The Paratext of Digital Documents

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The Paratext of Digital Documents

Abstract

Purpose
To provide a discussion on how to apply Genette's concept of the paratext to analyze digital documents. The article argues that the concept, despite its shortcomings, is useful because it gives us the terminology to analyze elements often ignored and overlooked.

Design/methodology/approach
By taking Gérard Genette's concept of the paratext as point of departure, the paper focuses on three controversial issues in the scholarly work about paratext and digital documents: the division of paratext into peritext and epitext, the explosive growth of paratext and the question of authorization of text and paratext.

Findings
Questions related to the spatial division of the paratext into peritext and epitext, the difficulty of where to draw the line between text and paratext and the question of authorization are not new for digital documents but did already occur in the analogue world. Even if many decisions like what to include and what to exclude in an analysis are left to the researcher, this does not mean that Genette's concept is unsuitable for digital documents. On the contrary, the concept gives us the terminology to analyze elements often ignored and overlooked, also for digital documents.

Originality/value
In providing a discussion of digital documents and some of the controversial issues discussed by other researchers, this article shows the relevance of Genette's concept, also for our work with digital documents.

Classification: Research paper

Keywords:
- Analysis
- Digital Documents
- Paratext
- Authorization
- Material Aspects

Introduction

In his study, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, the French literature scholar Gérard Genette introduces the concept of the "paratext" to the public.[1] For Genette "the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered to its readers and, more generally, to the public." (Genette, 1997, p. 1) In doing so, Genette points out the importance of paratextual

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[1] The study appeared in French with the title *Seuils* in 1987, but the term "paratext" appears for the first time already in Genette's *Introduction à l'architexte* (1979) and is mentioned again in *Palimpsests* (1982) as one of five types of relationship between literary texts.

elements in transforming the text into a book, and the fact that a text is not necessarily the same thing as a book, even if texts often appear in book format. A paratext thus is a text that relates (or mediates) to another text (the main work) in a way that enables the work to be complete and to be offered to its readers and, more generally, to the public.

Most of the paratextual elements explored by Genette are textual elements, but he mentions also non-textual manifestations: iconic (such as illustrations), material (for instance typography, format, binding, paper quality) and factual (the author's gender and age, her reputation, awards etc.). By drawing our attention to these non-textual elements, Genette also includes material, social and economic aspects in his analyses. As he points to, these elements not only present a text to a potential readership, they are also influencing the marketing, selling and interpretation of a book by attempting to steer our attention in a particular direction.

Genette's concept has been applied and modified both by literary scholars and by scholars in other disciplines like film studies, media studies, game studies, but also museum studies, translation analysis, and knowledge organization and information retrieval (cf. Skare, 2020). Not surprisingly, digital media and the appearance of new paratextual elements in the digital world are much discussed in recent years.

Digital documents and a new awareness of materiality
Due to the rise of the so-called new media and new types of text, the "materializations of the text" (Brooks, 2003, p. 679) has become more important, and scholars have started to ask for media-specific analyses (cf. Hayles, 2004), "[r]ather than stretch the fiction of dematerialization thinner and thinner" (Hayles, 2003, p. 275). Research on reading practices and the impact of the physical form on "reading as an embodied and multi-sensory experience" (Hayler, 2016, p. 16) is part of this renewed interest on materiality.

Genette is not the only scholar to create a new term in order to express the complexity of his objects and to focus on material aspects often ignored by scholars in his own and nearby fields. New terms are coined, but the scholars usually hang on to the expression "text" when naming their concepts like for instance "cybertext" (Aaarseth, 1995), "technotext" (Hayles, 2002) , and "unitary text" (Melnick, 2012). Nevertheless, one might argue that these new

terms also can be considered a criticism of the notion of "text" as an immaterial concept used widely in the Humanities.

