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NEWSLETTER
of the
ASSOCIATION FOR
DOCUMENTARY EDITING
ADE Council

Don L. Cook, president, of the Department of English, Indiana University, Bloomington IN 47405.
John Y. Simon, past-president, of the Ulysses S. Grant Association, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL 62901.
Charles T. Cullen, president-elect, of the Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Princeton University, Princeton NJ 08544.
Raymond W. Smock, secretary-treasurer, of the Booker T. Washington Papers, Department of History, University of Maryland, College Park MD 20742.
Kathleen Waldenfels, director of publications, of the Joseph Henry Papers, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC 20560.

The Newsletter of the Association for Documentary Editing is published quarterly by the Association’s director of publications. Correspondence on editorial matters and books for review should be addressed to Kathleen Waldenfels, Joseph Henry Papers, SI-149, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC 20560. Inquiries about membership in the organization and notices of change of address should be sent to Raymond W. Smock, secretary-treasurer, History Department, University of Maryland, College Park MD 20742.

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Historical Editing: The Federal Role

SIMONE REAGOR*

As a discipline history compels our attention because of its power to help us understand the present, and, thereby, to influence the shape of the future. The historian, whether consciously so or not, shapes the future while in the very process of reflecting upon the past. Historical documents provide the raw materials with which that shaping is done. They are the unsculpted base to which scholars and teachers apply their theories, their knowledge, and their biases. Historical documents are our primary cultural carriers; they are the records of the past that carry, like genes, possibilities for the future.

But what are the factors determining whether documents are saved to be used by historians, to become cultural carriers? In many instances, documents are initially preserved because it is thought they may have a further use related to their original purpose, as is often the case with legal records. At another level, many documents are saved by accident; materials are just tucked away and forgotten. But eventually, at some point in the chronology of an historical document’s development, someone makes a judgment. At some point, someone decides, "This document is important because it may say something about the past that should be carried into the future." At that point, a cultural carrier has been consciously brought into being.

This process by which people make decisions turning written materials into cultural carriers goes on when materials are deposited in libraries and archives. It becomes an even more refined process at the later stage when materials are selected for documentary editions. Editors then exercise power in creating cultural carriers both through what they choose to annotate and through what they say. In today’s world funders are also part of this process, for when granting organizations select editorial projects for financial support they are participating in the creation of cultural carriers.

At every stage in this process decisions are influenced by social and political factors, including class and gender roles. In my explorations of American cultural history, particularly in examining the development of the institutions and resources that are the infrastructure of that culture, I have become increasingly conscious of the way social and political factors shape these institutions and resources. Every scholarly project, including historical editions, is shaped to some degree by these elements.

When I began work on this paper, I started from the assumption that I would discover a range of arguments to justify continued federal funding for documentary editing through the powers of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission structured much as we have come to know it. My effort to think through this question has, instead, brought me to quite another position. Whatever options we may now have about federal funding, I no longer believe that we should replicate what we have had before. I do not believe it is wise to continue funding for historical editing through the commission under the guidelines of the past.

Before offering my version of what I think a more appropriate role for the federal government would be, I would like to examine the past. Historical editing as a modern academic pursuit came into being over the past three decades in the wake of the Founding Fathers projects, which largely because of the scholarly and political efforts of Julian Boyd were able to win government attention and then financial support from both the private sector, through the Ford Foundation, and from the federal government, through the commission.

The figures for what has been accomplished in this period are impressive. By 1979 the NHPRC had spent over $13,000,000 and had generated an additional $18,000,000 or so from private sources. In terms of numbers of projects, the 1979 annual report of the commission indicates that the agency had as of that date supported 83 book editions and 149 microform editions. That is a great deal of historical editing in so short a time.

Unquestionably, this field takes its present shape from the work, politics, and funding that had been generated by the commission. The commission’s growing influence over the past 30 years developed because its powers were increased in several ways.

First, the basic powers of the commission were expanded significantly. After President Harry Truman’s strong endorsement of Boyd’s Jefferson edition in 1950, the commission received a mandate to encourage, advise upon, and support the development of documentary editing. For more than a decade the agency shaped and nurtured documentary editing both inside and outside the federal government through its role as an advocate. Then in 1964 the commission won the additional legislative authority and an appropriation from Congress with...

