Digital Editions of *Valentine and Orson*

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Introduction

My project began as a digital archive of children's literature from the 1850s. As I learned more about historical children's literature and delved into archives, I discovered one of many versions of Valentine and Orson. This is the story of twin brothers who are separated at birth and become valiant knights. It has gone through many changes over the four centuries it was in popular circulation. This project aimed to discover as many different editions of this text as possible, take a selection of these texts, and create marked-up digital editions for publication online.

Process of Creating a Digital Edition

A digital edition is an online version of an artifact that is edited for a digital medium.

Source Texts

The process starts with a source text that is typically print or manuscript material. For my project I used not a single text, but a story with many different versions. Before I began looking for artifacts, I explored a wide range of scholarship on historical children's literature. I found versions of Valentine and Orson in rare book libraries, digitized university archives, and museums in other countries. Part of this process included collecting or creating images of every single page of the version.

Text Selection

This step is only relevant if one is working with multiple versions or editions of a particular text. Through researching Valentine and Orson, I found 35 versions, had complete sets of images for 17 of them, and finally prepared 5 of those texts as a representative sample. My criteria for selection were how well each text represented three categories of text styles I saw (picture book/ children's book, chapbook, and novel/ long form) and if I had access to and permission to reproduce the images.
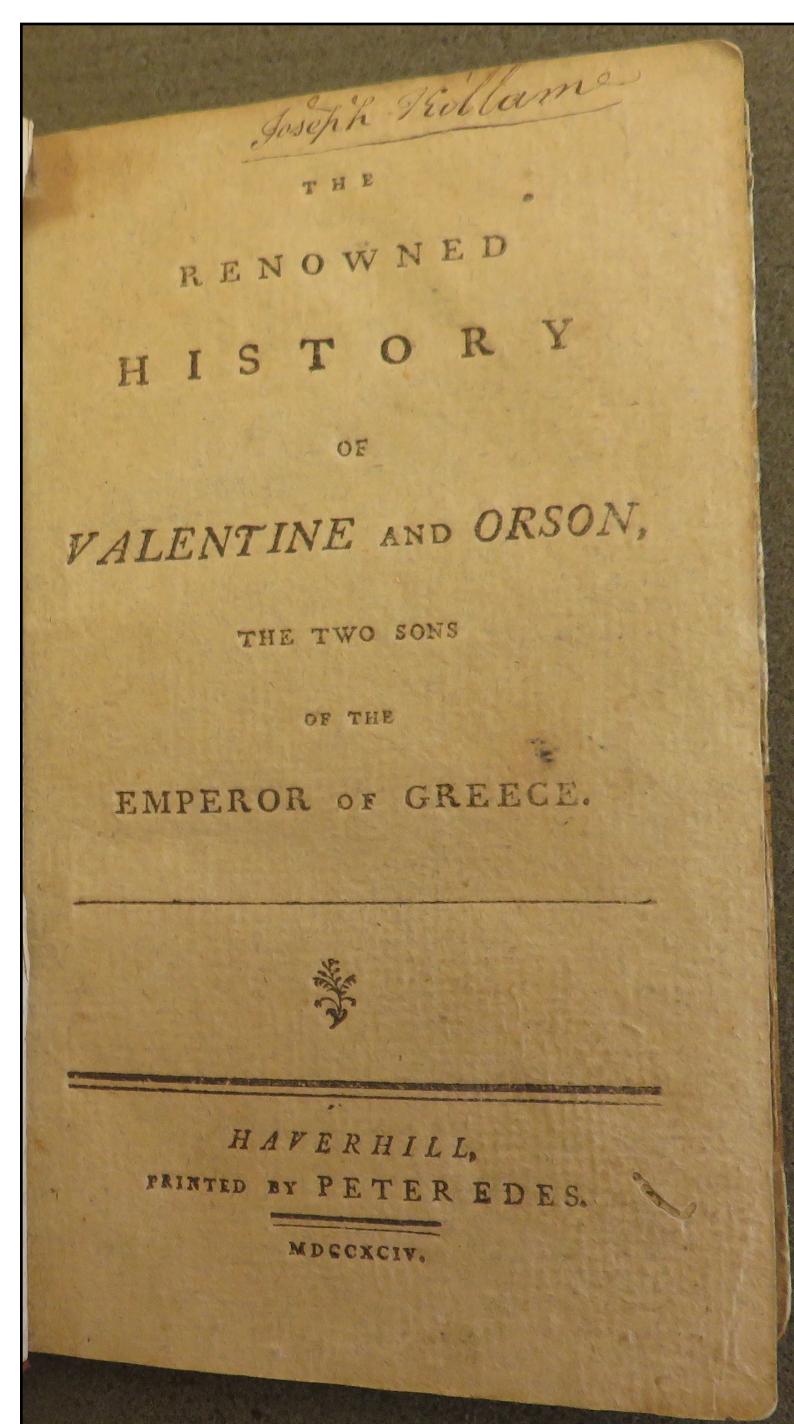
Right: Title page of The Renowned History of Valentine and Orson published by Peter Edes (1714) Yale Left: Illustration from Marquis of Carabas' Picture Book published by Walter Crane, Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University.

