RECITAL

Combining crowdsourcing and expertise in Digital Humanities

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Context: Comédie-Italienne history

RECITAL: Registres de la Comédie-Italienne



CETHEFI - Centre d'Études



des Théâtres de la Foire et de la Comédie-Italienne

Literature and history lab aiming at studying fairground theaters and Italian Comedy in Paris around XVIIIth century

Multiple approaches

- edition and study of unedited plays (Ciresfi)
- musical studies and database (Theaville)
- VR reconstitution of no longer visible theatres (VESPACE)
- accounting registers study (**RECITAL**)



What are we expecting to learn from accounting registers?

- \cdot performed plays titles
- sold tickets (by category)
- expenses (taxes, accessories, musicians)
- \cdot theatre accounting

We want to learn generalities, but also find out exceptional things/events





Data to re-think theatre history

Economic history

author's royalties, subscriptions, accounting rules...

Social history

audience composition, placement, involved actors...

Hardware history

sets making, costumes...





Historical investigations...

Leone : Lion (a turkey actually)

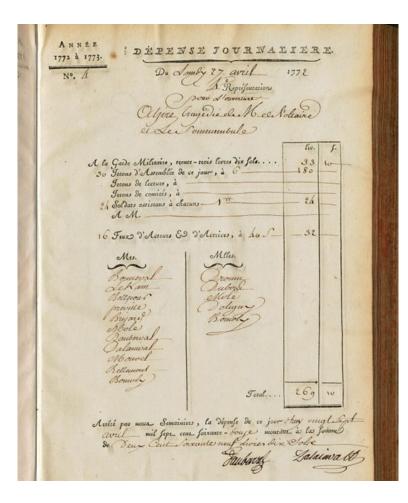
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A similar project is underway on Comédie Française registers

See https://www.cfregisters.org/



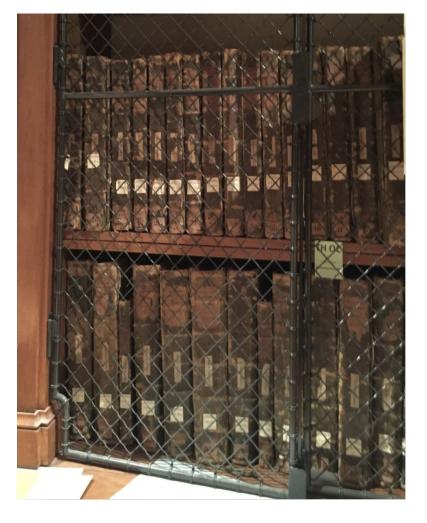


The corpus



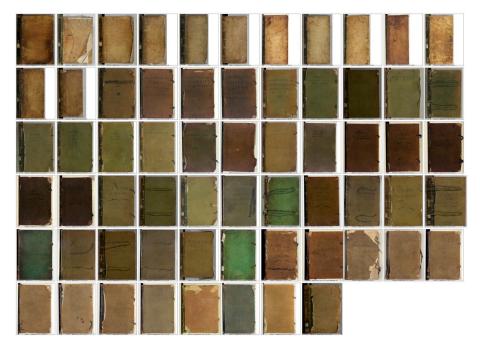
Accounting registers kept under the roof of the Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra





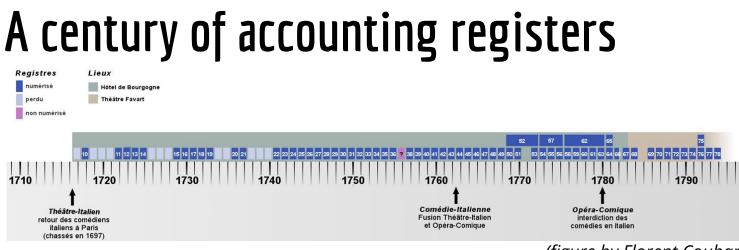


Available corpus



Registers for Comédie-Italienne - now available on Gallica





(figure by Florent Coubard)

- 1 Register = 1 Theatre Season, from April to March
- digitized corpus: 1717-1794 (with 13 seasons missing)
- 64 registers of 300 to 600 pages
- about 26 000 pages



