PART TWO

SCHOLARLY AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
CRITICAL EDITING AND CRITICAL DIGITISATION

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This chapter discusses scholarly editing based on textual criticism and its transmission mechanisms, science ideals, and socio-cultural functions. Primarily, its pattern of conflicts is mapped—historically and presently. It is suggested that this pattern is similar to that of other transmission activities within socio-cultural institutions. The chapter then proceeds to deal with library digitisation as a transmission activity. Two digitisation approaches are discussed: the currently much debated mass digitisation, and an approach that bears many similarities to textual criticism and that this chapter therefore suggests we refer to as critical digitisation. The relation between these two digitisation strategies is analysed. Finally, the chapter returns to scholarly editing and analyses its relation to library digitisation, with a particular focus on comparing the similarities and differences between these two transmission activities.

Scholarly editing and transmission ideals

Scholarly editing based on textual criticism is a bibliographical, referential activity. It examines a bulk of documents, compares their texts, normally clusters these around the abstract notion of a work, arranges them in a web of relations, and attempts to embody this web in the scholarly edition. The edition, then, becomes a surrogate purporting to represent, tag and comment upon the edited work. In a sense, the editor reproduces existing documents by making a new document that also embodies a documentation of the textual history and the editorial process.

At the same time, scholarly editions are hermeneutical documents and subjective interpretations, in two senses: they carry with them an ideological and hermeneutical heritage, and they also exert an interpretative influence over the objects they are designed to embody and represent. Nevertheless editions by tradition pretend to convey a sense of value-free objectivity, a mere recording of facts.

1 Parts of this chapter are based on a previous anthology chapter in Swedish: M. Dahlström 'Kritisk digitalisering', in Fra samling til Sampling: Digital formidling of kulturarv eds N. D. Lund et al. (Copenhagen: Multivers, 2009), 171–191.