However, despite a material turn (Roberts, 2017) in many disciplines, material aspects are still often considered less important than the content or the meaning of a text. While the content of a text is considered to be the product of creativity and artistry, material aspects are often regarded as craftsmanship, or as Lund puts it: "something inferior, […] a necessary evil for symbolic production" (Lund, 2010, p. 736). This also might be one reason for why many scholars focus on examples with eye-catching material aspects in their discussion of why materiality matters.[2] When it comes to digital documents, both the digitization of former analogue media like printed books and celluloid film and digital born documents, new questions in relation to the document's materiality appear.

Digital materiality is often difficult to access for scholars in the 'traditional' humanities. As pointed out by Allen-Robertson, digital documents "arise and persist as signals confined within software and hardware assemblages" (2017, p. 1733). Only the "increasingly user-friendly software that express and mimic the typographic conventions of print culture" (Allen-Robertson, 2017, p. 1733) establishes a familiarity between the user and the document while the digital technologies behind remain "enigmatic black boxes for most researchers working in the field of philology and textual criticism" (Appollon, Bélisle & Régnier, 2014, p. 1). Therefore many scholars in the humanities can only relate to and analyze what we can experience and observe on screen level, even if we are aware the fact that digital documents only are able to "mimic prior forms [...] because software has interpreted the data into such a form" (Allen-Robertson, 2017, p. 1738). Although the computational turn in the humanities has led to more interdisciplinary work combining "insights and methods from computer science with methods, questions and theories from the humanities" (Berry & Fagerjord, 2017, p. 26), much scholarly work in the humanities is still done in a more traditional way with close reading of a limited number of texts – printed or electronic – as a core method. Digital humanities, an umbrella term for a discipline still under construction, focuses often on data

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[2] In *Writing Machines* (2002) Hayles explores – according to the publisher – "works that focus on the very inscription technologies that produce them, examining three writing machines in depth" (https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/writing-machines). The works chosen are both printed (Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* and Tom Phillips's artist's book *A Humument*) and digital (Talan Memmott's *Lexia to Perplexia*).

Digital documents – what happens to the paratext?

While the standardizations within the publishing industry during the second half of the 20th century might be another reason for ignoring many of the material aspects, Genette demonstrates the importance also of 'elementary' elements like binding, cover design or choice of paper by using examples from the history of the book. His concept gives us a terminology to study material elements and the relationship between text and paratext, and between the material, mental and social aspects of a document. By focusing on the materiality of a document, we can also ask what happens to the text and the paratext when the printed document gets translated and remediated, either into other media like film or game or into digitized text. As already mentioned, with the emergence of digital documents more and more scholars are noticing the obvious: materiality matters, for all kinds of documents.

The term 'digital documents', often used as the opposite to printed documents, is an umbrella for a variety of different document forms and genres: from digitized former analogue documents like printed books and celluloid films to born-digital documents that simulate traditional documents like e-books and e-journals to multimedia-based, hyperlinked and interactive new forms native to the digital environment like electronic literature and computer games. This huge variety of document forms and genres has of course consequences for how we read and experience each single document.

During the last decennium scholars working on new media have developed and modulated Genette's concept to analyze cinema and/or television (Gray, Caldwell, Mittell), and e-literature (McCracken). A multiplicity of approaches supported by Genette's partextual theory has been presented by authors from various disciplines in several edited volumes examining the application of paratextual theory on digital media (Desroches & Appollon, 2014), focusing on the role of audiences and fans in the production of paratexts in the digital age

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(Geraghty, 2015) and on the ephemerality of digital media and thus paratexts (Pesce & Noto, 2016).

As pointed out by Desroches & Appollon "[d]igital culture's blend of old and new characteristics" (2014, xxxi) will let us discover both continuities and disruptors in the way digital documents are presented to their audiences. Despite the fact that all digital documents – text, film, music, games, and websites – consist of electrical signals, they nevertheless appear in different shapes and textures as different document types with different traditions and different paratextual elements on our screens.

