

true because of its foregrounding of only one or two volumes in parallel with each guide as an indication of the way authors used the guides as part of their editorial practice.

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LIVINGSTONE, Justin D. and Adrian S. WISNICKI, dirs. 2019. *Livingstone's Missionary Travels Manuscript*. <https://livingstoneonline.org/life-and-times/publishing-livingstones-missionary-travels>.

"A critical edition of *Missionary Travels*" by David Livingstone (1813–1873) "is long overdue", Justin D. Livingstone observes in his wonderful introduction to the latest addition to *Livingstone Online*. The fully digitized 1100-page manuscript of this key 1857 work by the British missionary and explorer, as well as a handful of critical essays and illuminating associated images and texts, mark this MLA Approved Edition of *Missionary Travels* as a major accomplishment in scholarly editing. With its wealth of clearly structured, never before digitally-accessible material, this is a most welcome addition to Victorian scholarship in general and a valuable resource for those interested in Livingstone and his travels. It is a thrill to scan Livingstone's handwriting and see such an influential work take shape before one's eyes.

The *Livingstone's Missionary Travels Manuscript* site allows users to trace the development of the popular bestseller as author and editors wrestle in the margins. The manuscript is a rare artifact — a mix of original manuscript, dictation transcript, and editor's copy — and is not only fully transcribed but accompanied by high-resolution images, easily viewable online. The essays surrounding the manuscripts (especially the two-part "Composing & Publishing *Missionary Travels*") are a model for thorough and engaging scholarly writing. The sheer wealth of data and context, as well

as the visual richness of its presentation, transcend what would have been possible with even an oversized print edition.

Co-directed by Livingstone (Queen's University Belfast) and Adrian S. Wisnicki (University of Nebraska–Lincoln or UNL), this edition — like *Livingstone Online* overall — follows best practices modeled by other TEL-based humanities projects associated with UNL and its Center for Digital Research in the Humanities. In offering a side-by-side comparison of the two versions (manuscript and print) of *Missionary Travels*, for instance, a user can experience a canonical work in flux, similar to a recent variorum edition of *Leaves of Grass* published by the *Whitman Archive*, while the robust search-and-download framework (allowing batch downloads in various formats) echoes a project like *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Online*.

Unlike these other UNL-associated projects, however, the target audience for this edition of *Missionary Travels* appears to be almost exclusively a scholarly one. Annotation throughout the primary documents is sparse, with little direct explanation for historical terms and figures. A separate “Glossary of Key Terms in the *Missionary Travels Manuscript*” is available but no digital infrastructure connects it to the rest of the edition in a meaningful way. The almost complete absence of hyperlinking is counterintuitive to users not schooled in the structural inflexibility that still marks scholarly digital editing. This edition feels, at times, all too static for a digital project and uninviting to a general user without much prior knowledge of Livingstone and his time. Its all-too-close adherence to a print paradigm is holding *Livingstone Online* back. This online *Missionary Travels* emphasizes *flipping*, where *linking* would be appropriate. There were also at least four different hands involved in the creation of the 1857 manuscript, but the interface does not allow users to effectively filter for these (though the excellent encoding would allow for it).

Missionary Travels presents its texts as monolithic, stable blocks to be read from top to bottom and not as a complex web of information. Following, for instance, a passage from manuscript to print in the comparison viewer necessitates manually locating it in each — the relationship of these two texts is one of static entities existing independently on a digital desk. The final, print version of *Missionary Travels* is also only available in the comparison viewer, disincentivizing lengthy perusal of what the manuscripts would become.

A reader interested in a specific term and its usage will also face needless hurdles: the search function disallows verbatim search (even when indicated using quotation marks) and always returns stemmed results (so that

“prosperity” returns prosper, prospering, prospered, etc.); there is no easily accessible search function for the whole edition; the default search is set to “catalogue only” and needs to be manually switched to full-text; and as manuscripts are encoded by document and not page, searches have to be performed twice, once to locate the whole document, then the passage therein. The full scope of material on the site is impressive, but the largely unfulfilled potential simmering in things like the comparison viewer leaves a user wanting more. These are minor gripes, but they add up.

The overarching infrastructure of *Livingstone Online* needs refreshing. It is characterized by outdated design philosophies — symbolized best, perhaps, best by the ever-present logo for Google’s long-defunct social media site, Google+ — and runs counter to current usability and universal design expectations. There are a number of accessibility issues, too, including insufficient alt-text for images, missing text for certain buttons, and structural issues that make the site taxing for users with screen readers.

This is, of course, not to say that *Livingstone Online* and the *Missionary Travels* edition are currently any less of an editorial achievement, but it is an achievement that is somewhat bogged down by structural and conceptual limitations that invite a thorough rethinking. A redesign of the user interface (with an eye for usability and scholarly possibility) would welcome a wider audience and foster a longevity for the immense amount of invaluable data and thoughtful research that it currently houses. It is much to the creators’ credit that even a brief glance over the TEI encoding reveals it brimming with possibilities — that is, many of the features lacking in the current edition are encoded and lying in wait for future site updates to make use of them. In that sense, the *Missionary Travels* manuscript edition is a testament to the forward-thinking nature of XML/TEI as much as the careful editorial work of Livingstone, Wisnicki, and their team.

All criticism aside, no book edition could achieve what *Livingstone Online* effortlessly accomplishes. Whereas the norms of the scholarly print edition (text, footnotes, glossary, contextual materials, etc.) have been long established, the digital scholarly edition still swims in an ocean of exciting possibilities and, for the time being, must fall short of some of them. That it can and does evolve and expand — that its editorial methods and its technological capacity are in process — underscore it as a model that supersedes the book when it comes to scholarly editing. Kenneth M. Price once called for digital humanists to adopt the term “arsenal” to describe the then novel space of digital, collaborative editing and step around the conceptual pitfalls of “edition”, “archive”, or “database”. Following the term’s etymology, “arsenal” to Price connotes product and process. It suggests a vision

of a digital workspace that has no unitary, predefined “use” but becomes a space for generating insights. While the term has yet to (and may never) catch on, the impetus behind it remains relevant: to approach using the digital space to its potential, an edition like *Missionary Travels* ought to sidestep the logic and limitations of the edited print volume — finality, authoritativeness, unidirectionality — instead of reproducing them in an online format. What, to think with Price, might this project look like if it truly saw itself as a “public place for making” — a digital space of exchange, processing, connection? What could it achieve if it understood its contents as a complex web of textual and contextual data and not as chapters in a book that just happens to be digital?

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