# Making a Digital Edition: The Petr*archive* Project

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## Abstract

**English.** This short essay will discuss current issues and future potentials of editing texts in the digital domain, while presenting a concrete case study: the Petr*archive* (ed. Storey, Magni and Walsh), an open access "rich-text" digital edition of Francesco Petrarca's songbook *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. The website proposes a new digital way of visualizing, studying and teaching Petrarch's work by offering different levels of visualization of the texts (facsimile high-quality images of all the *chartae* of the partial holograph Vaticano Latino 3195, its complete diplomatic transcriptions and edited forms and a nine-section commentary including a new English translation), as well as multiple indices and tools to access the diverse strata of the work's composition. Particular attention in this poster presentation will be given to new features currently in development, among which a new visual index that will allow users to navigate the material composition of Petrarch's manuscript and to analyze and visualize its fasciculation and the history of its composition.

**Italiano.** In questo breve saggio si discutono questioni e potenzialità dei metodi di edizione digitale, presentando nel contempo un caso specifico: il progetto Petr*archive*, una edizione digitale *open access* del canzoniere di Francesco Petrarca *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. Il sito si propone come un nuovo modo di visualizzare, studiare e insegnare l'opera petrarchesca offrendo diversi livelli di visualizzazione dei testi: immagini a colori ad alta risoluzione dell'olografo parziale (manoscritto Vaticano Latino 3195), nuove complete trascrizioni, sia in forma diplomatica che normalizzata, e un commentario in nove parti, che include una nuova traduzione in inglese. Grazie a un attento lavoro di encoding, Petr*archive* propone anche numerosi indici e strumenti per accedere ai diversi strati di composizione del canzoniere. Particolare attenzione in questa presentazione (poster) verrà riservata ai nuovi strumenti che stiamo sviluppando, tra cui un nuovo *visual index* che permetterà agli utenti di visualizzare la composizione materiale del manoscritto petrarchesco nei suoi undici fascicoli (nella loro composizione visiva e materiale) e di visualizzare le varie fasi di composizione del testo.

The *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* is an icon of the Italian and Western literary tradition. Unlike other canonical works, we still possess authorial drafts of several poems and a partial holograph – MS Vaticano Latino 3195 – transcribed over roughly a decade (1366ca.-1374) in part by Giovanni Malpaghini[1], a young copyist from Ravenna working under Petrarch's strict supervision (Dotti 1987). After completing the first four quaternions, part of the fifth, the seventh and part of the last quires, around 1368, for unknown reasons Malpaghini decided to leave Petrarch's employment and protection. After his departure, while transcribing the remaining poems, Petrarch began a long, difficult and often interrupted process of transcription and revision of the entire songbook. From its intended status as a fair copy, Vaticano Latino 3195 soon became a service copy in which the poet experimented his visual poetics as the basis for a potential but never realized final fair copy. The basis of any textual research on the *Fragmenta* is accepting that it is not a perfect work and that it was unbound and unfinished when Petrarch died in 1374. Copies of the *Fragmenta* often partial and unauthorized – at times even corrupted – were already circulating during the poet's lifetime. Petrarch himself often lamented in his letters that his youthful vernacular poems were disseminated without his consent among the "multitude"[2]. Centuries of textual transmission and cultural mediation have progressively altered

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[1] In a 2015 publication ("Malpaghini copista di Petrarca?" in *Cultura neolatina* LXXV: 2015 205-16) Monica Berté proposed to separate the historical figure of young Giovanni Malpaghini from that of Petrarch's scribe.

[2] In a letter to Giovanni Boccaccio Petrarch writes: "those brief and scattered vernacular works of my youth are no longer mine, as I have said, but have become the multitude's, I shall see to it that they do not butcher my major ones" (Sen. V 2, transl. Bernardo). And

the way we visualize, read and ultimately interpret Petrarch's poems, and the way we reconstruct the history of the work, often more conjectural than factual₃. The starting point of our work on the Petr*archive* – and that of material and digital philology – is therefore to go back to the material sources and to re-examine original documents in order to dig below the surface of a "modernized Petrarch" and to re-construct the forms and contexts in which the work was produced.