Although Genette's concept has proven to be highly useful for other media than printed books, many authors discuss whether it is productive or not for analyzing digital media. Already Peter Lunenfeld's essay "Unfinished business" (2000), one of the first attempts to use Genette's concept on new media, claimed that text and paratext are blended to an "undifferentiated and blurred" (2000, 18) product in digital media. The same argument has been used by others when it comes to the distinction between author and user (Burk 2010, 47-48). Birke & Christ are mapping the field of paratext and digitized narratives. They argue "that as long as a text […] is available in the form of a distinct physical object like the CD-ROM and is, as such, limited in its expanse, the concept of paratext can be applied productively", while the concept "loses its analytic value at the moment when, on the World Wide Web, context […] moves so close to the text" that paratextual elements become "difficult to isolate and identify" (Birke & Christ 2013, 80).

I will in the following take these arguments as my point of departure to discuss the paratextual elements of digital documents, focusing on three controversial issues: Genette's division of the paratext into peritext and epitext and how it applies to digital media; the explosive growth of paratext for digital documents and where to draw the line between text and paratext and between paratext and not-paratext; and finally, the question of authorization of text and paratext in digital documents.

Genette's division of the paratext into peritext and epitext
Genette divides the paratext into a *peritext* and an *epitext* (paratext = peritext + epitext): the former being aspects that are relatively closely associated with the book itself, such as the dustcover, the title, genre indication, foreword and epilogue or even various themes, while the

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latter consists of statements about the book beyond the boundaries of the book such as interviews, letters, diaries, correspondences and articles about the text in, for instance, journals. Genette's approach follows the order in which a potential reader usually meets the different elements he explores: he starts with the external presentation of the book (its cover and title page) and studies format, typesetting, whether the book is part of a series or not, the name of the author and the title (possibly including an indication of the genre). He then works his way through the elements inside the book cover like cover blurbs, forewords, dedications, intertitles and notes, and describes the paratextual message's "spatial, temporal, substantial, pragmatic, and functional characteristics." (Genette, 1997, 4) In the last and smallest part of the study he discusses the public and private epitext that can contain of everything written or said about a text. While the peritext often is neglected "by the literary world (including specialists), the situation of the epitext is obviously very different. Critics and literary historians have long made extensive use of the epitext in commenting on works." (Genette, 1997, 346) That is also the reason why Genette focuses foremost on the peritext in his study and uses numerous examples from the history of the book to show the importance of it for our reading.

Genette's division between peri- and epitext is purely spatial, and epitext can become peritext and vice versa already in the medium of the printed book. We might think of examples like an author's letter or an interview with an author that becomes part of the book as pre- or postface, thus changing from epitext into peritext. The same can happen to other elements of the epitext like a review or a conversation.

In the digital world DVDs are good examples to illustrate that this spatial change is the rule, rather than the exception: extra or bonus materials – the "most intriguing paratextual elements specific to the DVD" (Birke & Christ, 2013, 72) – are located on the same disc as the film or on a separate disc but still in the same case as the film-disk. Extra or bonus materials can include the film's trailer, deleted scenes, information about the making of a film like the choice of locations, the process of finding the actors, costume designers etc., and in the case of historical films information about the time period or the events presented in the film. Some of these extra materials are produced for the release of the DVD, while other are already existing outside the film as for instance film reviews or interviews with the director or the actors in a newspaper. Other elements outside the film like the film poster are often used on the cover of a DVD, as well as elements from the opening sequence of a film like the film's

title, the director's name and the casting. Thus, giving the audience access to many elements of the film even before they start to watch the film.

By changing the location and thus transforming epitext into peritext, the material is more easily accessible to the audience. Even if we can't know whether the audience watches extra materials or not, we might assume that the easy access will increase the use of paratextual materials.

In addition to that, the choice of materials also steers the attention of the audience in a certain direction wished by the producers of a DVD. What material the producer includes will often depend on the copyright of the available material, but also on how the audience is supposed to understand the film. The historical correctness of historical events presented in films can for instance be supported by interviews with experts in the field.[3] Materials like "The making of" and interviews with the director and the main actors can also focus on certain ways to understand the film. In some cases, the extra material can be as complex as a documentary made in connection with the motion picture in order to make the story told more trustworthy.[4] The same extra material as on a DVD can also often be found on the film's web page and/or in social media like a film's Facebook-profile. This makes the material at the same time both peritext and epitext.

