

Lab: Encoding Prufrock in *Poetry Magazine*

Goals:

- To familiarize ourselves with reading a periodical for its editorial unity
- To begin literacy of the XML transcript's structural encoding
- To think about the nature of the digital using an actual digital object

Part I. (15 minutes)

Break into small groups of 3 and look together at “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” in the June 1915 issue of *Poetry Magazine* at the Modernist Journals Project.

http://modjourn.org/render.php?id=1201885119281250&view=mjp_object

You may pick one, two, or all three of the viewing methods (PDF, Page Image, Thumbnail), whatever you prefer. Discuss the following questions and come up with responses to share with the class:

1. How does the poem's embodiment in the pages of *Poetry* seem different than the other editions you've encountered? What is similar?
2. Think about the publication date of June 1915, and then look at other material in the magazine (poems, editorials, advertisements, cover – everything is fair game). Pick one thing that seems to have a significant relationship to “Prufrock,” given the historical context. How does this thing influence your interpretation of the poem?

Part II. (20 minutes)

Use a plain-text editor (*not* a word processor such as Word) on your computer to open the XML file supplied in the lab download (Poetry033_06.3.tei.xml). There are a couple ways to do this:

- Windows/Linux: Right-click on the .xml file and select Open With.... Then, choose the application. For Windows users this will likely be Notepad. For Mac users you can select TextEdit. If you use Linux you already know what to do.
- Browse to the text editing application on your computer and open it. For Windows, the path is likely Start > Accessories > Notepad. For Mac, go to Finder > Applications > TextEdit. Then, go to File > Open... and browse to the .xml file.
- Go to your computer's search bar, type in the program, open it, and then open the file.

Once you are viewing the XML file, spend a few minutes thinking together about the following questions and come up with some responses to share with the class. Feel free to look at the PDF or website versions of the magazine to compare with the XML file.

1. Look at the code and content at the top of the document. The content is encoded by a system of tags, which are abbreviations wrapped in angle brackets (i.e. `<title>Poetry, a Magazine of Verse</title>`).
 - a. What kinds of patterns do you see in the tags?
 - b. In what ways do the XML tags seem to be encoding the document? In other words, what are they “saying” about the document and “doing” with the content?
2. Use the Find function in your editor to get yourself to “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”
 - a. How does the poem seem to be encoded?
 - b. What aspects of the digital (cf. Manovich, Peters) does this seem to embody?
 - c. Does it change your interpretation of the poem?

Part III. Roundup

What new insights about “Prufrock,” poetry, and digital texts did you gain today?