* Simone Reagor is head of sponsored research at Harvard University. This paper is a shortened version of a paper delivered at a session on documentary editing at the Society of American Archivists meeting in Berkeley in September 1981. Although Reagor was co-author with Henry Graff of a recent study for the NHPRC on historical editing, these remarks are not to be associated with that report. Comments by John Y. Simon, who chaired the panel in Berkeley, are printed below.
which to make grants. Since that time the commission has functioned both as the principal intellectual force shaping historical editing in American history as well as the primary source of funds for its support.

In these years the commission has also moved beyond supporting projects that relate to the founding of the nation, the original area of its focus, to supporting historical editing in general. This broadening of the scope of projects supported occurred, I think, largely because of changes in the field of history. As a result of the radical reinterpretations of the sixties and seventies many American historians came to view our national development not primarily as the product of a few great white men, but rather as a complex mosaic reflecting the lives and energies of vast numbers of people—men and women of many races and ethnic groups. In response to this shift in the field of history, the commission expanded its attention. In the early seventies the commission actively solicited a broader range of projects. Special committees were appointed to recommend lists of editorial projects in black and women’s studies. Many new types of editorial projects began to be supported, both as book and as microform editions.

Since 1965, while the scope of the commission’s activities was broadening, its financial clout was also growing. Although many may have felt that funding from the commission was inadequate, in fact the funding available from the commission has been quite impressive. From 1954 to 1979, as Kohn and Curtis noted, over $30,000,000 was either spent by the commission or generated by it from private sources, and the growth pattern is remarkable. From 1965 to 1971 there was available from the commission for the specific purposes of documentary editing $350,000 a year; from 1971 to 1975, $500,000; since that time it has been $2,000,000 a year. Even though a significant portion of that sum has been absorbed by the Founding Fathers projects (some 15 to 20% a year), there has remained a very large federal subsidy to the field—since 1975 well over $1,500,000 annually. In comparison to any other comparably sized field of scholarly endeavor in the humanities, it is enormous. We are, after all, talking about historical editing only for American history, not for history in general. Though I do not have specific information at hand, my guess is that there is no funding program, outside of the sciences, in the federal government or in the private sector to match this kind of specialized funding for one scholarly field of comparable size. For example, there is no specialized program for support of American philosophy or literature.

To sum up what has developed over the past 30 years of the commission’s relationship to historical editing:

First, the commission has focused a great deal of money on documentary editing in American history;

Second, the commission has moved from being an advocate for the field to being both an advocate and a funder of projects in historical editing;

Third, the commission significantly broadened the scope of its activities from projects related to the founding of the nation to American historical editing in general. In other words, the commission moved from supporting a fairly narrow part of the field to supporting the entire field. In considering what projects should be done, the commission has asked, “What do historians want? What will they use?” As far as I can tell, they have not been asking, “What is appropriate for Federal support?” and this is, I argue, where the trouble lies.

I do not argue with the relatively large sum of money, as such, that has gone to documentary editing. I hope that in one form or another it will continue, for documentary editions are an important part of our scholarly resources.

Nor do I argue with the reinterpretations of history that led to the commission’s broadening of its scope; for I believe the history of this country is more rightly viewed as just such a complex mosaic than as the result of the actions of a few powerful men.

I do not argue with the scholarly merits of most of the projects that have been supported in recent years. I am a strong supporter of the increase in documentary editing for historical areas that have been neglected. We need more reliable cultural carriers to document the experience, for example, of blacks and women as these groups have struggled to win a fuller interpretation of human rights. Indeed, in my view these fields can in general justify, better than traditional ones, comprehensive and highly annotated editions precisely because there is so little other material available. Full-scale scholarly editions could serve as keys to open up whole new areas for study, teaching, and scholarly enlightenment.

But as weighty and true as these points are, I do not believe they sustain an argument for a specialized federal program for documentary editing as it has come to function through the NHPHC.

Let me restate the key elements of the program. The commission has been the source of major federal funding for one area of scholarly humanistic endeavor, with that government agency holding both intellectual power to influence and shape the field of documentary editing as well as the power of the purse strings.