The Petr*archive* does not reproduce in OCR other editions of the *Fragmenta* but offers in XML-TEI and John Walsh's TEIBoilerplate, high-definition images of each *charta* of manuscript Vaticano Latino 3195, new diplomatic transcriptions and edited forms of the entire songbook, and its discoverable palimpsests. Through carefully structured text encoding, the site aims at re-constructing Petrarch's texts maintaining their most overlooked aspect: their visual and material forms₄. The basic authorial principles that characterize Petrarch's 366 texts and his carefully and authorially constructed visual poetics in MS Vaticano Latino 3195 are:

1.  31-line per *charta* organized in two columns;
2.  thematic and visual integrity of the *charta*, in which the poems are often not simply juxtaposed but carefully selected to form groupings of pomes deeply linked by meaning, thematic unity and contrast;
3.  contrasting visual structures to distinguish the five different poetic genres of which the *Fragmenta* is composed: two-column horizontal reading strategy for sonnets (transcribed over 7 lines-two verses per line), madrigals, ballata and canzone, as opposed to the two-column vertical reading strategy of sestina;
4.  use of space as organizational device, signaling, for example, the subdivision of the collection in two parts (cc.49-52v), or a new trajectory of the macro-text with the transcription on c.22v of the canzone *Mai non vo' più cantar com'io soleva* anticipated by blank space (eight transcriptional lines) at the bottom of c. 22r.

The Petr*archive*'s first task is therefore to re-visualize these basic authorial principles while maintaining a simple interface and ease of use. The encoding of *charta* 1v, which presents four sonnets, serves as an example of how the digital code translates textual and prosodic features together with visual aspects of the façade of the *charta*:

