

# At the origins of textual criticism

After the initial enthusiasm with which printing was welcomed, doubts soon arose about the quality of the text printed by typographers. This gave rise to the editorial curator, what we would call today an editor, i.e. a person capable of checking, with his linguistic skills but also by comparing various codices relating to the same work, the authenticity of the text to be printed. Medieval copyists transcribed from a manuscript, and were not immune to errors. The editors of the printed texts also used a manuscript as a model, on which they would make corrections and integrations before handing it over to the typographer. Both through their knowledge of Latin and Greek and through comparison with other manuscripts, they would try to obtain a text as close as possible to what was presumably written by the author.



Unfortunately, there are only a few cases in which the manuscript used for the printed edition has been preserved, because after its use it was considered useless, and in any case was in poor conditions. Only manuscript models of about forty editions are known, about a third of which were found in Italian libraries or in the Vatican Library. After the proofreader's intervention, the manuscript passed to the typographer, who placed the necessary markings on it in preparation for the composition of the page to be printed. Therefore, one can see, for example, markings for dividing the text; numbers corresponding to the presumed page number, useful for calculating the division of the volume into booklets; markings separating the words destined to occupy the last and first places of the final and initial folios respectively. Sometimes one can see markings left by typographers during the printing process: as they handled the manuscript, they left ink stains and fingerprints.