Transcription

For a digital edition, transcription is the process of replicating the words on a page into editing software. While there are mechanical ways to do this, I opted to type out the documents by hand so I could simultaneously surround text with descriptive tags.

Encoding

Encoding is the process of surrounding text with eXtensible Markup Language (XML) tags, such as paragraph (<p>), to inform the transformation tool of the text's purpose and have it transformed accordingly. This process typically happens simultaneously with encoding.

Encoding Guidelines

Throughout the process of encoding, editors make decision about how to use the various tags to represent the text. Projects involving texts typically follow the Text Encoding Initiative's P5 Guidelines. Editors also create project specific guidelines that outline more specific decisions they make based on their research needs or the capabilities of their platform.

Below: Image of the transcription process with the artifact image on the left and the XML editor on the right.
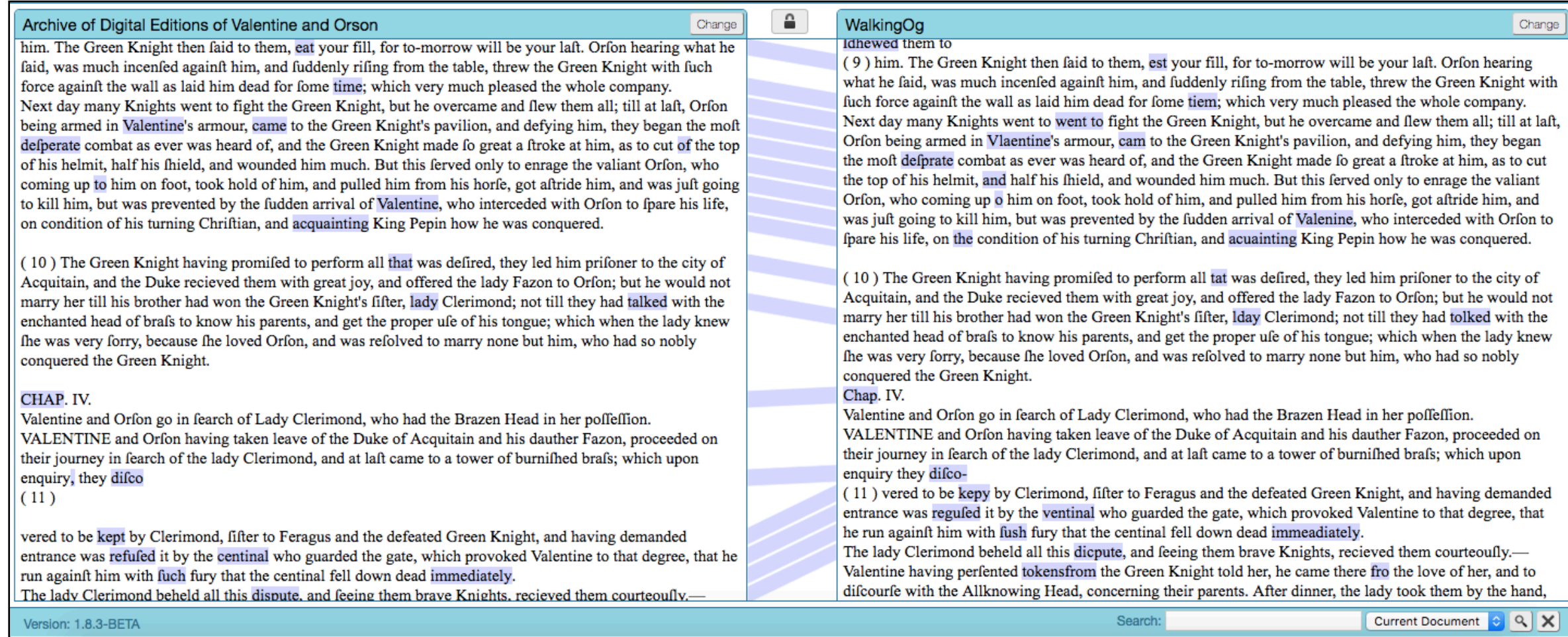

