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The Association for Literary and Linguistic Computing
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A flexible model for the collaborative annotation of digitized literary works

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1. Introduction

The Complutense University has been one of the first European universities that has collaborated with Google’s project by putting on the Web 100,000 volumes from its ancient fund. However scholars notice that these digitized texts are often of no much use to professors-researchers-students in literature unless additional tools are provided, to enhance the educational and research value of this material. In particular, the ability of making annotations on these texts has been largely recognized as a basic mean of adding value to this kind of digitized resources (Rios da Rocha et al. 2009). In this paper we present the annotation model used in @Note 1.0, a system developed at UCM funded by the Google’s 2010 Digital Humanities Award program.

@Note 1.0 allows us to retrieve digitized works from Google Books collection and add annotations to enrich the texts with research and learning purposes: critical editions, reading activities, e-learning tasks, etc. One of the main features of @Note annotation model, which distinguishes it from similar approaches (Azouaou & Desmoulins 2006; Bechhofer et al. 2002; Koivunen 2005; Rios da Rocha et al. 2009; Schroeter et al. 2006; Tazi et al. 2003), is to promote the collaborative creation of annotation schemas by communities of researchers, teachers and students, and the use of these schemas in the definition of annotation activities on literary works. It results in a very flexible and adaptive model, able to be used by many different communities of experts in literature defending different critical literary theories and for different annotation tasks. In this paper we present this annotation model.

2. The @Note Annotation Model

2.1. Structure of the model

The structure of the @Note annotation model is summarized in the UML class diagram (Booch et al. 2005) of Fig. 1. In this model:

- Annotation management communities are groups of annotation managers, experts in literature (teachers, researchers, etc) who act as administrators to create activities, to select works and to organize activity groups.

- Annotation communities, in their turn, are groups of annotators, students / pupils interested in literature who perform proposed annotation activities.

- Each annotation activity comprises (i) a digitized work, (ii) a metalevel-oriented annotation schema, (iii) a work-oriented annotation schema.

- In this context, the works are the literary texts that can be annotated during the annotation activities. Annotations, in their turn, are characterized by: (i) an annotation anchor (the region of the work to which the annotation refers), (ii) an annotation content (a free rich-text piece that actually configure the annotation), (iii) a set of annotation types (semantic qualifiers for annotations) chosen from the annotation schemas attached to the annotation activity (at least one from the metalevel-oriented annotation schema).

Figure 1: @Note information model
- The annotation schemas are explicit formalization of the types of annotations that can be carried out on works. In @Note, annotation schemas are hierarchies formed by annotation types and annotation categories (sets of annotation types and/or others, more specifically, annotation categories). In their turn, they can be metalevel-oriented annotation schemas (schemas which usually comprise concepts concerning particular literary theories around which the annotation activities are articulated), or work-oriented annotation schemas (schemas that capture aspects relative to the relationships between annotations and their anchors). While schemas of the first type are created by annotation managers, schemas of the second type are usually created by annotators.

2.2. The annotation process

The @Note annotation process governs how to create the different types of information elements envisioned in the annotation model. For this purpose, @Note introduces a set of rules governing aspects like information visibility, creation and modification privileges of annotations and annotation schemas, etc. Although, by lack of space, these rules will not be detailed here, in Fig. 2 we include an example concerning an informal description of some of the rules governing the management of annotation schemas.

2.3. Annotation browsing and recovering

Annotation schemas in @Note are seen as T-boxes of description logic theories (Brachman & Levesque 2004). For instance, Fig 3a shows, edited in @Note, a fragment of the annotation schema used at UCM in an English Literature introductory course, while Fig 3b despite the description logic’s counterpart. This simple interpretation is still powerful-enough to enable powerful annotation browsing and annotation recovering behavior. Indeed:

- Annotations can be browsed using annotation schemas, in a similar way to a folder explorer in a filesystem. In each step, there is a category or a type selected, and the user will see all the annotations entailed by such a selected element.

- Queries consist of arbitrary Boolean formulae involving annotation types and categories, being the outcomes the annotations entailed by such formulae.

In both cases, since entailment will be performed according to the description logic principles, the process will take into account the is-a relationship made explicit by the annotation schema.

2.4. Some technical details

The system has been entirely developed using Google technologies for the development of Rich-Internet Applications (RIAs) (Fraternali et al. 2010): GWT in the client side and the Google App Engine’s facilities in the server side (Unruh 2010). Fig. 4 shows some snapshots of the system. The current version runs on the fully free-access books integrated in Google Books, and, in particular, on the UCM-Google collection. The works retrieval is achieved by the use of the Google Books API through REST (Richardson & Ruby 2007), and then presented to clients in an asynchronous way to keep them responsive to their events.
This work has been funded by Google with a grant of the Google’s 2010 Digital Humanities award program entitled Collaborative annotation of digitalized literary texts. Additionally, this work has been performed in the context of the project grants of the Spanish Ministry for Research and Innovation (FF12008-056924-C02-01 and TIN2010-21288-C02-01), UCM (PIMCDs 2010/177 and 2011/313) and Santander-UCM (GR 42/10 - 962022).

References


Notes

HyperMachiavel: a translation comparison tool

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1. Introduction

The HyperMachiavel project started with the idea of a tool that would aid research communities comparing several editions of one text and in particular comparing translations.

The Italian studies department (Triangle laboratory) at ENS de Lyon has been working for many years on fundamental texts, from Machiavelli, Guicciardini and other contemporary followers, that put forward new political concepts throughout Europe in the 16th century. The question addressed in the project was mainly about the transfer of these concepts from one language to another, and especially their reception in France. The first aligned corpora tested in our tool gathers different editions of Machiavelli’s Il Principe, the princeps edito from Blado in 1532 and the first four French translations of the 16th century.

Inspired by machine translation and lexicographic domains, the system presented in this paper proposes an annotation environment dedicated to the edition of lexical correspondences and offers different views to assist humanities researchers in their interpretations of the quality and the specificities of translator’s work.

2. Viewing and Searching in Aligned Corpora

2.1. Synoptic View

To be able to identify lexical correspondences, machine translation tools usually propose a frame of two panels, one for the source text and the other for the target text. The visualized interface is meant for annotators to easily revise the results obtained from automatic word alignment. In general it only considers a pair of texts at a time.

In the world of digital editions, text comparison has always been of great interest and the request to view diplomatic vs normalized transcriptions, or simply