

THE *ENCYCLOPAEDIA* IN 2018: A COLLABORATIVE AND ARGUMENTATIVE DIGITAL EDITION

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MLT: Good morning Irène Passeron. A brand-new edition of the *Encyclopaedia* has just been posted online. You are one of the four people leading this new edition entitled ENCCRE, with two C. So, what does the name ENCCRE mean?

IP: E for Edition, N for Numérique, the first C for Collaboration, CR for Critical, and E for *Encyclopaedia*. So ENCCRE stands for Collaborative and Critical Digital Edition of the *Encyclopaedia*. The website, freely accessible, is brand new. It allows the consultation of the *Encyclopaedia*, to wander in all sorts of ways, to navigate, to do all kinds of searches in the *Encyclopaedia*'s articles or in its splendid plates.

MLT: We can find several versions of the *Encyclopaedia* on the web. Why imagine a new one? What are its specificities? What is your goal?

IP: Our goal is to deliver a reference edition accessible via the Internet, which means it first must be reliable, then well-documented and critical: it needs to provide commentaries and explanations allowing a better understanding of the work's implications. Like the *Encyclopaedia* itself, which deals with all areas of knowledge and their connections, ENCCRE is a collaborative venture that appeals to historians who specialise in all fields. A historian of mathematics will explain the "Algebra" article, the challenges posed by the new calculus as stated by D'Alembert. A historian of literature will comment on the "Tragedy" article, at a time when Voltaire is considered France's greatest tragic author. Of course, this huge work, 74,000 articles and 2,600 plates, will not be done in a day but will go on for a long time.

MLT: What does a "reliable edition" mean?

IP: There was, in the 18th century and later, a whole host of pirate editions. So, we first need to know if what we have in front of us is the original edition. Because you can find many hybrid and unauthenticated editions on the Internet. The team's first task was to find and digitise an authentic copy of the *Encyclopaedia*, that is to say one that has been identified by book historians. It is Mazarine's library one, in Paris, of which a good photograph of the original copy was made.

IP: The *Encyclopaedia* has recruited nearly 200 collaborators. How many collaborators do you have for ENCCRE?

MLT: First, before figures, let's talk about the diversity of skills required. Historians of medicine, music, metallurgy, geography, literature, etc., historians with strong competences across different domains. If not only scientists but also compilers, illustrators, engravers and printers were needed to produce the *Encyclopaedia*, for ENCCRE, in the digital age, we need to rely on an active collaboration between engineers, computer scientists and researchers. The ENCCRE team now has more than 130 employees of all nationalities because interest in the *Encyclopaedia* is global and growing every day.

MLT: How did you work?

IP: As a result of the development work connecting computer scientists and researchers on the *Encyclopaedia*, we had to start by analysing the encyclopaedic text and knowing precisely its components, that is to say, how a dictionary's article or plate is structured, then labelling them. Using the example of the "Bitterness" article, we have its title, the domain of the designated knowledge, here physics, its cross-references, here referring to "soft" and "bitter", the signature, you can see the circle in parentheses identifying D'Alembert, and its potential bibliographic references. This objective can only be reached with labelling and proofreading campaigns, that we must go through regularly with such challenging a project, and which implies a large collaboration only made possible thanks to a collaborative interface.

MLT: Let us take an example. I find the article "Abada" in the first pages of the *Encyclopaedia*. I can read: "Animal living on the coast of Bengal." What is this animal and what interest does it have for us?

IP: The critical analysis shows two major interests. The first is that the abada is actually a rhinoceros that will only be identified as such later. The second is that it is an article bearing Diderot's mark, a star. So, we see that as early as 1751, in the first volume, Diderot criticises the rudimentary descriptions stemming from travel narratives. "It would be reckless, he says, on such a description, to doubt that the abada is a real animal." No doubt, there is doubt is there.

MLT: We can see the interest of this critical enlightening, but ENCCRE's website also opens other doors, doesn't it?

IP: Absolutely. The search engine of the website makes it possible to launch a multitude of requests on the topics addressed, the authors and the works that they quote, the censure they were subjected to, etc. One can also find on the website a full documentation on the *Encyclopaedia* as well as a database that gradually maps all the studies focused on the *Encyclopaedia* around the world. Lastly, the ENCCRE is a long-term endeavour that will take years to complete. But fortunately, our team is growing every day.

MLT: Thank you Irène Passeron. We wish you bon courage and good luck for your continuing work on ENCCRE's website.