

Paratext[†]

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Abstract: This article presents Gérard Genette's concept of the paratext by defining the term and by describing its characteristics. The use of the concept in disciplines other than literary studies and for media other than printed books is discussed. The last section shows the relevance of the concept for library and information science in general and for knowledge organization, in which paratext in particular is connected to the concept "metadata."

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1.0 Definition

Paratext is a term coined by the French literary critic Gérard Genette. The term appears for the first time in Genette's *Introduction à l'architexte* (1979) and is mentioned again in *Palimpsests* (1982) as one of five types of relationships between literary texts.¹ For Genette (1997, 1), "the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered to its readers and, more generally, to the public." In doing so, Genette points out the importance of paratextual 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. The paratext is "a threshold, or—a word Borges used ... —a 'vestibule' that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. It is an 'undefined zone' between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary" (Genette 1997, 2).

2.0 History

In *Seuils* (1987), Genette gives a complete study of the notion for the first time.² Genette explores the potential of the concept for the medium of the printed book but concludes (Genette 1997, 407) that "the other arts have an equivalent of our paratext." *Seuils* has been translated into German (1989) and English (1997), and the concept has since been applied by scholars in disciplines other than literary studies and for media other than printed books.

3.0 Characteristics, components

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 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 ap-

1 proach follows the order in which a potential reader usually
2 meets the different elements he explores; he starts with the ex-
3 ternal presentation of the book (its cover and title page) and
4 studies format, typesetting, whether the book is part of a se-
5 ries or not, the name of the author and the title (possibly in-
6 cluding an indication of the genre). He then works his way
7 through the elements inside the book cover like cover blurbs,
8 forewords, dedications, intertitles and notes, and describes
9 the paratextual message's "spatial, temporal, substantial,
10 pragmatic, and functional characteristics" (Genette 1997, 4).
11 In the last and smallest part of the study, he discusses the pub-
12 lic and private epitext that can contain everything written or
13 said about a text. While the peritext often is neglected "by the
14 literary world (including specialists), the situation of the
15 epitext is obviously very different. Critics and literary histori-
16 ans have long made extensive use of the epitext in comment-
17 ing on works" (Genette 1997, 346).

18 The division between peri- and epitext is purely spatial,
19 and epitext can become peritext and vice versa. We might
20 think of examples like an author's letter or an interview with
21 an author that becomes part of the book as pre- or postface.
22 The elements of the paratext are "depending on period, cul-
23 ture, genre, author, work, and edition," (Genette 1997, 3)
24 and might vary and change over time from edition to edi-
25 tion but also in the case of translation from one language
26 and culture to another. In addition to that, a paratextual el-
27 ement may appear, disappear and reappear again at any
28 time, definitely or not. To illustrate these changes, Genette
29 mentions examples of titles that have been shortened by
30 posterity and prefaces that have been deleted in a new edi-
31 tion for later to reemerge in a newer edition.

32 By using numerous examples from the history of the
33 book, Genette shows what role paratextual elements play in
34 interpreting a text. Genette includes also the knowledge a
35 reader might have about the author like the degree of celeb-
36 rity, his/her age and gender, awards, honorary degrees, and
37 so on in the discussion. In so doing, Genette combines ma-
38 terial aspects of a document with its context.

39 Most of the paratextual elements explored by Genette are
40 textual elements. But he mentions also non-textual manifes-
41 tations: iconic (such as illustrations), material (for instance ty-
42 pography, format, binding, paper quality) and factual (the
43 author's gender and age, her reputation, awards etc.).