With this I have several problems.

First, I can find no grounds to justify the selection of this one area of scholarship in the humanities for such intense federal attention. Why historical editing as a field for general support rather than, say, American philosophy? To argue for support of this one narrow field, one should logically also argue for federal programs for other such highly specialized scholarly areas.

Second, such narrowly aimed government programs run the risk of generating projects primarily because there is money available rather than because there is a compel-
ling need in the field. Every project in such specific areas, in this case historical editing, is inclined to think it has a right to a share of the public money designated for those purposes. Though in my view most of the projects supported by the commission have been worthwhile, this is a classic danger of all narrowly focussed federal support programs; scholarly fields need to be particularly conscious of this risk.

Thirdly, and most important, leaving aside our special concern for historical editing as a scholarly field and considering instead the long term health of the mind of the nation, we must retain a cognizance of the risks of federal support for scholarship. While it is undoubtedly desirable to continue federal funding for humanistic scholarly and intellectual work, we must ensure that such support is provided free of too much government influence. This concern must be particularly sharp with regard to historical editing, for we are dealing with the academic field responsible for disseminating our nation's primary cultural carriers. The degree of intellectual influence that the commission, a government office, has exercised over the field of documentary editing has been too great.

I am not suggesting that the commission has consciously exercised an unhealthy influence or intended to develop government control over a scholarly area. On the contrary, I admire the work of the commission and its staff. But the principle is wrong; the risk too great. The nature and degree of that risk become more apparent when we contemplate what the reaction of the scholarly community would be if the present administration in Washington were to suggest the creation of a Presidentially-appointed committee for support of, say, American philosophical and religious documentary editions, giving that committee the powers both to shape the field in general and to control federal funding of specific projects.

No one originally intended that the commission should have such broad powers and influence. It happened slowly and evolved innocently. But innocence of intent is insufficient justification for letting the situation remain. If federal government is to continue to fund historical editing, then the process must be made as free as possible from undue influence. If we are to continue federal support for historical editing, then it should be through a system that returns responsibility for the general shape of the field to the community of historians and scholarly editors. Any commission of the future should be responsible only for editorial projects that are particularly appropriate for such intense federal attention and interest.

The remaining question, then, is whether there is any part of documentary editing that justifies this kind of federal attention?

Richard Kohn and George Curtis criticize the commission for the judgments it has made about what should be edited. They believe the commission has funded too many projects that, in their opinion, are not useful to historians. The agency could best rectify its mistakes, according to these critics, by funding editions on the basis of their true utility, which they go on to define as "records of wide- and permanent-enough interest to justify national dissemination."

I do not agree with these writers that the key to determining projects that are appropriate for specialized federal support is their degree of usefulness to historians generally.

Any effort to determine the extent and nature of the use of such works is largely fruitless. If approached on a quantitative basis, it is extremely difficult to attain the necessary information either from individuals or from libraries, and, in any case, quantitative answers tell us little. Even when we know how many copies of a given edition are sold, we still cannot determine how many people then use those volumes. More importantly, in scholarship the focus must be on quality rather than on quantity. Even one significant use of a volume by a scholar or a teacher could have an important impact on our understanding of history. And who is to say when such a "significant use" will occur? It could be the year the volume is published, or it might be 30 years later.

Grounds for a special federal program for documentary editing must be more clearly defined than the use question permits. Such grounds must provide sound justification for such intense federal attention to a scholarly field.

I believe such grounds can be defined by taking as the basic rationale for such a program the creation of documentary editions that improve the function of or that serve the specific purposes of a branch of the federal government. Under this guideline we can place, first and foremost, any historical editions that contribute to our knowledge and understanding of the Constitution, its history, and interpretation. Any editions that could contribute to the more effective work of the Supreme Court would have the strongest claim for support in such a program. Some of the editions funded by the commission are, in fact, already being extensively used by legal historians and lawyers, as a survey of the Social Sciences Citation Index reveals. The appearance of some of these documentary editions is clearly generating extensive scholarly work in legal history and theory that may have a useful relationship to the work of the Supreme Court.

