phase of evolutionary maintenance is also planned, which will ensure continuity and updates beyond the formal duration of the PRIN project.

RESULTS

The Diplomatic Digital Edition Builder has introduced a new way of reading and interpreting the manuscript to the project, transforming the transcription into an interactive space that immediately reveals the processes, relationships, and structures of the page. The tool makes scholars' work more fluid and natural, offering an intuitive interface that allows them to create and explore complex transcriptions without resorting to fragmented or inflexible solutions. The infrastructure paves the way for future developments, effectively integrating the humanistic approach and the potential of digital technology.

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