44 By drawing our attention not only to textual elements,
45 but also to factual, iconic and material, Genette also in-
46 cludes social and economic aspects in his analyses. As Ge-
47 nette points out, these elements not only present a text to a
48 potential readership, they are also influencing the market-
49 ing, selling and interpretation of a book by attempting to
50 steer the way of our experience in a particular direction. Or
51 as Birke and Christ put it (2013, 67-68): paratextual ele-
52 ments have both interpretative, commercial and naviga-
53 tional functions.³

54 Genette's concept and especially his division into peri-
55 and epitext is not completely unproblematic, because ele-
56 ments can change their position, appear or disappear. In ad-
57 dition, in many cases, it can be difficult to decide where to
58 draw the line between text and paratext⁴ and between par-
59 atext and non-paratext. Genette himself advises (1997, 407)
60 against proclaiming all as paratext. He concludes the study
61 by stating (1997, 404) that his "inventory of paratextual el-
62 ements remains incomplete" and mentions (1997, 405-406)
63 three practices left out from the study because of missing
64 historical information or the need for additional skills (tech-
65 nical and iconological): translation, serial publication and
66 illustration. Genette points (1997, 34) also to the fact that
67 many of the choices taken by authors and publishers today
68 are neutralized because of the "irreversible tendency toward
69 standardization."

70 By considering the author and the publisher as "the two
71 people responsible for the text and the paratext," (Genette
72 1997, 9) Genette ignores the fact that many other people
73 might be involved in the production of a book, some men-
74 tioned by name, others not. When analyzing paratextual el-
75 ements and their importance for the understanding and in-
76 terpretation of a text, it might be difficult to find out who
77 has actually taken the decision and why. Nevertheless, we
78 can always assume that the choices are made in order to ful-
79 fill a function. In addition to that, we might assume that
80 popular and successful authors often have more influence
81 on decisions made by the publisher like the choice of title
82 and the cover illustration (cf. Skare 2008).

84 4.0 Application of the concept

85
86 As pointed out in the foreword of the English translation
87 of *Seuils*, Genette is hard to categorize and has been called
88 structuralist, narratologist, rhetorician, semiotician and
89 more. In literary studies, Genette is probably best known
90 for his narratology. Even if the foreword of the English
91 translation labels *Paratexts* as a "key work in Genette's car-
92 eer," (xvii) the paratext is often considered as something
93 additional and not as important as the actual text.⁵

94 Nevertheless, Genette's concept has been applied and
95 modified both by literary scholars⁶ and by scholars in other
96 disciplines like film studies⁷ (cf. Kreimeier and Stanitzek
97 2004; Gwóźdz 2009; Böhnke 2007; Gray 2010), digital nar-
98 ratives and media studies (cf. Birke and Christ 2013;
99 Desrochers and Apollon 2014; Pesce and Noto 2016), game
100 studies, but also museum studies, translation analysis (cf. Pel-
101 latt 2013) and knowledge organization and information re-
102 trieval (cf. Andersen 2002; Paling 2002).⁸ Not surprisingly,
103 digital media and the appearance of new paratextual elements
104 in the digital word have been discussed in recent years.

105 Peter Lunenfeld's essay "Unfinished business" (2000) is
106 often considered the first attempt to use Genette's concept

1 with regard to new media. He claims that text and paratext
2 are blended to an “undifferentiated and blurred” (Lunen-
3 feld 2000, 18) product in digital media. The same argument
4 has been used by others when it comes to the distinction be-
5 tween author and user (Burk 2010, 47-48) in new media.

7 **4.1 Electronic literature and digitized narratives**

8
9 As pointed out by Cronin, “the idea of paratext is no less
10 relevant in the online world, perhaps even more so.” He
11 mentions (2014, xvii) “metadata elements and tag clouds
12 linked to digital objects, the supplementary materials and
13 datasets that accompany scientific publications, and the ex-
14 tra-textural indicators of quality, trustworthiness and cred-
15 ibility that are built into websites.” Social media indicators
16 as for instance Facebook “likes” or comments are contribu-
17 tions made by users who become more than readers or con-
18 sumers; they become a kind of co-author.

19 The question of authorship or co-authorship is not a
20 new one in the digital world. Already the printed book, and
21 especially many of its material paratextual elements in-
22 volved other producers than the author of the text, but in
23 the digital world this becomes more and more visible.
24 Terms like “collective intelligence,” (Jenkins 2006) “collab-
25 orative writing” and “produsage” (Bruns 2008) have been
26 used to describe these processes.