In addition to the easy accessibility of the extra material to the audience, the remediation of a theatric release into a DVD-version also adds paratextual elements to the film itself, like the sequencing of the film into chapters. Each chapter is often presented with a title and a still picture from the film, giving the audience an impression of what to expect. In the same way as book chapters, the chapters of a film allow the viewer to move around more easily, to go back and forward or to skip some parts.

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[3] The special German DVD-edition of the film *The Lives of Others* (2006) includes in addition to the film-disk also a CD-disk with the soundtrack of the film, a bonus DVD-disk with a documentary about the secret police in East Germany and a book with the film script and several articles about the film. Experts like historians and eyewitnesses are authors of the articles in the book; audio-commentaries to the film highlight the amount of research spent on the topic by the producer and his team.

[4] The special German DVD-edition of *Generation War* (2013) is a prominent example for that. The fictional TV-series in three parts is accompanied by a documentary where the stories of five contemporary eyewitnesses are told, thus confirming the fictitious story.

Genette's division of the paratext into peritext and epitext is at least confusing already in the field analyzed by Genette, the history of the printed book. For digital documents "the question of proximity and distance" (Birke & Christ, 2013, p. 73) becomes even more complicated as demonstrated here for DVDs. The digitization of the film and the increased storage capacity of the DVD-medium allows the producers to include many more paratextual elements than in the analogue world, but the principle is the same as for printed books described by Genette: the elements of the paratext are "depending on period, culture, genre, author, work, and edition" (Genette, 1997, 3). Elements of the paratext might vary and change over time from edition to edition, but also in the case of a translation from one language and culture into another. In addition to that, a paratextual element may appear, disappear and reappear again at any time, definitely or not.

DVDs are obvious examples for the problematic division of the paratext in peritext and epitext. But the DVD as storage medium has almost become obsolete and replaced by streaming in many cases. New paratextual elements can appear on streaming services that not only present the film or series in case in text and image to the potential audience, but also suggestions for 'similar' content that we are supposed to like because of what we already have watched. As in the case of the extra material, also these new paratextual elements will have the same function: to present the film to the audience and to guide the reception.

We might think of similar examples for digital texts that are annotated with text and images or digital editions that make a whole range of extra materials available for the reader, giving easy access to materials found outside the printed edition. In the case of older material and critical editions we might find examples like the works of Henrik Ibsen (www.ibsen.uio.no) where we can view the facsimile in addition to the printed text and also find the text enhanced by comments and explanations made by researchers.

Even if the division into peritext and epitext was already problematic in the world of the printed book, for digital documents the problematic becomes even more obvious. The fact that the same elements can be both peritext and epitext at the same time suggests at least that Genette's division is an artificial one. While Genette wanted to direct our attention to elements often ignored for printed books, we can observe an increasing presence and thus importance of all paratextual element for digital documents. We might avoid the problem by only using the term paratext in our analysis, but the spatial division might nevertheless be

useful in some cases, especially when we are comparing different editions over time. Whatever term we choose, our awareness of the materials chosen by the producer is important because they enable us to investigate the producer's intent. While the reader of a printed book had to search much more actively for an interview with the author or had to locate his/her letters or diary at a library or an archive, today's user is only a click away from access. Offering the audience new editions with new extra material is also a way to sell the 'same' text once more to the same audience, especially fans and collectors that are interested in every aspect of their favorite object.

The explosive growth of paratext text in the digital world

The digitization of a document can be considered as a kind of translation or re-mediation that also has consequences on the paratext. The digitization of a printed book or a film leads on the one hand to more paratextual elements closely connected to the document like for instance the sequencing of a film into chapters or the possibility to click on hyperlinks when reading an e-book. These differences can be compared to what happened for instance to a printed book when it is getting published in a new edition or translated from one language into another, not only changing elements like for instance the cover design but also removing or adding elements like forewords, introductions etc. On the other hand, digitization makes – as described above – a large amount of paratextual elements easily accessible to the audience. Some of these paratexts existed already outside the document itself, others are produced for the edition in case, that means a growth of paratextual elements in existence, greater visibility and easier access. Even if the audience does not need to take these elements into consideration before, under, and/or after accessing the digitized document, the easy access might contribute to a much broader use of these elements. The question of what is the main document and what is more peripherical can become more difficult to answer, the same goes for how much extra material can be included. One extreme example can be found in the Platinum Series Special Extended Edition of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. The edition