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<pb n="charta 1 verso" facs="../images/vat-lat3195-f/vat-lat3195-f-001v.jpg" />
<lg xml :id="rvf005" type="sonnet" n="5">
<lg type="octave">
<lg type="dblvrs" corresp="#canvasline">
<l n="1"><hi rendition="#red #fs24pt">Q</hi><hi rendition="#small-caps">u</hi>ando io <choice><orig>mouo</orig><reg>movo</reg></choice> i sospiri a chiamar <choice><orig>uoi</orig><reg>voi</reg></choice><supplied>,</supplied></l>
<l n="2"><choice><orig>El</orig><reg>E 'l</reg></choice> nome che nel cor mi scrisse <choice><orig>amore</orig><reg>Amore</reg></choice>&v2c ;</l>
</lg> […]₅
```

Petrarch's visual poetics is maintained in the digital code: every pair of verses is translated in the strip of encoding as a <lg> (line group) of two verses (type="dblvrs") corresponding to one canvas line (corresp="#canvasline"). The result of the transformation of the encoding onto the web page is a new

representation of Petrarch's visual poetics and editorial principles for which he worked restlessly for over a decade:



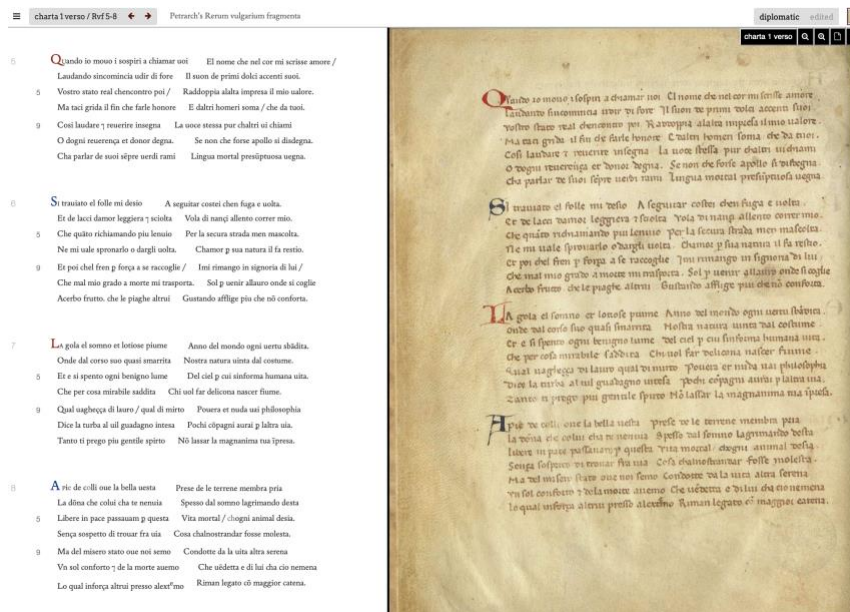Figure 1. The Petrarchive, c.1v: diplomatic transcription and manuscript image, displayed side by side.
URL: http://dcl.slis.indiana.edu/petrarchive/content/c001v.xml#c001v?facs=active

Other than being a research tool[6], text encoding also represents a close reading of the texts: it 'forces' encoders to 'break down' each poem and to 'label' its single components using specific tags. It can therefore also serve as an alternative and highly stimulating teaching tool: while being asked to encode Petrarch's texts, students necessarily need to re-think the very basic words, linguistic and prosodic structures of each poem to be able to digitally translate them into tags.

Advanced uses of text encoding also offer new ways of representing and analyzing erasures, renumbering, palimpsests, while maintaining a clean and simple digital interface. The most notable example is the palimpsest *Donna mi vene spesso ne la mente* on c.26r, erased and overwritten by *Or vedi amor che giovenetta donna* (*Rvf* 121) by the poet himself:
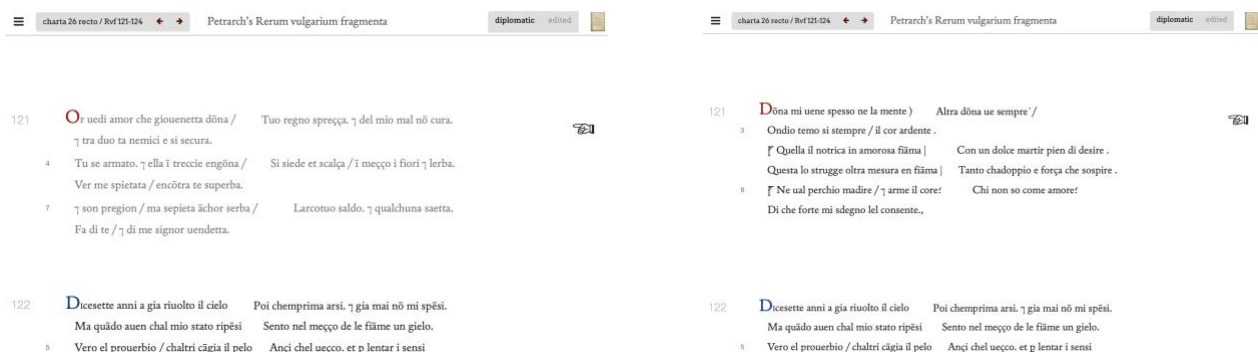


Figure 2 and 3. The Petr*archive*, c.26r: diplomatic transcription of *Rvf*.121 *Or uedi amor* (left); diplomatic transcription of palimpsest *Donna mi uene*. URL: http://petrarchive.org/content/c026r.xml

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Through a combination of common Web design techniques and text encoding, by clicking on the *manicula*[7] in the right margin, the user can easily move from one version of *Rvf* 121 to the other as diplomatic and edited versions of both poems are available. To encode the simultaneous presence of erased and overwritten poems, we employ the following TEI elements: <del> (deletion): to contain the erased "Donna mi vene"; <add> (addition): to contain the added "Or vedi amor"; <subst> (substitution): to wrap the related <del> and <add> and assert that the <add> is *substituted* for the <del>; and <ab type="blockSubst"> (anonymous block)[8].