Left: Image from *Valentine and Orson* published by Mc Loughlin Bros, Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.Center: Image from *The Adventures of Valentine and Orson* published by R.P. & C. Williams, Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University. Right: Image from *History Valentine and Orson* published by T Goode, Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University.
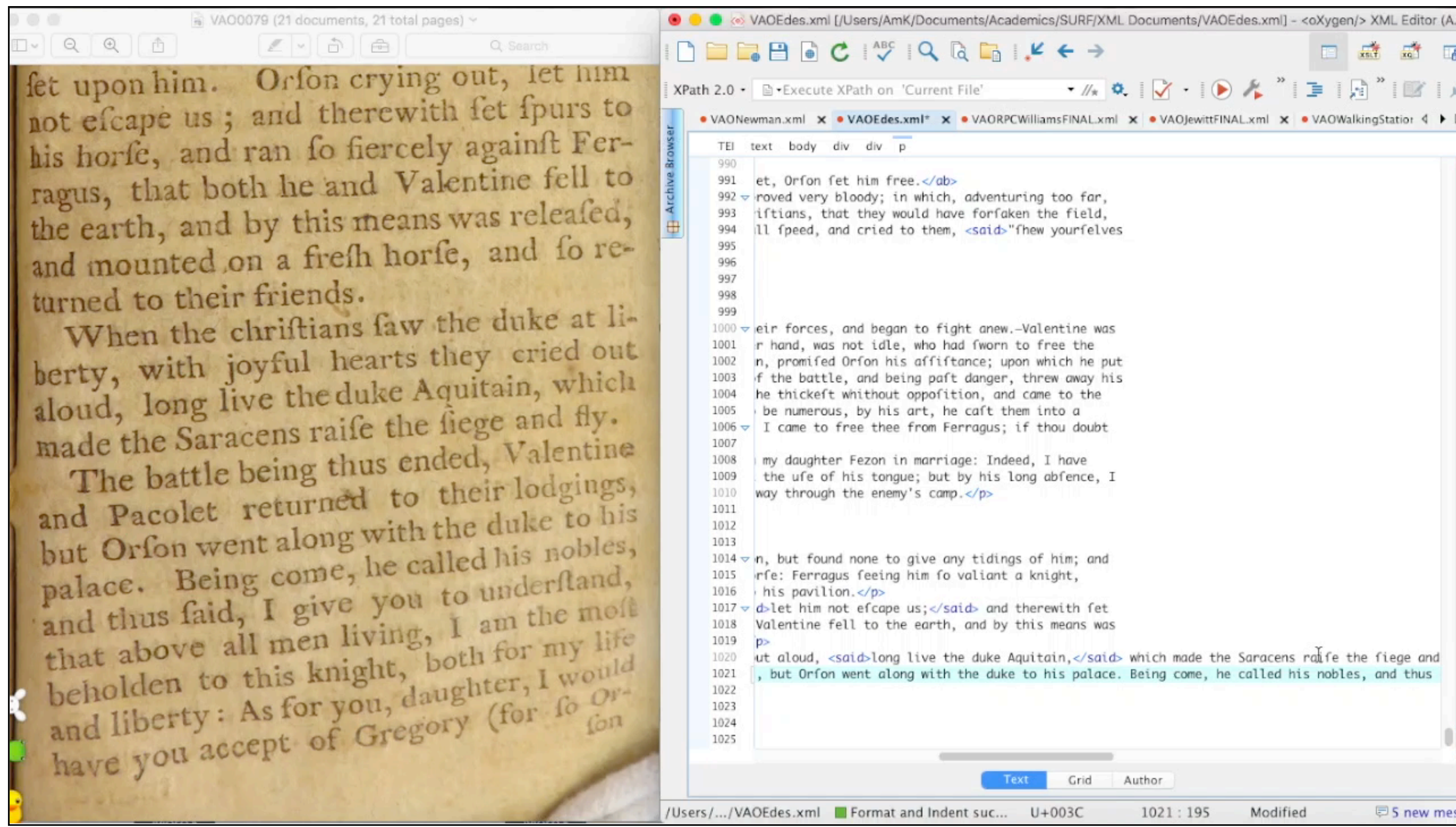
Contextual Mark-Up and Images