not only adds over two hours of new material across the trilogy [...], but also includes two discs worth of bonus content for each film, for a total of twelve discs and over 31 hours of unique material, not including the multiple palimpsestic reviewings of the films themselves made possible by the four separate audio commentary tracks available for each film in the trilogy (Benzon, 2013, p. 93).

This example illustrates that the line between the 'core' and the more peripheral is hard to draw. Many fans will probably purchase this very edition because of the huge amount of paratext that outnumbers the main text by far. Even if it might be difficult to find similar examples for other documents than film, we can think of digital texts/e-books with a dictionary function or annotations that explain in text and/or image passages of the text. Videos on YouTube are surrounded by videos with "similar" topics, if we search for a book on amazon we are informed about related items. Like the many other books on the shelf in a library, the digital shelf provides us with surrounding documents that all have their own paratextual elements but at the same time function as paratext to the one book chosen of us.

When Birke & Christ argue that "the concept of paratext can be applied productively" (2013, 80) on distinct physical objects, they obviously are not considering examples like films or Tv-series that are published on DVDs, often in several editions with different extra materials that in some cases can be more extensive than the film itself. Even if the text and paratext is located on the same "distinct physical object", the reader/viewer has to make choices in what material to include or to exclude and how to evaluate it in relation to the core document.

Even if Genette in his study investigates all paratextual elements one by one to show the importance of each element and the connectivity between the elements, the purpose of analyzing the paratext is not to find and explore all elements, but those needed to answer our research question. One way to differentiate the paratextual elements is to use the temporal aspect. Genette distinguishes between prior, original, and delayed paratexts (Genette, 1997, pp. 5-6). To look on the temporal aspect – when in the process a paratexual element appeared or disappeared – in addition to who was the producer of it, may give us valuable insight in the production, distribution and marketing of for instance a film in the digital era. The question of those elements' lifetime is crucial too; more and more elements might be ephemeral like for instance a live chat while a film or TV-series is broadcasted or posts on social media that not necessary disappear but become more and more invisible, thus difficult to find and access for the audience. Even if many of these elements only are one click away, the huge amount of search hits might favor some and disfavor other. While Genette mentions one month as the record for the shortest lifetime – "the preface to *La Peau de chagrin* (1997, p. 6) – the lifetime of digital paratexts may only last for seconds if we think of a comment that is deleted just after it is written.

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Genette also mentions some rare cases where the text has disappeared but where the paratext – for instance the title of a book in a bibliography – still exists: "a text without a paratext does not exist and never has existed. Paradoxically, paratexts without texts do exist, if only by accident: there are certainly works – lost or aborted – about which we know nothing except their titles." (Genette, 1997, p. 4)

For digital born texts that only work in a certain version of a software we might find examples where the paratext – or the different paratexts – are the only documents visible and available to us today.[5] While printed books could be damaged and disappear, here the text still exists, but we are no longer able to access it. As with other older media formats, we not only need the document, but also the right devices to access the content.

Even if we limit the paratext to one printed text like a novel, the different editions, translations, and possible remediations together with all the epitextual material that might be produced about that one text, can constitute a huge amount of paratextual elements. A statement like "in principle, every context serves as a paratext" (Genette, 1997, p. 8) doesn't make the amount of potential paratexts less. The question of where to draw the line between text and paratext and between paratext and non-paratext existed already in the analogue world and could be challenging. Even if the amount of paratext for digital documents is potentially much higher, the need to make choices is the same. What may confuse the issue, is the easy access to digital paratextual elements that are on our fingertips, only a click away, making the problems only more visible in the digital world.