Petrarch's visual poetics is so authorially designed and so deeply part of the collection that a reader can recognize the genre and sometimes function of poems even before reading them. The SGV images created to digitally reconstruct the façade of the manuscript page are simple graphic representations of the *Fragmenta*'s material structures. On *charta* 1 verso and *charta* 3 verso, for example, users can easily identify the most frequent four-sonnets 'canvas' (c.1v) and distinguish the shift in directionality between the sonnet, horizontal, and the sestina, vertical (c.3v):
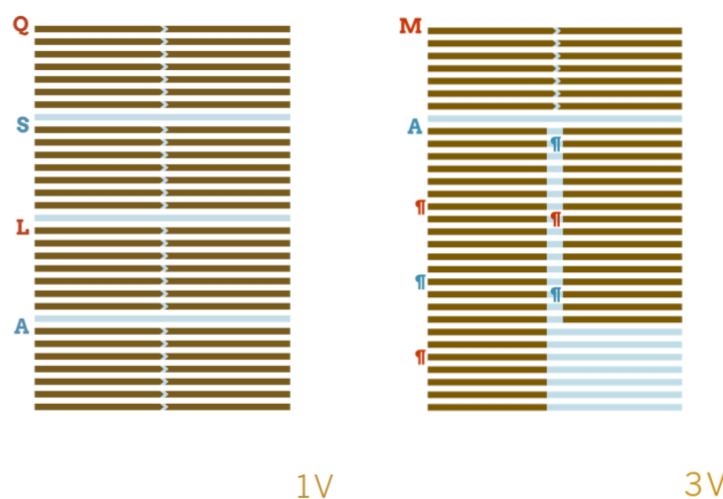


Figure 4 and 5. A visualization of c.1v and c.3v created for the Petr*archive* project.

The description of Petrarch's visual poetics embedded in the text encoding is therefore also represented in the Petr*archive* visual indexes[9]: the graphic image files are in fact XML files in the Scalable Vector Graphics format (SGV) which contain the information necessary for the Web browser to reproduce the image. The graphic information in the SVG files may also be derived from the codes embedded in the TEI/XML file, proving the visual and representational capabilities of the encoded document. From a brief look at the visual index of the entire songbook, also developed for the Petr*archive*, the nine pairings sonnet-sestina[10] present in the collection are immediately recognizable: once again, even before accessing the textual contents of the poems, the Medieval reader – and now the digital user – can collect a series of information regarding the poetic genres, their material and visual treatments:

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[7] The *manicula* is not present in Vaticano Latino 3195: it is an interface element introduced by the Petrarchive, mimicking those Petrarch and other medieval and early modern readers used to draw attention to specific passages in manuscripts.

[8] For more information about the encoding developed to digitally reconstruct the palimpsest see Isabella Magni and John A. Walsh's *Digital Representations and the Pivotal Instability of* Donna mi vene spesso ne la mente *in the Study of the* Fragmenta (2016).

[9] In the examples in Figure and 5: arrows signaling the directionality of the text distribution (on c.3v the user can distinguish the shift in directionality between the sonnet, horizontal, and the sestina, vertical); paragraph markers in the sestina as internal visual indexicality indicating the vertical disposition of the text over the two columns; initials on the right of the text indentation signaling to the medieval reader, and now to the contemporary user, the beginning of new poems, marking the passage from fair- to work- and service copy (red and blue the rubricated fair-copy initials, in blank ink the remaining ones) and functioning as a textual index; blank space serving as additional punctuation device (visible in light blue color in the graphic SGV images).

