Abstract: Digital and critical text editions and databases, Elisabet Göransson

In the ancient library in Alexandria from the 3rd century BC onwards, scholars and copyists were bringing together important texts for analysis and preservation. They realized that no single text as witnessed in the manuscripts was identical, and started to compare the manuscripts they collected to make sure that these important vessels for knowledge and culture would not be forgotten or dispersed. Their ambition was to give justice to the texts they were studying in their work and produce editions of texts that would be representative and easy to access for any person interested.

Today, the main goal and ambition of the scholars working with texts and their representations in critical editions and in databases remains basically the same. During this research seminar, I would like to give a background to text editions by presenting the major differences between the methods for editing texts and how they are presented today in published printed or digital editions and/or databases. I will show how "traditional" printed critical editions have been produced and used and give some contrasting examples of recent and/or ongoing digital critical editions and databases. As a basis for a discussion I will give some perspectives concerning the work scholars can pursue in this area in our digital era. What happens when this scholarly work process becomes mainly digital: is this type of work fundamentally changed, or not changed at all? The collaborative database project I am working in for the moment has as its aim the presentation and analysis of different versions of the sayings of the Desert Fathers and the reception of these texts into many different languages. The project will be discussed within this framework; advantages and disadvantages with this type of project will also be brought up for discussion.