The practice of compiling collections of sayings by Greek wise men and philosophers, or gnomologia as they are properly called, began already in classical antiquity and continued throughout the centuries with increasing regularity into medieval times and beyond. Linguistically, the practice was not confined only to Greek, but it also flourished in other languages in whose culture Greek letters made a significant impact, particularly in Latin, Syriac, and Arabic. Always a popular genre, it was adapted to meet various needs by the societies, or classes within societies, that used it to express themselves. Perhaps originally intended for school-room instruction, the compilation of gnomologies gained a new and significant function during Hellenistic and early Imperial times as the main medium for the propagation of the tenets of philosophical schools that owed their popularity and wider appeal to their ethical content. The Epicureans to a certain extent (the preservation of Epicurus's own kyriai doxai in the form of a gnomology comes immediately to mind), the Stoics certainly (Chrysippus is one of the founders of the genre), and particularly the Cynics (whose main theory of parrhesia an apopthegm with a quick repartee is ideally suited to convey) made sustained use of gnomologies in their teaching.

A natural characteristic of the genre, in all languages, is its fluidity. It is fluid with regard to both the extent or size of each individual collection and the text of the sayings contained in each collection. A particular gnomology may have a greater or smaller number of sayings in each of the various manuscripts in which it is preserved, and it may vary substantially in extent if it happens to have survived in more than one recension. The text also of a discrete saying may vary from one manuscript to the next. Since the very point of a maxim or witticism depends heavily on its form, on the precise wording, attempts to improve upon a perceived imperfection by a transmitter or even scribe must be responsible for many of the textual variants. Furthermore, given the longevity of the collections and the sayings they contain, the development of the Greek language is also a factor in considering textual variations. A wording that made the point perfectly in the fourth century BC in Athens no longer fulfilled the function twelve centuries later in Constantinople, and it was accordingly recast
in a linguistic form more immediately intelligible.¹

Today I am going to talk specifically about problems in editing Greek gnomologia – and, for these purposes, will simply define a gnomologium as a collection or an arrangement of anecdotes and sayings (apophthegms). Specifically I am dealing with a group of collections arranged alphabetically by author. One has a series beginning with, say, an anecdote to the effect that Alexander the Great did this followed by another to the effect that Alexander the Great said that. However, it is usual not to repeat the name of the author, so you get “Alexander the Great did this”, followed by “The same man said that”. Since the name of the author is not usually repeated but just indicated with ὁ αὐτός, it is obvious that many mistaken attributions will arise as series of sayings get copied over time.

There are many bunches of anecdotes and sayings in many Greek manuscripts – they were often used as filler – as in modern magazines – they were also often more than filler: they were deliberately compiled as, among other things, educational resources. Collections of these anecdotes and sayings take on a special interest if you can show connections between them that point to a common source. During the 19th century, there was quite a lot of scholarly interest in such collections. Scholars often tried to mine them for fragments of ancient authors. Smitten with the Lachmannian method, they also were eager to trace the knotty transmission of these collections back to some Ursammlung.

I call my particular group of sources the GV family, GV standing for Gnomologium Vaticanum. The Der Wiener Apophthegmen-Sammlung (WA) was published by Curt Wachsmuth in 1882 from cod. Vindobonensis theol. 149, ff 302v–308v. It is unfortunately rather incomplete, lacking selections for letters B–Π. Gnomologium Vaticanum is the name of a collection of 577 apophthegms, alphabetically arranged by name of author, in cod. Vat. gr. 743 (ff. 6–46v) edited by Leo Sternbach shortly after Wachsmuth’s publication of WA. GV is the most extensive representative of a corpus of apophthegms found in various manuscripts, for example Appendix Vaticana, Florilegium Leidense and several others. For simplicity’s sake, I have designated this tradition as the GV-family, because GV is the more famous and easily accessible collection, now available on the TLG.

I will just say a few more words about the kind of material we are dealing with in GV. A majority of the persons cited are Greek philosophers, although there are also a number of apophthegms belonging to other famous authors and artists (tragic and comic poets, orators, historians, kings, generals, etc.), including even Cicero, who is the latest identifiable name. A few anonymous selections are included, for example, two short fables (nos. 420–421) and sayings reflecting ethnic characters (e.g. a Scythian in no. 534, Spartans in nos.

392–398). Sayings of women are added at the end of the collection. Other collections are have more or less the same content, though with individual variations – wa, for example, has a number of citations from poetry.

