XEDITMAN: A XML Editor for Manuscript Descriptions

Pavel Pavlov

Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
5 James Bourchier Blvd., Sofia 1164, Bulgaria
E-mail: pavlovp@fmi.uni-sofia.bg

Abstract

The paper presents the specialized editor XEditMan (XML Editor for Manuscript Data) which is an XML-oriented tool for editing and browsing catalogue descriptions of mediaeval manuscripts. It offers a friendly interface for entering data on mediaeval manuscripts and visualisation of the descriptions already available.

1 Introduction

In the last years we witness the growing interest to the conservation of cultural heritage and enabling a convenient access to it in electronic form. One of the essential matters in this field of work is related to organizing the workflow of data entry in a way which guarantees effectiveness and accuracy of the efforts.

In this paper we present an integrated tool which makes possible entry of data and visualisation of catalogue descriptions of Old Bulgarian manuscripts.

2 Architecture and Functional Capabilities of XEditMan

XEditMan is actually a set of tools: editor for new document, editor for existing document and a visualiser. The editors are currently oriented towards the use of the descriptions compatible with the document type definition (DTD) structure suggested by the project MASTER (Manuscript Access through Standards for Electronic Records) and adopted by the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI).

The editor of new document is used to enter data arranged in the order, which is natural for the subject domain. During the data entry the elements which are filled in appear in a sequence which is adopted in the manuscript cataloguing practice. The interface is both in English and Bulgarian languages. It is organized as a librarian worksheet (see Figure 1) and this facilitates preparing electronic descriptions by people who are not acquainted in detail with the DTD structure.

In two cases repetitive elements are possible: description of scribes and description of texts appearing in the manuscript. In these cases, during the first entry the user supplies the data on the first scribe (respectively, text) and the total number of scribes (texts). Then when the description is opened with the editor of existing texts, the respective number of elements appears in the window and makes possible the entry of the information on the other scribes (respectively texts). There are several types of elements in accordance with their values: with no value, with supplied values, and combo boxes for choice of possible value.

Typical fields for direct data entry are name and date. Elements, like material and manuscript status, are supplied with combo boxes containing possible values. Fields like watermark and collation have the value “No information” entered by default. If there is no information about the element, the specialist who enters data does not have to bother with writing this text again and again.

After the data are entered, the users clicks a button “Save the description” which generates the XML document conformant to the MASTER project DTD and all element identifiers appear according to the DTD.

The tool can be used also for visualization of single descriptions in two modes: complete descriptions or user-selected group of elements.

The visualisation of a complete description is based on the use of a chosen XML document from the collection. It is executed by a designated component of the XEditMan environment.
The partial visualisation is useful in cases when users are not interested to see all available data, but only some of them. This method of visualisation is performed in two stages in XEditMan: in the first stage, the user chooses which data he would like to see and on the second stage the data which were chosen are visualised.

3 Conclusion

XEditMan was experimentally used in the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics for the first mass data entry of Old Bulgarian manuscripts. Currently, an electronic repository of 807 manuscript descriptions prepared with the assistance of XEditMan is available. We hope that this will lead to a better access to the manuscript heritage of Bulgaria.

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