The authorization of text and paratext

Genette warned to "rashly proclaiming that 'all is paratext'" (1997, 407), but without giving any explanation or criteria for where to draw the line. The only criteria given by Genette of whether something can be considered paratext or not is its authorization by the author: "By definition, something is not a paratext unless the author or one of his associates accepts responsibility for it, although the degree of responsibility may vary" (Genette, 1997, p. 9).

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[5] Talan Memmott's *Lexia to Perplexia*, first published online in 2000, is one striking example. Because of updates in web browsers, the work is no longer accessible unless we run or emulate an outdated version of browser software (cf. Skare, 2019).

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The question of authorship or co-authorship is not a new one in the digital world. Already the printed book, and especially many of the material elements of the paratext involved other producers than the author of the text. When analyzing printed books, Genette considers the author and the publisher "the two people responsible for the text and the paratext, but they may delegate a portion of their responsibility to a third party." (Genette, 1997, p. 9)

This third party is for Genette for instance the writer of a preface, chosen and confirmed by the author or publisher (1997, 10). Even if Genette is concerned about material elements of the book such as binding and cover design, he does not mention the printer or the designer as members of this third party. If we extent the third party with these important producers of book elements, we will find examples where for instance the design of a book cover is chosen without the author's confirmation. The same may actually appear for elements like the title and the subtitle of a book; publishing houses have different practices in how much the author is involved in these choices.[6]

Genette differentiates further between paratexts produced during an author's lifetime and after his death (1997, p. 6) and between the official, semi-official, unofficial paratext:

The *official* is any paratextual message openly accepted by the author or publisher or both – a message for which the author or publisher cannot evade responsibility. […] The *unofficial* (or *semiofficial*) is most of the authorial epitext: interviews, conversations, and confidences, responsibility for which the author can always more or less disclaim with denials […] (1997, p. 10).

But whether the author denies for something said in an interview or not, it is still up to the reader to decide if he takes the information into account or not and what he makes out of it when for instance reading a book or watching a movie.

In the digital word there are more and more paratexts created by others than the author and his publisher. Already a search engine gives us paratextual information:

The search-engine hits thus perform multiple functions: They contextualize the work like a bookstore, a library or an academic reading list would, but they also "sell" the work as a publisher would, depending on which hits we encounter, obviously. It is hard to say whether

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[6] These elements are often difficult to investigate because the publisher often is not willing to share this kind of information or lacks records for older publications.

the hits are epitext or peritext; the distinction has become problematic (inasmuch as it has not always been problematic). (Dijk, 2014, 27)

Internet as the "paratext paradise" (Rodríguez-Ferrándiz, 2016, p. 170) can make it difficult for the audience to distinct between watching a film or reading a text and engaging with its paratexts, the same way as digital documents blur the border between production and consumption, making audiences into something new and different than passive recipients. By commenting a film or novel on social media, by chatting with other users and/or the producer during for instance the streaming of a film, and last but not least by producing fan fiction (Jenkins, 2006, 175ff.) or remixes, more and more paratextual elements are created by others than the official author and publisher. This does in my opinion not mean that a user easily can ignore these elements. As for printed books, the choices made by a user/reader will be influenced by paratextual elements, either conscious or more unconscious. As already pointed out by Genette, the question is not if the reader/user knows all the facts, but that readers/users who know the will read and experience the work differently "and that anyone who denies the difference is pulling our leg" (Genette, 1997, 8).

Paratext – a useful concept for digital document?

Questions related to the division of the paratext into peritext and epitext, the difficulty of where to draw the line between text and paratext and between paratext and not-paratext and the question of authorization of text and paratext are, as discussed above, not new for digital documents. These problems already existed in the analogue world and also in the world of printed books analyzed by Genette. But digital documents, one might argue, let the problematic areas of Genette's concept become more evident for the researcher, as did the importance of a document's materiality. Birke & Christ conclude their mapping of the field of digitized narratives with the observation that "[t]he concept of paratext itself […] is too media-specific" and that we therefore need "new concepts and a new vocabulary" (2013, 81).