27 In addition to authorship and authorization, the docu-
28 ment’s materiality and its boundaries⁹ are other questions
29 that have to be raised when discussing the paratext of digital
30 documents, both digitized former analogue documents like
31 printed books and celluloid film and digital born materials.

32 Birke and Christ (2013) are mapping the field of paratext
33 and digitized narratives. They argue (2013, 80) “that as long
34 as a text ... is available in the form of a distinct physical ob-
35 ject like the CD-ROM and is, as such, limited in its expanse,
36 the concept of paratext can be applied productively,” while
37 the concept “loses its analytic value at the moment when,
38 on the World Wide Web, context ... moves so close to the
39 text” that paratextual elements become “difficult to isolate
40 and identify.”

41 Distinct physical objects like CD-ROMs and DVDs have
42 many similarities with printed books. We, therefore, can find
43 some of the same paratextual elements in all of these materi-
44 als. The authors of course also mention (Birke and Christ
45 2013, 72) the bonus materials as the “most intriguing paratex-
46 tual elements specific to the DVD.” A wide range of extra ma-
47 terials on DVDs expands the number of paratextual elements
48 that are easily available for the user. We even find examples
49 where a DVD box can contain more than the film-disc, a
50 book with the film’s script or a disc with the sound track of
51 the film are to be found in many special editions.

52 All these possible extra documents—for instance a book
53 and a CD—have paratextual elements on their own and

54 could be analyzed as separate documents, but they are also
55 functioning as paratextual elements that surround the film
56 and might influence the viewer’s interpretation of the film.
57 As with many other paratextual elements, it is up to the
58 viewer/reader to take these documents into consideration
59 or not.

60 So even the boundaries of a distinct physical object are
61 not so easy to define as it might appear at first sight. In ad-
62 dition to that, we have, as for printed books, outside mate-
63 rials that can be produced by the film company as for in-
64 stance an official web page or a fan page on Facebook or
65 other pages produced by fans. These pages often have a
66 short life time and they do not necessarily present com-
67 pletely new or different materials as compared to, for in-
68 stance, the special edition of the DVD. By spreading the
69 paratextual elements in several media, the visibility is in-
70 creased and probably more potential viewers will actually
71 see and use these elements either as a threshold into the film
72 or as a guidance for how to understand the film. So even if
73 the document’s materiality in the case of a DVD might
74 seem more stable and easier to distinguish than with digital-
75 born documents, paratexts might disappear—as they could
76 in the case of printed books (Genette 1997, 6): “If, then, a
77 paratextual element may appear at any time, it may also dis-
78 appear, definitively or not, by authorial decision or outside
79 intervention or by virtue of the eroding effect of time.”

80 In addition to that instability, the document’s bounda-
81 ries are another issue not so easy to decide on as it seemed at
82 first glance. When it comes to the question of authoriza-
83 tion—who is responsible for/who is the author of the dif-
84 ferent paratextual elements—both the DVD, the book and
85 the web page have official producers, but as in the case of
86 the printed book, people other than the author/director are
87 responsible for different elements of the paratexts; we might
88 think of a graphic designer, a sound specialist, the authors
89 of the articles about a film, etc.

90 Many of the digital documents we are surrounded with
91 are digitized, former analogue documents like printed books
92 and celluloid films; according to Bolter (2000, 65) this is a re-
93 mediation where “an older medium is highlighted and re-pre-
94 sented in digital form without apparent irony or critique.”