After the source text is transcribed and encoded, the editor adds their own layers of information. The editor decides what sort of outside information should be added to further the goals of the project. This could include anything from a note about a place to tags that identify unique features of a text. Editors can also choose to include page images or figure images that are present in the source text.
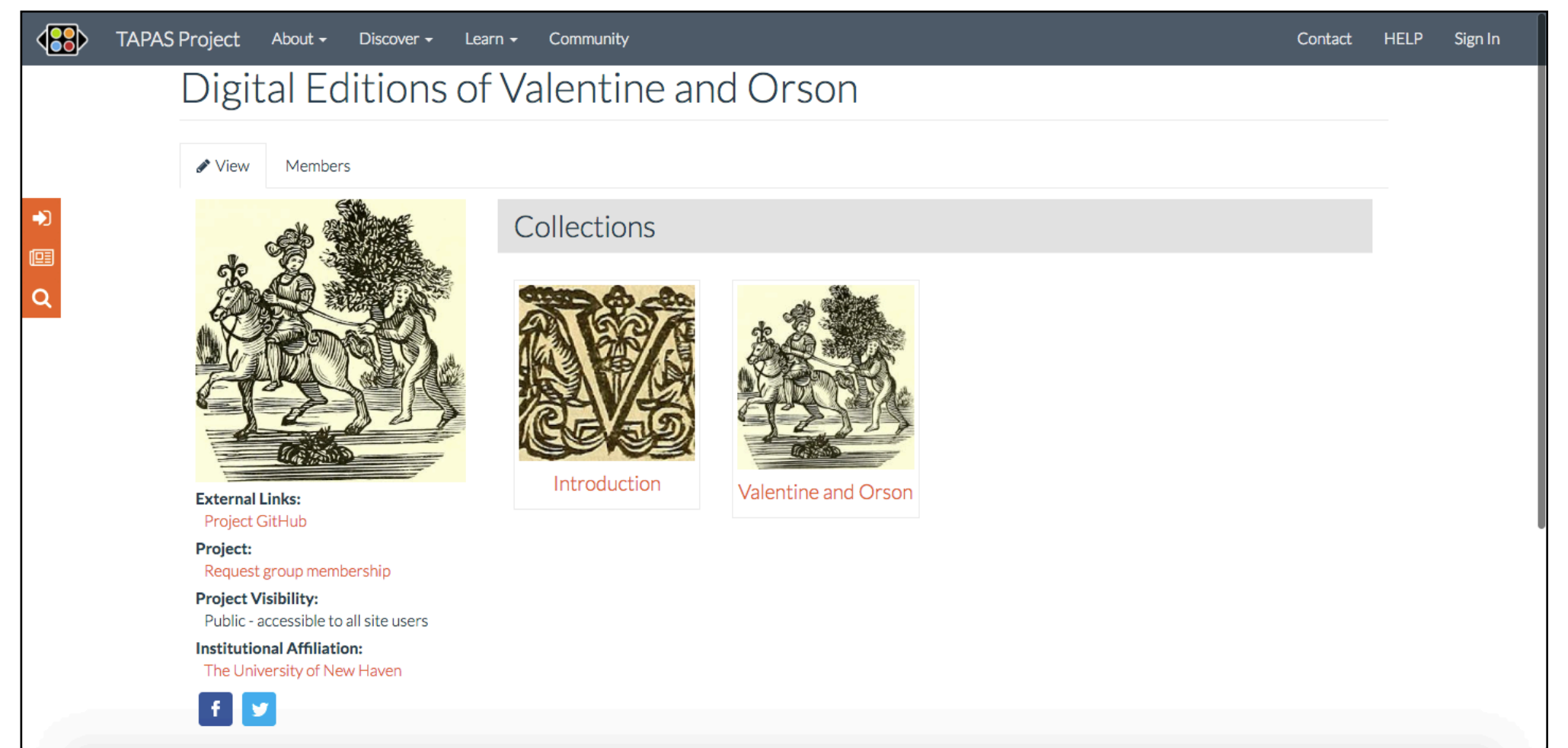

Above: A comparison of an original and a corrected XML file for one of the versions of *Valentine and Orson*. Blue highlights show where changes occurred.

Corrections

Once a text is full transcribed and encoded, the editor checks it for errors. One way of doing this is to read the original text aloud character-by-character while the document is checked for discrepancies with what is read. While this is a time consuming process, it is vital to having an accurate representation of the source text.

Presentation Online

The last step in the process involves uploading the final document to the online platform. Depending on the platform, the editor may make some changes to the encoding so the documents present properly online. This project is published on the TEI Archiving, Publishing, and Accessing Service (TAPAS) platform. TAPAS has built-in scripts that visualize XML data into a polished digital edition.

Above: Image of the landing page for the Digital Editions of Valentine and Orson project on the TAPAS Project website.

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