A Digital Presentation of The Text of Servius

Or, an exploration of the perception and presentation of the book, the text and the image.
This work forms a small part of my PhD thesis and is very much work in progress.

One aspect of my thesis is the exploration of both the perception and the presentation of book, text and image.

Marius Servius Honoratus (fl. 400 CE) is identified as the writer of a detailed commentary on Virgil’s works.

Servius’s text as a whole has not been re-edited and printed since 1881. One of many reasons for this might be related to the perception and presentation of text.
**SERVIUS’S TEXT**

**Lemma From Virgil** followed by Servius’s commentary on the text. Comments can be of varying length and complexity, and often include references to other sections of Virgil’s work, or to other writers’ works.

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**P K Marshall:**

‘As far as I am aware, it has never been proved exactly how the original was presented. Most people simply assume that the work was published separately from the text of Virgil …’ (Marshall, 1997, 15)

The text was also reused, adapted and subject to change in presentation as well as content.
Early Editions

Books contain multiple texts:

Text included within image

Full colour image illustrating the scene from the text

Text in brown ink on parchment in rustic capitals

Page from the Vatican Virgil, Aeneid 6.
Servius's commentary presented as interlinear gloss on Virgil's text (Aeneid 4.1-8):

Texts distinguished by different colours and scripts. Initial decorative dropped capital — text as image.
A page from Sebastian Brandt’s 1501 edition of Virgil’s works.

Virgil’s text in the centre, in a larger font, with links to the commentaries.

Woodcut illustration depicting the scene described by Virgil.

Servius’s Commentary, among others, presented surrounding the text of Virgil.
The commentary adds prestige to the text it comments on, and gains prestige by being part of that text.

Text and image merge — by overlapping on the page and through the use of illustrated lettering.

The page looks impressive — reading occurs of both texts and images simultaneously.
CURRENT STATE OF THE TEXT

LATIN

Thilo and Hagen (1881) — hard copy, PHI CD, on-line at Perseus (Aeneid only)

Harvard Servius (1946-) — Aeneid 1-5 … ‘labours on’ (JJ O’Donnell)

ENGLISH

McDonough, Prior and Stansbury (2005) — Aeneid 4 only
A Page of the Harvard Servius

Different columns to separate Servius’s text from the ‘additional scholia’.

Critical apparatus to indicate alternative readings at the foot of the page.

This layout writes the text as antiquarian, academic and for technical analysis.

For practical use, this layout requires familiarity with Virgil, familiarity with Latin, untangling the layout.
SEMIOLOGY OF THE PAGE

Typography and page design carry meaning

- This is a classic serif font (Minion pro)
- This is a classic sans serif font (Myriad pro)
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- This font is based on an uncial script
- This font resembles rustic capitals (Herculanum)
- This is a chancery font (Apple Chancery)
- This is a gothic black-letter font - Cantebriggia
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- This font is classically inspired (lithos pro)
- This is a typewriter font (Prestige)

Contemporary fonts can signify just about anything
and do so only through encoded differences

(Irvine, 1999-2006)
Semiology of the Page

Layout and page design also add meaning to the text:

Continuous print with no interruptions¹ signifies the text as being ‘academic’ and serious. This text is normalised and has little or no variation in typescript, colour or size. It contains one continuous narrative. Any illustrations are entirely separated from the text and printed elsewhere in the publication.

¹ other than footnotes or end-notes to indicate sources or extra comments. Such comments are seen as the ‘aside’.
The Digital Text ...

- Economic cost — avoided in digital text
- Dynamic text — text can be presented differently at different moments
- Hyperlinks to crossover points — dynamic links can lead the reader in different paths through the text, like a mind-map or an adventure-map
The Digital Text ... leads to

- Different way of reading — this encourages a non-linear reading pattern. The reader chooses which links to follow and takes a more active part in creating their version of the text.

- Different criteria for selection — when laying out the pages in the way I do, I have to make very different decisions than standard editors about which sections of text I use and why. These decisions have some similarity to those made in earlier editions in that they are influenced in part by considerations of aesthetic appearance.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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David Wright, 1993. The Vatican Vergil: a Masterpiece of Late Antique Art, University of California Press.

The French Ministry of Culture, Collection of Illuminated Manuscripts: http://www.enluminures.culture.fr/

The French National Library: Gallica Library: http://gallica.bnf.fr/
List of Illustrations

Slide 1: Image of Servius, digitally adapted from the frontispiece of Virgil, Opera, Bernadino de Portesio, 1510, Venice (found in Patterson, 1987).


Slide 5: Detail of a manuscript showing the start of Book 4 of the Aeneid, with Servius’s comments interwoven in red. Virgil, Aeneis, 14th century, Carpentras - BM - ms. 0362, folio 26. Image taken from: http://www.enluminures.culture.fr/

Slide 6: Detail of page cxlv verso, from Sebastian Brandt’s 1502 edition, with the text of Aeneid 1.494-500, showing a range of commentaries (including Servius) surrounding the Aeneid from Gallica Library. Superscript letters placed in Virgil’s text link to the commentaries to ensure a reader can find their place in both.

Slide 7: Detail of a manuscript showing the start of Book 2 of the Aeneid, with Servius’s comments in a column underneath Virgil’s poem. Virgil, Opera, late 15th century, Dijon - BM - ms. 0493, folio 74 verso. Image taken from: http://www.enluminures.culture.fr/

Slide 9: Section of a page from the Harvard edition of Servius, showing the text in multiple columns and spaced according to sources. The text is from Aeneid 3.569-571 edited by Stocker and Travis, 1965, 206.