95 We are all familiar with examples belonging into this cat-
96 egory like films on DVD and research articles and books
97 online. There are different initiatives—local in-house initia-
98 tives in the beginning and national or international initiatives
99 with common standards like the Project Gutenberg (guten-
100 berg.org), the Internet Archive (archive.org) or Google
101 Books. Many national libraries have also digitized their collec-
102 tions during the last decades. In Norway for instance, we can
103 read books published in Norway before the year 2000 when
104 we are on a Norwegian IP-address.¹⁰

105 There are different solutions for how the texts are made
106 available to the public. When the books are scanned—as in

1 the case of the Norwegian National Library—the cover and
 2 all pages, including empty pages are scanned. As in the phys-
 3 ical library we might find different editions of the same text,
 4 this also happens in the digital library. In addition to the
 5 paratextual elements of the physical book, new elements
 6 like the address of the web page appear when the book gets
 7 digitized. We also can choose different options for how we
 8 want to read/see the text: one page at the time or as double
 9 page, we can see the metadata, we can search for words or
 10 phrases in the whole text, we can download the reference to
 11 our own reference program, we can save the document to
 12 our own library, we can share the permanent link on social
 13 media and we can send an e-mail if we have any comments.
 14 The web page as part of the National Library of Norway
 15 gives authority to these digital documents.

16 Other examples often produced and used by researchers
 17 can be enhanced by, for instance, comments or explana-
 18 tions. In the case of older material, we also can view the fac-
 19 simile in addition to the printed text. These examples, espe-
 20 cially in cases of digitization without enhancing, are not
 21 very different from the distinct physical objects. Each book
 22 on nb.no is still an entity, but our search strategies might
 23 result in different surroundings, thereby also in different
 24 paratexts. As in the case of Amazon or streaming services
 25 like Netflix where we get personalized recommendation
 26 based on our preferences, we can expect personalized par-
 27 atexts too.

28 If we compare the digitized printed books with e-books,
 29 there are of course differences in how we can access and read
 30 the book. The reader has often the option to choose be-
 31 tween downloading the book as a PDF or to read it online.
 32 Both options make the reader encounter something that
 33 looks like a printed book. In the downloaded PDF version,
 34 we also can write our comments and highlight text as we
 35 could do in a printed book. There are some differences due
 36 to the medium: we can choose the size of the page by enlarg-
 37 ing or minimizing, we can move easily around in the text by
 38 clicking on the hyperlinks in the table of contents and we
 39 can search the text for certain words or phrases. In addition
 40 to that, we can read the book on different devices. As
 41 pointed out by Birke and Christ (2013, 76) “elements with
 42 navigational functions come to the fore.” But contrary to
 43 Birke and Christ who argue that these elements¹¹ cannot be
 44 considered paratextual elements because they belong to the
 45 delivery device and not to the book, one could also argue
 46 that they are important paratextual elements the same way
 47 as for instance the format, or the font, or the paper quality
 48 for the printed book, because they imitate what the reader
 49 is used to experience and is able to do with a printed book
 50 in a digital surrounding.

51 When it comes to digital-born texts and how a potential
 52 reader gets information about a text’s existence and how to
 53 get access, search engines become important. As pointed

54 out by van Dijk (2014, 27), search engines perform multiple
 55 functions: “They contextualize the work like a bookstore ...
 56 but they also ‘sell’ the work as a publisher would, depending
 57 on which hits we encounter, obviously.”

58 Because of updates in web browsers, older works are of-
 59 ten no longer accessible unless we run or emulate an out-
 60 dated version of browser software.¹² We might compare this
 61 with missing pages in a printed book, but here we have no
 62 idea what we cannot get access to and what we miss. We can
 63 only read about the work and watch images that others have
 64 taken while they were reading it. Here we can find examples
 65 of a digital document where the paratext—or the different
 66 paratexts—are the only documents visible and available to
 67 us today. While printed books could be damaged and disap-
 68 pear, here the text still exists, but we are no longer able to
 69 access it. As with other older media formats, we not only
 70 need the document but also the right devices to access the
 71 content.

72 Digital documents are today usually combining text
 73 with image (also moving images) and/or sound; the use of
 74 colors and fonts is often striking. Genette’s concept of the
 75 paratext has proved useful in the analysis of these non-tex-
 76 tual elements, and the scale of objects analyzed includes not
 77 only narratives in book format but also other media and
 78 platforms like video games, YouTube, and Mashup
 79 (Desrochers and Apollon 2014).