The sayings of philosophers show clear affinities with the various series of apophthegms in Vitae Philosophorum of Diogenes Laertius. Aphorisms or apophthegms as a deliberate promotional or instructional strategy were used in various Socratic schools, primarily among the Cynics, and the Cynics are reasonably assumed to have had quite a lot to do with the compilation and diffusion of these sayings. However, sayings were also studied in rhetoric, and the manipulation of sayings (maxims, gnomai, sententiae) and anecdotes (apophthegmata) formed part of early rhetorical training.

The apophthegms generally follow fairly typical forms. For example:

- GV 68: Ἀγησίλαος ὁ Λακεδαιμόνιος ἐρωτηθεὶς ὑπὸ τινος τί ἄν τις ποιῶν γένοιτο πλούσιος, ἐφη· ἐὰν τὰς ἐπιθυμίας παρατήσηται.
- GV 553: Χίλων Αἰσώπου πυθομένου τί εἴη ποιῶν ὁ Ζεὺς εἶπε· τὰ μὲν ύψηλὰ ταπεινοὶ, τὰ δὲ ταπεινὰ ύψοι.

Their style is similar to traditional sayings in other near Eastern cultures, and one might compare such Gospel passages as these:

- Lk 17.20: Ἐπερωτηθεὶς δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν Φαρισαίων πότε ἔρχεται ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς καὶ εἶπεν, Οὐκ ἔρχεται ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ παρατήρησεως, οὐδὲ ἐροῦσιν, Ἰδοὺ ὑδε· Ἦ, Ἐκεῖ· Ἦδο γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστιν.
- Matt. 9.12: καὶ ἰδόντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ἔλεγον τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ, Διὰ τί μετὰ τῶν τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν ἐσθίει ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν; ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας εἶπεν, Οὐ χρείαν ἔχουσιν οἱ ἰσχύοντες ντοῦρ ἀλλ’ οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες.

I would also like to point out that these sayings are not merely sententious thoughts. In fact a large number are quite simply what we would call bad jokes. Many of them are related to typical Hellenistic figures – the philosopher, of course, the tyrant, the world-wise poet or even the inept poet, et cetera. I think we can see clear connections here to new comedy.

Most relevant for us at the moment is the continual presence of these sayings in education. For example, Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1144 contains a number of school treatises covering the liberal arts. It starts with a synopsis of rhetoric beginning with “methods” of the progymnasmata, where we find Aphthonius’ definition of chria or “anecdote” and maxim. This manual is found with others in the first half of the manuscript. The other half is filled with collections of sayings and brief historical or mythological notes, including my gv-related sources Appendix Vaticana I and II – also published by Sternbach.

Before I go on to the editorial problems, I would just touch on the interest of studying this kind of material. For example, Here is one of the brief notices in Appendix Vaticana:
It deals with Cleisthenes and the law of ostracism. The information in this notice has been discussed seriously by historians over the past four decades, since it is one of our few references to the origins of ostracism. Often these collections do provide us with testimony and/or fragments of no longer extant authors. More generally, these anecdotes can be studied both for their language use and as forming a part of cultural history: humour, popular philosophy, and so forth.

Let’s get into some of the editorial nitty-gritties now. Here is a partial table of collections related to GV:

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<th>Collections edited from single manuscripts</th>
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<td><strong>Collection</strong></td>
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<td>Appendix Vaticanana 1 = AV1</td>
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<td>Florilegium Leidense = EL</td>
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<td>Gnomologia Vaticanana = GV</td>
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<td>Neapolitanum 1 = N1</td>
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<th>Collections edited from several manuscripts</th>
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Some of these were published (mostly in the nineteenth century) using a single manuscript. This applies to all the collections related strictly to GV. Some
of the relevant but more distant relatives of GV have received more critical editions based on more than one manuscript – I will not here discuss the problems inherent in these editions.

Instead, let's take a closer look at the editions of collections in single manuscripts. We begin with the manuscript of GV itself. Here is a typical folio. See the name of Isocrates beginning a series of his sayings:

This is what it looks like in the TLG with the same saying of Isocrates:

355 Ἰσοκράτης ἔλεγε· “μεγάλους δεῖ λαμβάνειν μισθούς (παρὰ τῶν) μαθητῶν τούς διδασκάλους, παρὰ μὲν τῶν εὐφυῶν, ὅτι πολλὰ μανθάνουσι, παρὰ δὲ τῶν ἀφυῶν, ὅτι πολὺν κόπον παρέχουσιν”.

356 Ὁ αὐτὸς ἐρωτηθεὶς “διὰ τίνα αἰτίαν τοὺς ἄλλους διδάσκαλους λέγειν αὐτὸς σιωπᾶς”; ἔφη· “καὶ γάρ ἢ ἄκονη αὕτη μὴ τέμνουσα τὰς μαχαίρας τμητικωτέρας ποιεῖ”.