I agree in the importance of media-specific analyses but would argue that Genette's concept is important also for digital documents, as stated by Gray, "we need the word as a reminder – an insistence, even, – to look at paratexts" (2015, p. 232). The fact that digital documents consist of both familiar and new paratextual elements due to their media-specific affordances should not prevent us from investigating the paratext of digital documents. But we need to look out for those new paratextual elements inherent to digital documents and also the differences

between different digital document forms and genres. We need to discuss whether an element belongs to the paratext or not and justify why we focus on those new elements.

Although Genette's concept has several shortcomings, one might even criticize his naming, the concept nevertheless provides us with an awareness for elements of a document that are "very much a contributing, and at times constitutive, part" (Gray, 2015, p. 231) of it. The concept thereby helps us to recognize the importance of different versions instantiated in the same or in different media, accessed by the user on different platforms and devices. A comparison between a printed book and its digital version will for instance be able to answer the question whether this remediation uses the media-specific affordances and in what way.[7] A comparison between how 'traditional' and digital documents use the paratext will help us not only to recognize the different producer's intend, thus the intended function of the paratextual element, but also to separate unofficial and official, ephemeral and more permanent paratexts from each other. Recognizing that "although the majority of paratextual functions Genette identifies reappear [in fan fiction, R.S.], they are used to significantly different ends" (Lindgren Leavenworth, 2015, p. 57) will contribute to our digital literacy in terms of deciding about the authenticity and trustworthiness of a document. As pointed out by Cronin, "the idea of paratext is no less relevant in the online world, perhaps even more so" (Cronin, 2014: xvii). He mentions "metadata elements and tag clouds linked to digital objects, the supplementary materials and datasets that accompany scientific publications, and the extra-textural indicators of quality, trustworthiness and credibility that are built into websites" (Cronin, 2014: xvii).

As argued by Gray, examining paratexts is not an "odd exercise in completionism" (2015, p. 230), but the close reading of one or more documents' paratext will nevertheless be a time-consuming project. A comparison of the 'same' text in different editions and in different media will often be a good starting point for finding paratextual elements that differ. Different editions may reflect different contexts and socio-political views, the 'same' text may therefore be read differently by different people. Questions about the authorization of paratextual elements – produced by whom and to what purpose –, the means – whether media-specific or not – used by the producer, and the possible effect on the user might be questions discussed

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[7] See for instance the example of Alix Shield's remediation of the 1911 text *Legends of Vancouver* where he uses digital story-mapping "to decolonize the way this collection is presented" (Shield, 2018, p. 107).

by the researcher. The cooperation between scholars inside the 'traditional' humanities and scholars with technological skills is needed to understand the paratext of digital documents, combining the close reading of what we experience on our screens and the knowledge about the affordances of the chosen hardware and software.

Adjustments to the concept might make it less difficult to handle the huge amount of potential paratextual elements to investigate. Genette created several categories to specify the paratextual elements he was studying, considering spatial aspects (peritext and epitext), temporal aspects (prior, original and delayed) and whether the paratext was authorized by the producer or not (official, semi-official and unofficial). As discussed above, these categories are probably not the best ones to analyze digital documents with. New media scholars have developed other categories to cover new document forms (see Rodríguez-Ferrándiz, 2017, pp. 177-178 for a comparison). New categories can be based on the paratext's function – interpretative, commercial, navigational (cf. Birke & Christ, 2013, pp.67-68) – and the resulting reading behavior – "centrifugal and centripetal movement" (McCracken, 2013, p. 105). Barnett suggest the term hyperparatextuality for infrastructural paratexts because "they also provide pathways out of the text in ways that printed codex does not" (Barnett, 2020, p. 52).

The chosen document(s) format and genre, in combination with the research question, will be decisive for the choice of our concepts and the terminology we apply. Although we have to adopt Genette's concept to make it better work for digital documents, Genette's terminology makes us conscious about important elements of documents that otherwise might be ignored and overlooked. If we acknowledge that paratexts can change the meaning of a text, we need to be aware of paratexts, for all type of documents.

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