81 4.2 Film and television

82
 83 As pointed out by Georg Stanitzek (2005, 36) “[i]n film
 84 studies the potential of the paratext concept was recognized
 85 very quickly, namely, as both a practical and a necessary ad-
 86 dition to the film semiotic notion of the text.” Films have
 87 many of the same paratextual elements as books that can be
 88 found in a film’s opening and closing credits, like title, sub-
 89 title, and the names of the people involved in the produc-
 90 tion. In addition to a book’s epitextual elements, films also
 91 have posters, trailers, and stills that can be observed and an-
 92 alyzed as “media-specific variants.”

93 When analyzing the paratext of a film, the importance of
 94 different media platforms like cinema, DVD and television
 95 becomes visible and necessary to notice, because they high-
 96 light the fact that elements of the paratext can change posi-
 97 tion at any time. Elements of the epitext like a film trailer or
 98 conversations with the film maker or the actors can become
 99 extra material on a DVD, thus getting spatially closer to the
 100 film text, turning into peritextual elements. The film
 101 poster is often used as the DVD’s cover, consisting of many
 102 of the same elements like a book cover. For television, and
 103 especially in private television, “logos, trailers, teasers, and
 104 appetizers play a pivotal role in making flow the ideal organ-
 105 izational principle of television programming processes”
 106 (Stanitzek 2005, 38).

1 An important element in many of the discussions about
2 paratext is the question of where to draw the line between
3 the paratext and the film. By watching US TV shows such
4 as *The Simpsons* or special DVD releases such as *The Lord of*
5 *the Rings*, Jonathan Gray goes a step further and also ex-
6 plores toys, video games, advertising campaigns, websites
7 with audience discussions and the like as paratexts (cf. Gray
8 2010, 4) and their significance for the interpretation of the
9 film or television series.

10 Today we could add that more and more films and TV
11 series have their own web pages in addition to their social
12 media appearance. Different paratextual elements like inter-
13 views with actors and film maker, stills from the set, reviews
14 etc. are collected and made available for the audience, some-
15 times the audience also is encouraged to participate by post-
16 ing images or answering questions. Gray distinguishes be-
17 tween “entryway paratexts” and “in medias res paratexts”
18 (2010, 23) where the former tries to control the viewer’s en-
19 trance to the media product like trailers, “coming soon” and
20 the like, and the latter appears “during” or “after” viewing.
21 As already pointed to by Genette (cf. Genette 1997, 41), el-
22 ements of the paratext establish a genre contract with the
23 reader for how to read a text. Gray observes (2010, 83) the
24 same when it comes to establish truthfulness and claim au-
25 thenticity for the stories told.

26 The premiere of a film or a TV series is today often accom-
27 panied by many other products in different media, thereby
28 trying to establish a media event that makes the audience
29 want to be part of it. The terms “transmedia narratives,”
30 “complex TV” and “cross-media derivatives” (Pesce and
31 Noto 2016, 1) describe the phenomenon of a wide range of
32 by-products like real-time tweeting, online commentaries,
33 pop-up ads, different forms of merchandise, and announce-
34 ments that are often short-lived or ephemeral. Thus, the
35 question of what is central and what is peripheral, what has
36 to be taken into consideration when analyzing a media text
37 has become more difficult to answer. The tension between
38 ephemera and permanence is not a new one but has become
39 more exposed for digital media. How to collect these parate-
40 xtual elements, how to archive and how to make them avail-
41 able for future research are important issues to discuss. The
42 “misunderstanding of social and political meaning of media
43 artifacts for the audiences that concretely used them” (Pesce
44 and Noto 2016, 3) can be problematic.

45 For the study of silent films and the exhibition practices
46 during the silent era, the concept of the paratext can also in-
47 clude intertitles, film music and the surrounding program
48 as important elements that give us an idea of how a film has
49 been exhibited at the time of its premiere and afterwards
50 (cf. Skare 2016).