Any documentary editions that can help elucidate the work and thoughts of those who were intimately and broadly involved in the founding of the nation as it relates to the Constitution command special attention from the federal government. In addition to projects relating to the writing of the Constitution, there may be other subjects (e.g., the vote for women) relating to constitutional issues critical in the development of the nation's history that
would be appropriate for support. Such projects contain the hard evidence needed by the courts, lawyers, judges, and legal historians, that will permit us to continue working out the principles on which rest the civil liberties of us all. These are unassailable grounds for claiming congressional funds specifically in support of historical documentary editing.

Still following the principle of looking at an edition’s relationship to a function of the government, other areas that might command such support could include the National Archives, which may require certain documentary editions to make possible full and effective use of its own resources. A case might also be made for the State Department’s need for papers relating to the history of the territories to ensure the availability of accurate historical material for possible use in diplomatic relations or treaty negotiations concerning geographical boundaries. The commission should serve as the coordinating office, and perhaps the funding agency, for all such projects.

The basic guideline I am proposing as a means of shaping the commission’s work for the future with regard to historical editing is, in fact, related to the question of use. But the question is focussed on whether the materials to be funded are of use to a federal office, not to historians generally.

Adoption of this guideline of use to federal purposes implies something about the nature of the editions that should be supported by such a program. In order to ensure the most complete and accurate use, any editions funded by such a program deserve the fullest editorial attention. Editions should be complete, well-annotated, and fully indexed.

As for the rest of historical editing, which is the larger part of the field, these projects can be directed to and appropriately considered by the Editing Program at the NEH, an existing federal program that deals with the full range of editorial projects in the humanities. Many of these editions are already receiving some support from that office on the basis of their scholarly and humanistic merit.

But, realistically, we must acknowledge that the field of historical editing is about to be pruned. Even if the commission’s responsibilities for historical editing were revised along the lines suggested, which would have the effect of continuing support for some of the larger and more expensive editions, and even if the NEH took on a substantial portion of those remaining, there would still be editions that could not survive. Even if the commission is not reshaped and even if congressional funding is continued, that support will not be on the level of the past.

To prevent this pruning from being unnecessarily destructive Congress should not force the sudden cutting off of any edition that has been created by the commission. A phasing out period is needed during which such projects can be concluded, scaled down, or funded elsewhere. Time must be permitted for staff people to adjust their professional lives. To kill projects thoughtlessly would be as irresponsible as to have funded them originally with an insufficient rationale.

Historical editing must begin to think about itself in new and different ways. This crisis could yet prove to be a timely development, forcing the field to address some issues and trends that, if they had been allowed to continue, could have been as damaging to scholarship as this pruning will be.

2. On this point I am in agreement with Kohn and Curtis, although there are other aspects of their argument with which I disagree.
4. For further comment on the problems involved in trying to determine the use of documentary editions, see Henry F. Graff and A. Simone Reagor, Documentary Editing in Crisis: Some Reflections and Recommendations (March 1981; a report prepared for and available from the NHPRC), pp. 8 and 9.
5. Graff and Reagor, pp. 9 and 10.


Exemplary Citations

In Response...

JOHN Y. SIMON

In urging us to rethink the issue of federal financial support for historical editing down to the fundamental level of what deserves this support and why, Ms. Reagor has done us all a favor. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission has a long prehistory dating back to the seminal thought of J. Franklin Jameson; a period of good intentions and inactivity (1934-50); the age of Jefferson—or of Julian P. Boyd—(1950-64); expanded powers with the addition of grant funding (1964-75); and finally, a bifurcated role with the addition of a records program to its initial mandate. Throughout, there has been an evolving sense of mission, shifts in peripheral concern, and, ultimately, a program of sponsorship and funding based more upon reaction to proposals than upon an initial set of goals.

What Reagor regards as weakness, however, might as fairly be seen as strength. Within the family of long-term sponsored and funded projects, many were founded before the commission had grant funds, and none are totally dependent upon this agency for support; each project represents both a decision by the commission to sponsor or support and a decision by other agencies, institutions, or other sources of funding to provide continuing support. In this dimension, one can argue that each project has passed at least two tests: that of the host institution and that of the commission.

