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About the balance between science-based accuracy and user-friendliness

As every other dictionary the project Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm – Neubearbeitung is faced with a common difficulty. On the one hand the demand for accuracy of the lexicographic information presented has to be fulfilled sufficiently. On the other hand the organization and presentation of the lemma article has to be as condensed and short as possible for economic reasons. As a result, there are a number of layout elements (different character styles, abbreviations, various forms of brackets, paragraphs, structuring marks and others) that are supposed to define the parts of the article as well as to differentiate between types of information. I know from experience that even expert users of the Deutsches Wörterbuch often neither are able to completely identify the information offered in the articles nor are they aware of the correct decoding of the layout elements. Interestingly, the current design was to some extent created in reaction to the Grimm brothers' somewhat careless practice of employing presentation elements in the first volumes of the Deutsches Wörterbuch. Some examples will illustrate the complex system of structuring and other elements, which, while aiming at a very high accuracy, can be rather difficult to understand for users.

Finally, there will be taken a closer look at the perspectives a digital lexicographic system could offer in this respect.