52 4.3 Computer games and gaming

53
54 According to Carter (2015), Mia Consalvo was the first to
55 introduce the concept of paratext to game studies with her
56 monograph *Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Videogames*
57 (2007), while Rockenberger mentions (2015, 253) Lunen-
58 feld (2000) and Jones (2008) beside Consalvo as the most
59 prominent contributions to the field.

60 *Cheating* is not about individual games and their par-
61 atexts, “but the emergent surrounding industries that trans-
62 cend individual games, and the manner in which they have
63 been corporatized and are now integral to the contempo-
64 rary game industry” (Carter 2015, 314). Consalvo focuses
65 on the history, content, function and effect of printed game
66 magazines and licensed strategy guides, as well as cheating
67 devices or modchips that are all considered “parts of the par-
68 atext” (2007, 76). By instructing the player and helping
69 them to learn how to play, the paratext serves “a specific role
70 in gaming culture and for gaming capital, where the “gam-
71 ing capital is paratext itself” (Consalvo 2007, 22).

72 Carter discusses “the crucial role” of propaganda in one
73 concrete game, *EVE online*. Carter argues (2015, 311) that
74 this propaganda is a form of paratext “that emerges from
75 within the game as part of play, rather than a peripheral in-
76 dustry that surrounds it.” The term “emitext” is proposed
77 by Carter, because the relationship between the paratext
78 and a designed game is much more dynamic than for more
79 or less static books. According to Carter (2015, 337-338)
80 “paratexts are typically referred to as a form of ‘external dis-
81 source’,” while emitexts have “no strict spatial relationship
82 to the game and complex, dynamic levels of authority and
83 illocutionary force.”

84 Rockenberger points to the questionable use of Ge-
85 nette’s concept in new media studies in general and in video
86 game studies in particular and argues (2014, 252) that “the
87 terminology in this field of research is rather vaguely con-
88 nected to, and sometimes even completely detached from,
89 Genette’s definition.” Paratext is, according to Rocken-
90 berger (2015, 253), “used as a vague umbrella term with an
91 extremely broad extension.” As Birke and Christ (2013)
92 asked for digital narratives, Rockenberger is concerned
93 about where to draw the line between introduction and
94 prologue and asks where the game actually begins (259).
95 What belongs to the game and what does not; where do we
96 draw the line between the game and its surroundings? This
97 is an important question, because the elements of paratext
98 can become numerous over time and it can be difficult to
99 know what to include and what to ignore. Genette asks the
100 question whether “the author or one of his associates ac-
101 cepts responsibility” (1997, 9) for the paratext, an im-
102 portant criterion, but the focus on the author and his asso-
103 ciates can ignore important elements, in some cases even the
104 cover design of a book. As pointed out by Rockenberger

(268), the idea that the author controls every aspect of the production is “already empirically inappropriate for the domain of print culture, and even more inapplicable to the new media.”

4.4 Library and information science

Genette’s concept of the paratext focuses foremost on a document’s material elements and how these relate to the context and the interpretation of documents; thus, allowing a complementary approach (cf. Skare 2009) to document analysis. Paratextual elements will often be the first encounter with a document for a potential reader but also for a librarian. Paratexts are, therefore, not only thresholds of interpretation but constitute also thresholds of access (Paling 2002). In recent years, researchers have also focused on the peritext in academic publishing, and the study of book jackets as access points and thus as part of library practices has been paid attention to. Book covers are important when it comes to exhibitions, but also as a reader’s advisory tool (see Pecoskie and Desrochers 2013). When the importance of paratextual elements, for instance on the book cover, are recognized, the advantages and disadvantages of a “mute” but long shelf life—library binding have to be weighted for and against the often-shorter lived original binding where the cover’s (or the dust jacket’s) “most obvious function ... is to attract attention,” (Genette 1997, 28) but also to give the potential reader an idea of the book’s content.