One can sympathize with Reagor's desire to set clear guidelines for commission sponsorship and support without fully agreeing with it. The most sensible and practical guidelines may be violated not by willful editors or bureaucrats but by unruly documents. For example, a recent commission-sponsored publication, Mary Chesnut's Civil War, edited by C. Vann Woodward, violates every standard suggested by Reagor—and perhaps others she might wish to add. The document itself emanates not from the federal government but from a hostile government: the Confederate States of America. The author is no government official recording policy, but a woman reporting what archives would ignore. Editing and publishing the document serves no conceivable federal purpose except the very broadest and most valuable: informing the American people about their heritage. Finally, its appearance provoked—perhaps deliberately—debate over the authenticity of the document itself and its reliability as a historical source.

Let me assure you of my opinion that commission sponsorship of Mary Chesnut was no mistake. For three-quarters of a century a flawed text of this document formed an essential element in the historical understanding of the South, the Confederate government, the history of women, and more. Historians who used the Diary from Dixie—the title given two flawed editions—persistently and unavoidably misunderstood the nature and purpose of this document. Woodward revealed that the document existed on three levels: as a diary kept at the time (and now largely lost), as an abortive effort in the 1870s to create a work of art based on the original diary, and as another effort at literary composition in the 1880s. By choosing to publish the final version (incorporating some excised material from the original diary), Woodward faced criticism that he had published a document that was a hoax and that he could have served historians better by publishing only every word of the remnants of the original diary. Whether such criticism is well-founded or not, we need to focus on the main point: every historian henceforward who uses Mary Chesnut will know what is being used and what degree of truth is conveyed.

The Booker T. Washington Papers, a more traditional commission project now nearing a triumphant conclusion, also illustrates this point. Precisely because Washington (like almost all of his correspondents) was excluded from a major role in the formulation of government policy, his papers have an unusual claim on our attention if we are to arrive at an understanding of the American past. We could not possibly claim that these documents are any less significant in forming current federal policy than those generated by people more politically powerful in their own day. Furthermore, the Washington papers share with the Chesnut diary the quality of surprising as well as enlightening scholars. The Washington edition has presented a more traditional policy than those generated by people more politically powerful in their own day. Furthermore, the Washington papers share with the Chesnut diary the quality of surprising as well as enlightening scholars. The Washington edition has presented a more complex man dealing in a more sophisticated way with the issues of his time than heretofore portrayed by his biographers, and has also illuminated his correspondents. This is not to say that the biographers were lax or unperceptive; documentary editing furnishes a perspective unavailable elsewhere. It is not a mechanical substitute for biography but an independent form of historical presentation with values beyond the biographical.

If we lived in an ideal nation, our political leaders would also be our wisest thinkers and ablest writers. Of course this is not the case, and many vanished statesmen are best memorialized by statues and uncommon denizens of postage stamps. In the end, we may find
that any clear formula for determining what papers should be edited will exclude those very papers which would prove most productive while encouraging with funding opportunities those enterprises which meet the formula but not the needs of scholarship.

In the past, the commission has chosen to sponsor and support editing projects based upon conceptions of what would most benefit a broad community of scholars and, through their use of documents, the American people generally. These judgments have not been beyond criticism, but based, as they are, upon the individual judgments of representatives of leading historical organizations, it is difficult to see how they might be improved by transferring these powers to bureaucratic channels. Could we realistically expect government officials to request documentary compilations which might take fifty years and more to complete? And would they be able to certify that such studies when completed would assist in formulating policy? Of the risks enumerated in the paper, that American history is a "narrow field," that projects may be developed just because money is available, and that the government may exercise too much influence over the editing, not one has been confirmed by the experience of the commission since 1964. Narrowness, boondoggling, and tendentiousness are far more likely dangers in a program conceived to fulfill "in-house" needs.

By calling for redirection of the commission to meet the policy needs of the federal government, Reagor overlooks the existence of a corps of federal historians already fulfilling this need. The departments of State, Defense, and Interior (and there are others) have substantial numbers of historians ready and able to serve them. These historians can perform more ably than historians from academia since they possess special access to internal materials, no small matter when security clearance and declassification are considered. And even historians within the government are forced to look beyond documents in federal custody for documentary compilations. The National Archives employs a microfilm program to disseminate records in its custody; almost any worthwhile editing project based upon such records (like the Territorial Papers) would be flawed by exclusive reliance on any single body or class of documents. Sometimes the distinction between editing by federal historians and the editing by commission projects blurs to the point of disappearance. But it should not be forgotten that work sponsored by the commission is invariably less burdensome to taxpayers and that the commission has scored success after success in making accessible documents vital to an understanding of the American past.