Anatomy of a register



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10%

Blank pages Daily accounts Monthly accounts Final state + various 10% 77% 3%

TH-OC-42 register (1760-1761) - 373 pages



Original corpus characteristics

- Handwritten pages
- · 2+ languages: French and Italian (various dialects)
- · 7+ « bookkeepers »: from Alborghetti to Linguet
- · Currency of the Ancien Régime : Livre-Sou-Denier
- $\cdot \,$ All along the century
 - formal changes of balance sheets
 - updating of accounting rules



Digitizing approaches

Two complementary approaches

Automated (AI-based)

VS

Manual (expert+crowdsourcing)



Al automation

Usage of AI for segmentation and transcription

- PhD work by Adeline Granet during the project (2015-2018)
- Difficult corpus characteristics + lack of ground truth (bootstrap)

Off-the-shelf open solutions now exist for HCR

- Transkribus: mostly open-source, but recent paying model for using models in SAAS mode.

eScriptorium (web interface for Kraken): open-source

Crowdsourcing approach

- more tedious, workforce-demanding
- fit for irregular contents
- more apt at identifying exceptional/interesting items
- a requirement for building the ground-truth
- issues of data quality evaluation and data validation



Crowdsourcing platform - ScribeAPI

ScribeAPI software

issued from the Zooniverse project

MIT-licensed

Ruby-on-Rails platform



Crowdsourcing tasks in short



3 activities

- Mark (segment and categorize)
- Transcribe
- Verify



Crowdsourcing interface

8 different page types Déterminez le type de la page cicontre :

COUVERTURE

INTRODUCTION

ETAT

COMPTE QUOTIDIEN

COMPTE MENSUEL

COMPTE ANNUEL

PAGE VIERGE

OK

Inclassable ?



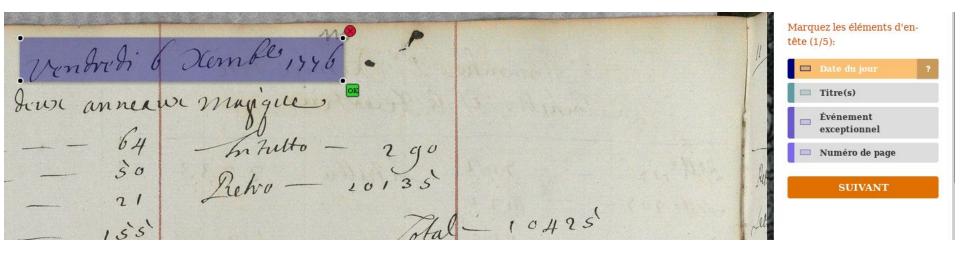
Crowdsourcing interface - marking

133 data categories - displayed according to the page type

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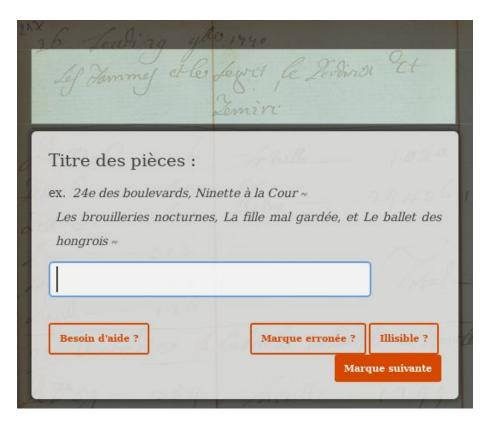


Crowdsourcing interface - marking





Crowdsourcing interface - transcription



Les femmes et le secret, la perdrix et Zémire



Crowdsourcing interface - verification





ScribeAPI

Pros

- Open source
- Collaborative annotation of images
- Able to express chained task sequences (mark-transcribe-verify)
- Well thought interface (accessible to non-technical users)

Cons

- Complex architecture/model
- End-of-life reached in 2016



Open-Source and Technical debt

Official ScribeAPI - End-of-Life in 2016

Dependencies on old versions of Ruby, js/coffeescript, Mongo, unbuildable as-is now

Current server/dependencies dockerized

But not all hope is lost

effort by Utrecht University to update critical dependencies (unmerged pull request)



After crowdsourcing - ongoing work

- Data quality evaluation
 - first phase crowdsourced (peer-reviewed verification)
 - second phase automated
 - third phase manual
- Data cleaning and validation
 - custom tools, using external information (list of play titles, actors...)
 - dedicated user-interface (dashboard) for experts
 - integration of Al-based tools
- Data publication
 - FAIR principles
 - collaboration/links with other projects/data



If you want to contribute, welcome at...

https://recital.univ-nantes.fr/



