

## Guidelines for Annotating VHL Texts

**Please note:** As you may have already discovered, the VHL texts interface does not work correctly when viewed with Internet Explorer, which does not comply with some commonly accepted standards and technologies we are using. Please use a free, standards-compliant browser such as Netscape/Mozilla, Firefox, Safari, etc.

Thank you for your interest in annotating with us! This document will acquaint you with how we imagine the annotation engine will be used, as well as with our overall vision of the Virtual Humanities Lab. All of this is subject to change, and this change may be prompted by any interested party: we are aiming to create an environment that scholars will actually use. If you have any suggestions or bug reports, please let us know your thoughts. If it is technically feasible and if resources permit, we will try to address the issue. If it is not possible to do so right away, we'll note it for the future.

While the VHL is in development, we are limiting annotation to those texts that we put up: Boccaccio's *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante*, Villani's *Nuova Cronica* and Pico's *Conclusiones Nongentae Disputandae*. In the future, we hope to open up the annotation functionality to other texts.

### 1. I want to annotate a text. What do I do?

Please sign up for a free account on the VHL discussion forum [link] and read through the guidelines for posting there. Then write a post to the appropriate discussion board (s) introducing yourself and your research interests. Following that, please feel free to start annotating within the appropriate discussion forum for your text. The existing group of annotators will participate in the forum to the extent of their availability, and may invite some of the forum participants to annotate directly within the text.

### 2. OK, I've got an in-text account. What now?

That's it! You may log in by clicking "LOG IN" [link] at the top of any VHL page. (This pertains only to the set of pages that constitute the section of VHL devoted to working directly with the texts. This set excludes the VHL weblog, the discussion forum, and the project description pages stored on the Italian Studies Department's site.)

### 3. The in-text annotation interface.

If you look at any section of any text, you will see a legend of the symbols we use for viewing annotations and encoding. You will notice that the red editing links are greyed out. Once you log in, they will become red.

To make an annotation, click on the white A on red background next to the section of text that you want to annotate. You will see a series of fields on the right-hand side.

In the field labeled *Anchor word or string*, type or paste a short phrase from the text, verbatim, to which you want to anchor your annotation. Think of it as if it were a

footnote, and use the phrase located immediately before where the footnote mark would appear.

Write your comment in the *Annotation text* field. You may use HTML for formatting and/or hyperlinking, if you wish. There is no need to use the <p> and <br> elements; they will be inserted automatically.

If you would like to anchor this annotation to another section of a text, which is not currently displayed, choose the *Not done yet* radio button and highlight the appropriate text section in the box beneath it. Otherwise, choose either the *finalize* or the *cancel* radio button. Click on the gray *Enter* button.

If you chose *Not done yet*, the page will reload to show you the section of text you had selected. The text of your annotation will be preserved in the form, and you will be able to edit it further. This process can be repeated as many times as necessary.

If you chose *Cancel*, you should get a green notification stating "Okay, annotation cancelled."

If you chose *Finalize*, you should get a green notification stating "Success! annotation added to VHL database. Thankyou." You will then be able to click on the *view annotations* button and see your note in the green notes field that pops up, overlaying the text. From there you will be able to modify or delete your own annotations.

If things don't work as described above, and the error message is confusing, please feel free to contact us. If you have further questions after reading this document, please let us know also.

#### **4. Annotating in the Forum.**

Click on the forum in which you want to post. Unless you are verifying index entries, this will likely be called "General / Misc."

Then click on "new topic" and give your topic a subject line (with some placement identifying information). In the message body, the first line should be an anchor: a word or phrase copied and pasted directly from the text and hyperlinked back to the appropriate section of that text. Write the text of your annotation below. As long as you are logged in, you do not need to sign your annotation. Once you are done, click "Preview" and/or "Submit".