During the past decade, as opportunities for historians to find employment or grant funding have declined, the result has been increasing pressure upon the commission to redirect its efforts toward some innovative, expanded, and ever more secure role within the federal government. Perhaps eventually this pressure may lead either to the destruction of the commission as it now exists or to a drastic change in its mission and mandate. Undesirable as this is, it may be inevitable. The most regrettable conceivable outcome, in my opinion, would be the redirection outlined by Reagor toward unnecessary duplication of historical work already underway in federal agencies.

Reagor's point about duplication of programs between NEH and NHPRC deserves attention. For historical editors, the chance of funding from one or another agency is good news, with any proposal having two chances for success. In recent years, the commission has shifted emphasis from long-term, multivolume, comprehensive editions to short-term selective editions buttressed by microform supplements to provide the entire corpus. In so doing, the commission has moved closer to the standards of the NEH, discouraging undertakings of the sort which have made the commission a government success story. The duplication noted by Reagor might well suggest that the commission would profit by moving in the opposite direction: by reaffirming sponsorship of projects so monumental in size and scope, so difficult to complete, that no other federal agency would care to make the commitment. When President Truman saw the first volume of The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, he instinctively answered the question asked by Reagor: "What is appropriate for Federal support?" Perhaps this is the fundamental principle which the commission should adopt.

Interpretation in Editing

Passage from a letter of James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson dated 9 August 1784, describing a proposed trip to the frontier, as edited by Julian P. Boyd (Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 7:392).

I will certainly see all that my time will admit of. It is possible I may lose my scalp from the temper of the Indians, but if either a little fighting or great deal of ruseing will save it [I] shall escape safe.

1 Monroe, Writings, ed. Hamilton, 1, p. 38-9, gives this almost illegible word as "running," which would be plausible were it not for the fact that such a reading imputes a greater degree of humor to Monroe than his letters usually displayed. The reading given above, a misspelling of an obsolete verb ruse, meaning to retreat, dodge, or detour, seems to fit both Monroe and the scrabble better.

--BRENT TARTER
Interpretation in Editing: The Gallatin Papers

BARBARA OBERG

When I spoke with Nate Reingold about his expectations for this panel and what issues it might raise, he suggested first of all that he had no interest in dictating a format to the members of the panel, and second, that we might keep our remarks brief enough to allow time for discussion on the subject of interpretation. What Nate really meant by the word discussion, is, I believe controversy, because he then went on to express the desire that—or other members of the panel as well—would say something provocative, something which would attack some sacred cows of the editorial profession. My own personal style is not particularly one of provoking controversial or argumentative encounters in meetings, though I can enjoy it when other people do. But I have the strong sense that anything which an editor says in public at an ADE meeting on the subject of interpretation is likely to produce a vigorous debate. The statement made by Robert Leitz this morning directing the annotation of Jack London's letters to “just the facts”, and the responses I sensed around the room indicate that interpretation in editing is a subject on which we can have a good heated dialogue.

I think I will plunge right in, and propose that not only is interpretive editing all that we can do, not only is it proper, but that it is the best chance we have of producing works of history which will stand as classics of historical writing. I want to use as an example of a good, classic, interpretive edition of correspondence and published writings, Henry Adams's three-volume edition of Writings of Albert Gallatin. This is the edition of Gallatin's writings which scholars now have, and which they had for about the last century. In 1877 Henry Adams was engaged by Gallatin's only surviving son to write a biography of Albert Gallatin. He concluded by publishing both a Life and a selected edition of writings. Adams, grandson of John Quincy Adams, and a son of Charles Francis Adams, was a medieval historian, editor of the North American Review, biographer, author of a multi-volume narrative history of the early Republic, philosopher of history, art historian, and novelist. Members of Henry Adams's family had, of course, been closely associated with Gallatin, and John Quincy and Gallatin served together on a diplomatic mission to negotiate the Treaty of Ghent. Adams had, therefore, superb qualifications for undertaking both a biography and an edition of Gallatin's writings. He was an intelligent and knowledgeable person, with an interest in the subject; and we cannot really, on top of all that, expect him to have had training as a documentary editor.