357 Ὁ αὐτὸς ἐρωτηθεὶς τί ἔστιν ἔγρον ῥήτορος εἶπεν· “τὰ μικρὰ μὲν
μεγάλα ποιῆσαι, τὰ δὲ μείζονα μικρὰ τῷ λόγῳ”.

358 Ὁ αὐτὸς εἰπόντος τινὸς ὅτι ὁ δῆμος ὑπὸ τῶν ρητόρων διαρπάζεται ἔφη· “τί θαυμαστόν, εἰ Κόρακος ἐφευρόντος τὴν ρητορικήν οἱ ἀπ’ ἐκείνου κόρακες εἰσίν”.

If we were to have a look at Sternbach’s 1889 edition reprinted in 1963 we would find that Sternbach printed each item separately with copious notes in Latin mentioning all the parallels he could find (the total number of parallel sources cited is enormous). At the foot of the page comes critical annotations. It’s amazing erudition but disorganized and unwieldy.

Within the research program Ars Edendi, my particular goal is to produce a suitable printed edition not only of the Gnomologium Vaticanum itself but of it and the related collections. This is fraught with a number of editorial problems of which I will proceed to mention just a few. Ah. Where to begin? – I mean that’s the problem: where to begin. Normally when you want to edit a text extant in various manuscripts, you choose as a starting point a lead manuscript. But does that work here? No. What criteria would determine it? Age of the manuscript? They are all more or less equally old – and, as we all know, age is not a good criteria. Besides, we do not really have one text extant in various witnesses. Each collection is in some ways unique.

A complicating factor in editing gnomologia is that they are often compilations of compilations, rather than original compilations. What do you do with compilations of compilations such as the Corpus Parisinum that I edited a few years ago? The compiler of this corpus took from his sources – including some GV-related source – and rearranged his selections, and yet not thoroughly. In the GV-related case he went from an alphabetical collection of apophthegms to a non-alphabetical but still author-arranged collection of both sententiae and apophthegms attributed to the various authors, and yet put any leftovers in an alphabetically arranged collection like GV. The diagram below attempts to show something of this confusing method. GV itself shows a number of traces of deriving its selections from variously arranged sources.

Diagram 2: CP-compiler’s confusing method

Another editorial problem is how to select the best text. Now GV is the larg-
est representative of the group but does not necessarily have the best text. But what can one mean by best text in this case? Below are shown GV 147 and variants in other sources:

**GV 147** Βίας ὁ σοφὸς ἐρωτηθεὶς ὑπὸ τινος τί ἂν εἶη ἄφοβον [πράγμα] εἶπεν· ἡ ὀρθὴ συνείδησις.

**AV I 26** Βίας ὁ σοφὸς ἐρωτηθεὶς τί ἂν εἶη ἄφοβον ἐν τῷ βίῳ ἔφη· συνείδησις.

**FM 25** Βίας ἐρωτηθεὶς τί εἴη ἂν ἄφοβον ἐν τῷ βίῳ, εἶπεν· ἡ ἀγαθὴ συνείδησις.

**AIPM 16** Βίας ἐρωτηθεὶς ὑπὸ τινος τί ἂν εἶη ἄφοβον εἶπεν· καθαρὰ καὶ ἁμωμος συνείδησις.

These differences may not be due to mistakes. They may simply be deliberate scribal variations. After all these collections were often used for instruction. We recall the presence of AV in cod Vat gr 1144. AV has a very close relationship to ms. N (Cod. Neapolitanus Graecus II D 22). Though some scholars simply call N a gnomologium, it is not: It is an example of Schedographia applied to sayings in a gnomologium very like AV. According to the schedographic method, individual words of the text of each saying or item are accompanied by:

- Interlinear glosses
- Grammatical and etymological analysis of individual words
- A list of words showing the same phonetic features

Given the widespread educational use of this material, textual variations were regularly and often intentionally introduced by teachers and/or students in copying out the sayings, so the “best text” does not exist in the usual sense.

One major question an editor has to ask him or herself is: what am I editing? In the case of a gnomologium like GV, I ask myself: is my primary goal to edit the individual sayings or to edit whole collections? Although it may be likely that the GV-related collections derive from a single source, which we may be able to uncover by stripping away all the “interpolations”, it remains very difficult to establish the mutual relationships between the sources. I am not giving up on it. However, given the evidence we have to work on, any final conclusions will be highly subject to uncertainty and may in the end be just a reconstruction of something that never really existed.