4.4.1 Knowledge organization

Many of the peritextual elements described by Genette have a natural place in library work and knowledge organization. As pointed out by Paling (2002, 140), “the table of contents from *Paratexts* reads like a list of bibliographic elements: formats, series, title pages, printings, and other editorial and publishing devices.” Andersen (2002, 55) shows how the bibliographic record “exploits some of the paratexts of a work in order to make it present and searchable” and argues “that the bibliographic record is a kind of meta-paratext.” The same way as a potential reader of a novel is first confronted with its paratextual elements, the bibliographic record and the included paratextual elements will be important in an information retrieval situation providing subject access points (see Hjørland and Kylesbech Nielsen 2001). Overall, the concept of paratext in knowledge organization is relevant in considering the issues of metadata (Mayernik 2020).

Genette’s study is concerned with novels, therefore, he is not discussing paratextual elements found in academic genres like abstract, key words, table of contents, references and indexes. Here we have examples where paratextual elements

also are providing access points for document retrieval, helping the reader to identify relevant documents.

<i>Title and Subtitle</i>	<i>Subject; content; genre</i>
Author’s Name and Affiliation	Research area; can be associated with authority and quality
Publisher	Research area; authority; quality
Journal name	Topic; subject
Edition	Authority; quality
Key words	Topic; research area; method and theory
Reference list	Cognitive authority
Index	Aboutness; cognitive authority
Dedication	Cognitive authority
Abstract/blurb/the please-insert	Aboutness; subject; content
Format, series, binding	Quality, sometimes also about the topic
Cover design (images, colors, typography, paper quality)	Aboutness, quality
Table of contents	Aboutness
Preface	Aboutness, contextual information, statement of intent

Table 1. Elements of the paratext and the kind of information provided.

Most of the paratextual elements inform about the subject or the content of a given document, but can also indicate the authority and truthfulness of the producer, thus, also indicating the quality of a document. But, as pointed out by Hjørland and Kylesbech Nielsen (2001, 263) “[p]oor titles, bad indexing, and in general poor SAPs [subject access points] are those that express unimportant (or perhaps even false) information about a given document.”

If we consider paratextual elements given by the producer (author, publisher, designer) “primary,” elements added by indexers like classification codes and subject headings can also be considered paratextual elements based on an interpretation of the document (both its “primary” paratextual elements and its content). Paling describes the cataloguing process as belonging to the paratext where librarians as third parties select the descriptors to be assigned to a book, thus paratextual elements becoming thresholds of access. Hjørland and Kylesbech Nielsen point (2001, 283) to the fact that indexers are often “influenced by the title, the abstract, and other access points already given The value-added services provided by classifiers, indexers, and abstractors are not always independent interpretations of a document’s subjects.”

1 Other documents surrounding the one in question, like
2 articles in either a printed journal or online, can also function
3 as paratext, informing the potential reader about the content
4 and its relevance for one's research question. The citation of
5 a work could also be considered an element of the paratext,
6 thus becoming important in citation analysis and biblio-
7 metric studies as demonstrated by De Bellis (2009).

8 The importance of subject headings chosen by cataloguers
9 is discussed by Veros (2015). Veros uses the case of ro-
10 mance fiction novels in Australian libraries and shows that
11 the missing catalogue record for books in this genre leads to
12 problems for the potential readers. Without any catalogue
13 record, "the text cannot be discovered" (Veros 2015, 7) by
14 the potential reader. Paratextual elements are, therefore, not
15 only necessary to present a text to its potential readers, they
16 are also essential in order to make a document visible and
17 thus accessible.

18 5.0 Conclusion

19
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21 Paratextual elements will often be the first encounter with
22 a document, both for the potential reader/viewer and for
23 the librarian/information professional as mediator. Our as-
24 sumptions about a document's content, but also about its
25 quality and trustworthiness, depend on our interpretation
26 of the paratextual elements we recognize. To analyze what
27 happens to the elements of the paratext when a text is trans-
28 lated into another language or is remediated into other for-
29 mats like a novel into a film or game, but also from printed
30 into electronic text, will give the information professional
31 important knowledge not only about the documents in
32 question but also about the cultural and social context and
33 will help to pair the right reader/viewer with the right text.