[10] All of the *Fragmenta*'s sestine — except for the double sestina of part II (*Rvf* 332) — are always presented in contrast to a sonnet on the same charta (see Petr*archive Glossary* "Sestina". URL: `http://dcl.slis.indiana.edu/petrarchive/ content/glossary.xml#sestina`).
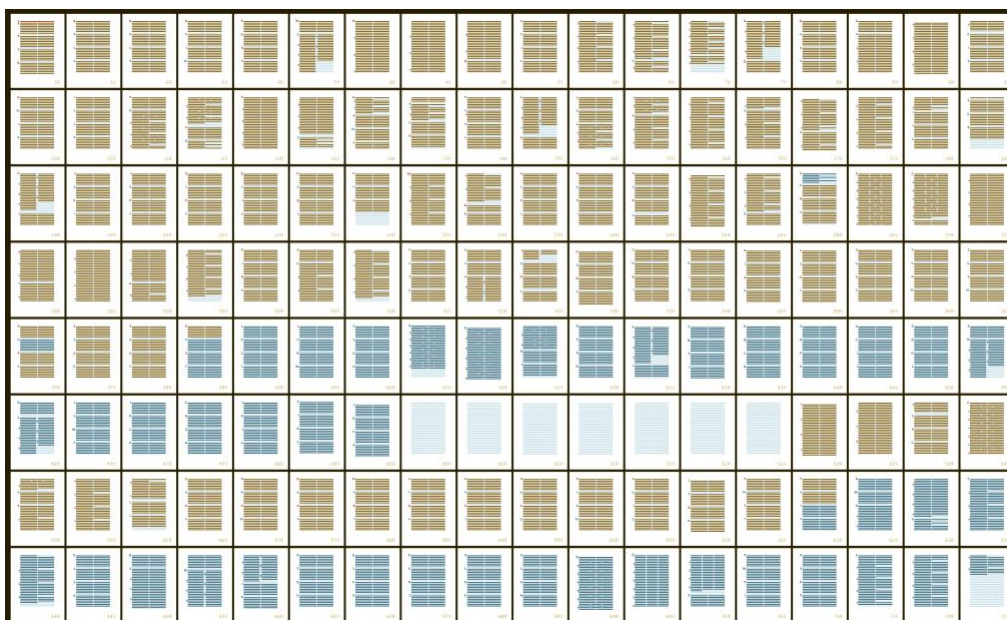
Figure 6. The Petr*archive*: visual index of MS Vaticano Latino 3195. URL:
http://dcl.slis.indiana.edu/petrarchive/images/
Petrarchive__Visual_Index_to_Vat__lat__3195.jpg

The representational values established by the Petr*archive* visual indices also offer a unique insight into the preparation of the manuscript, still in the form of loose gathering at the time of Petrarch's death: from the original project revealed by the rubricated *chartae* transcribed by Malpaghini (in brown) and set aside in 1368[11], to Petrarch's addenda in his own hand[12], and to the last service-copy transcriptions for the poet only[13] (both in dark blue). A newly developed visual index arranged by fascicles, also allows users to navigate into Petrarch's material construction of his fascicles, including the two final binions (cc. 63-66 and 67-70) that the poet inserted last into an already existing binion (cc.61-62, 71-72):
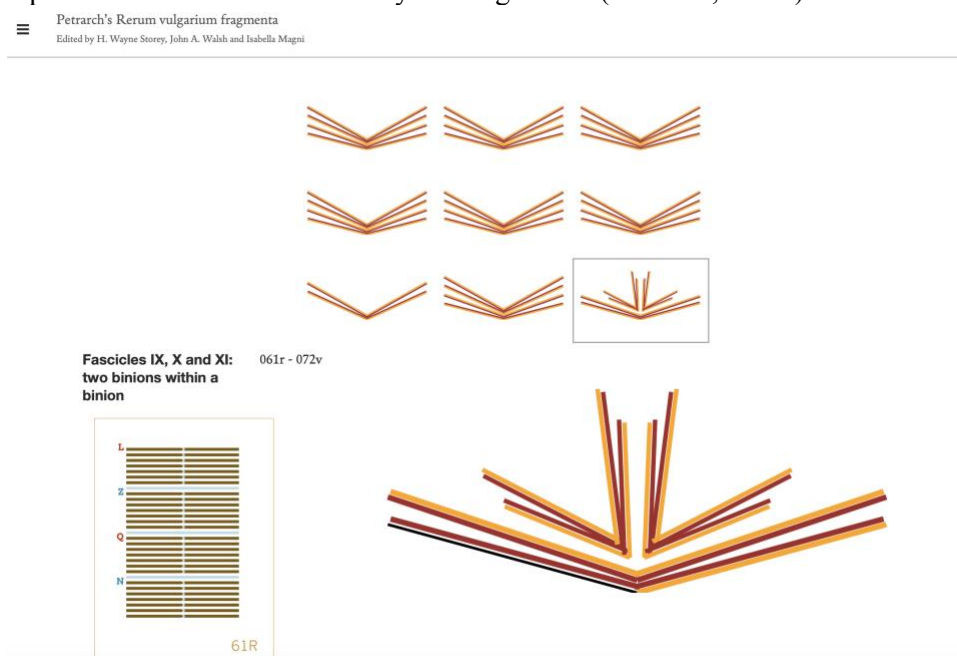


Figure 7. The Petr*archive*: visual index by fascicles. URL:
http://dcl.slis.indiana.edu/petrarchive/
visindex_fascicles.php

[11] Five quaternions (cc.1r-40v) in Part I and two fascicles (cc.53r-60v) (cc.61r-62v and 71r-72v) in Part II.
[12] Another quaternion (cc.41r-48) in Part I and four more *chartae* (c.59r-62v) in Part II.
[13] This last section includes four *chartae* at the end of Part I (cc.49r-52v) and the last binion added towards the end (cc.69r-70v) with the transcription of canzone *Quel' antiquo mio dolce empio signore.*

Digital tools allow us to start from what we possess, the material evidence, and to dig below the surface to re-discover the original contexts in which the text was produced. Through carefully studied TEI encoding and the virtual representation on the web page of the different aspects of Petrarch's *Fragmenta* - its textual and graphic, temporal and spatial components – the Petr*archive* aims at re-building the structural and visual principles implemented by the poet himself at the level of single *charta*, fascicles and macro-structures and therefore to re-propose Petrarch's editorial choices, diminishing the distances between the experience of contemporary users and that of manuscript readers in the medieval context and providing innovative ways of teaching and conducting philological and literary research.

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