So what is an editor to do? Actually, this kind of material does in fact lend itself very well to digital solutions. This is why, together with Charlotte Roueché of Kings College London and Elvira Wakelnig of the University of Vienna, I am editing digitally a number of collections through the **SAWS**, Sharing Ancient Wisdoms. The aim of the **SAWS** project is to use new technology to present and analyse the tradition of wisdom literatures in Greek and Arabic.
To publish our texts and express these relationships, we will use **XML** (eXtensible Markup Language). **XML** is:

- An international standard for the exchange of data
- A ‘metalanguage’ – a language for describing other languages
- Able to describe what something means, not just how it should appear

The difference between **HTML** (HyperText Markup Language) and **XML** is that of a typographic versus semantic description. Thus, **HTML** describes graphic structures, while **XML** describes the conceptual structure. Using standard **XML** will allow us to:

- embed meaning within the transcribed text
- produce each of the required outputs and indices
- ensure interoperability with other projects

To express the relationships within and between texts, we will use **RDF** (Resource Description Framework). This is another internationally agreed schema, for expressing relationships. **RDF** extends the linking structure of the Web to use **URIs** (Uniform Resource Identifier) to name the relationship between things as well as the two ends of the link.

As I said, using **XML** allows us to embed another level of meaning within the transcribed text. Basically it is a sophisticated way of indexing a text. In my **GV** project, our starting point for the tagging is a more or less diplomatic edition of each collection in each manuscript. We are also creating a large database of sayings – basically tabulating the sources. In the database each entry has item number but each item also retains a numbering for its placement in the source collection.

In the digital edition, you can choose to view a saying as it appears in its context in a specific collection. You can look at a diplomatic layer or a standardized layer. Real nerds can also choose to see it in its **XML** layer. Of course, if we get permission to photograph and display manuscript pages, we could also include that on a home page. You can also view each saying with all the variants. Obviously you can tag for other things – keywords – and get all the sayings involving, say, women and wine. A possible Wiki function could be added to allow authorized users to filter away irrelevant variants.

Of course, we intend to use our hypertext to explore relationships. Here is a simple example: **GV 87** (diplomatic layer):

```
ὁ αὐτὸς ἐρωτηθεὶς τίνα μᾶλλον ἀγαπᾷ, καὶ ἐπεὶ ὁμοίως ἀμφοτέρους· ὁ ἐν γὰρ μοι μακεδόνος τὸ ζῆν ἐχαρίσατο· ὁ δὲ τὸ καλὸς ζῆν ἐπαίδευσεν·
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You can choose to see parallels in other sources:

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GV 87 Ὁ αὐτὸς ἐρωτηθεὶς τίνα μᾶλλον ἀγαπᾷ. Φιλίππον ἢ Ἀριστοτέλην, ἐπεὶ ὁμοίως ἀμφοτέρους· ὁ μὲν γὰρ μοι τὸ ζῆν ἐχαρίσατο, ὁ δὲ τὸ καλὸς ζῆν ἐπαίδευσεν.
```
Alexander, asked whom he loved more, Philip or Aristotle, said: “Both equally, for one gave me the gift of life, the other taught me to live the virtuous life.

Plutarch, Life of Alexander 8.4.1

Aristotle admired Aristotle at the start and loved him no less, as he himself said, than his own father, since he had life through his father but the virtuous life through Aristotle ...

Diogenes Laertius 5.19, Life of Aristotle

Aristotle said that educators are more to be honoured than mere begetters, for the latter offer life but the former offer the good life.

You may be interested in the Arabic parallels:

وقال الآباء هم سبب الحياة والحكماء هم سبب صالح الحياة

Here we have gone from a saying of Alexander about Aristotle to a saying of Aristotle then to an Arabic saying attributed to Pythagoras. If you look at the Arabic saying you discover, moreover, that there is a verbal connection between this text and the parallels in \(\text{wa}\) and \(\text{cp}\) which is not present in the version in \(\text{gv}\).

There is a major problem, as I see it, in these kinds of digitizing projects, and that is the question of the conservation or maintenance of the digital information. Once a book edition of a text has been printed and distributed, well, there...
you have it in lots of libraries. It can last for centuries. However, websites need to be maintained. You need a durable host institution to agree to keep it available, and to convert the information in the case of technological developments requiring an updating. Therefore, while I am genuinely excited about the possibilities which the SAWS project offers for the study and organization of the material, I am still aiming at working out a method for editing the gv-family in printed form, hopefully in the Les Belles Lettres series which has already expressed its interest.