34 Genette's concept has proven to be productive in fields
35 other than literary studies. In addition to the mentioned ar-
36 eas, scholars have studied the paratext of newspapers
37 (Frandsen 1991) and the importance of paratexts in the
38 scholarly archive (Dalgaard 2001). Also, museum studies
39 (e.g., Christensen 2011; Schall 2014), translation analysis
40 (e.g., Pellatt 2013), pedagogy and reading studies (e.g., Ap-
41 perley and Beavis 2011; Mangen and Kuiken 2014) and the
42 field of marketing and advertising have started to apply the
43 concept. The application of the paratext notion to new me-
44 dia and especially to digital media and thus new forms for
45 text production and consumption has led to an increased
46 focus on media specificity, authoring functions and the al-
47 teration of reading habits.

48 Notes

49
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51 1. The five types of relationship are: intertextuality, par-
52 atextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality and archi-
53 textuality. It is important to notice that Genette's termi-

54 nology is occasionally not in accordance with other crit-
55 ics.

- 56 2. The introduction had been translated into English ear-
57 lier and was published in *New Literary History* in 1991
58 (Genette and Maclean 1991). Already in 1988, the Eng-
59 lish version of a lecture given by Genette at the Univer-
60 sity of Chicago was published in *Critical Inquiry* (Ge-
61 nette and Crampé 1988). The script of the lecture was
62 later included as a chapter about titles in *Seuils* (Paris,
63 1987).
- 64 3. Rockenberger (2015, 262-263) distinguishes "between
65 at least sixteen functions that paratexts might fulfill in
66 media:" referential, self-referential, ornamental, generic,
67 meta-communicative, pragmatic, informative, staging,
68 ideological, hermeneutical, evaluative, commercial, le-
69 gal, pedagogical, instructive/operational and personal-
70 ization.
- 71 4. Genette includes, for instance, intertitles and notes in
72 his analysis of the paratext; elements that are part of the
73 text but are not necessary to read and understand the
74 text.
- 75 5. Cf. the subtitle of the German translation: *Das Buch*
76 *vom Beiwerk des Buches*.
- 77 6. A special issue of *Poétique* was devoted to essays on the
78 paratext by members of a seminar at the École des
79 Hautes Études in Paris in 1987. In later years, the con-
80 cept is often used to analyze the relationship between
81 text and image (both inside the text and on the book
82 cover, cf. Skare 2018) or texts where typographical
83 choices are important (cf. Graulund 2006: "visual
84 text").
- 85 7. Most of the film studies using Genette's concept are
86 written in German. For an overview of this research in
87 English, see Klecker 2015.
- 88 8. See also *Critical Studies in Media Communication* vol.
89 34 (2017), no. 2. This issue presents under the title "Par-
90 atexts, Promos, and Publicity" a range of articles that
91 discuss "paratexts and paratextual theory intervening"
92 (101) in different areas of media and communication
93 studies.
- 94 9. See Birke and Christ (2013, 68) where these three fields
95 of debate are pointed out as relevant to digitized docu-
96 ments.
- 97 10. The digitizing process at the Norwegian National Li-
98 brary consists of three steps: scanning, structure analysis
99 and post-processing. For an explanation of the process
100 see [https://www.nb.no/en/digitizing-at-the-national-](https://www.nb.no/en/digitizing-at-the-national-library/)
101 [library/](https://www.nb.no/en/digitizing-at-the-national-library/), accessed 21.5.2019.
- 102 11. Birke and Christ are using the five main navigation
103 menus available on the 2011 Kindle as an example to il-
104 lustrate their point and conclude (2013, 77): "As with
105 the front matter, paratextual elements become spatially
106 separated from what may be considered the 'unified ob-

ject' of the text, the e-book's data file. The menus circumscribe the ways in which readers can access and navigate the different parts of the text; the degree to which this has an interpretative function again depends on individual cases."

12. For instance, Talan Memmott's *Lexia to Perplexia* (2000). Cf. Skare (2019) for a discussion of this example.

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