It is Henry Adams's conception of Albert Gallatin which has dominated our knowledge of him, for the little writing which has been done on him ever since relies heavily upon Adams's work. In a period of just under three years, Adams produced two volumes of selected correspondence, one volume of published pamphlets, and a single-volume biography, The Life. What a remarkable record for getting out the volumes; one can only be grateful that he is not here to be held up as a model to us by the NHPRC. Let me examine his work more closely to indicate why it is interpretive. Quite obviously it is the principle of selection that from the beginning of Adams's editorial enterprise, leads to a very clear interpretation of Gallatin, of his life and career, and of his place in the American political and economic system. Like most editions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, there is no annotation. It cannot, therefore, be long footnotes—explanatory, critical or interpretive—which shape the edition. Adams said nothing of editorial method, or what principles he would use to select only a very few of the thousands of documents available to him. Adams ignored almost entirely the early period of Gallatin's life—his life in Geneva, his stay in Massachusetts, and his entrance into state and national politics. Volume I covers the years 1788 through June 1816. But of all the letters included, only two pre-date 1801, the year in which Gallatin assumed the office of Secretary of the Treasury in Jefferson's first administration.

One practical reason for this might be that there are fewer letters extant for the early years of his life, but there are certainly enough available to have included some in the edition. Raymond Walters, who wrote the most recent biography of Gallatin, noted in his introduction that Adams had chosen to concentrate on the national period of Gallatin's life, and to see that as the real beginning of his important political career. But this is a somewhat uncritical judgment of Adams's motives, and rather lets Adams off the hook. In actuality Adams began his edition of Gallatin's politics, only when he began to approve of

Barbara Oberg is editor of The Papers of Albert Gallatin at Baruch College of the City University of New York. This paper was presented to a session on "Interpretation in Editing" at the October 1981 annual meeting of the ADE in Madison.
fall of Rome, so too does Adams's historical writing and reveal Henry Adams as much as it does Albert Gallatin.

...early association with or even knew Aaron Burr. Latin was ever associated with or even knew Aaron Burr. When Gallatin achieved respectability, when he was editing to America, Adams simply noted in the Life that "the act was not a wise one," and then he eliminated that period of Gallatin's life from the edition of correspondence.

The pattern of leaving material out of the edited writings continues throughout the 1780s and 1790s in a way which can only be deliberate, not accidental. The comprehensive microfilm edition of The Papers of Albert Gallatin contains four reels of documents for this period. Most of them—the collection at the New York Historical Society—were among those which were given to Adams by the family, so he had the opportunity to use them. If a scholar were to use Adams's documentary record of Gallatin's life, his emigration to the United States, his land speculations in western Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, West Virginia and Indiana, his part in the Whiskey Rebellion, his brief tenure in the Senate, never occurred. Significantly, there is only one letter there, which is a letter to Governor Thomas Mifflin, September 1794, on the peaceful behavior and general sense of submission to the laws among the people of the western countries. I think Adams liked the sentiments expressed in the letter, and saw it as characteristic of the "true" Albert Gallatin.

I might point out one other interesting omission from the edition. Adams's edition bears no indication that Gallatin was ever associated with or even knew Aaron Burr. No letter from Aaron Burr is included in the edition, yet at least nineteen letters passed between the two men between 1799 and 1801. Nothing is said about the election of 1800. When Gallatin achieved respectability, when he assumed an important, responsible post in Jefferson's administration, and apparently when he abandoned immature political ideas and questionable friends, Adams was prepared to begin the documentary record of his life.

Lest it appear that I am attacking Adams, or soliciting support for a new edition of the papers of Albert Gallatin, I would quickly say that I am instead offering praise to him. What is amazing is that the Adams edition has lasted and that it has served us well, but that it is an outright interpretation of Gallatin and of his place in American history. The edition makes not a single comment on Gallatin; it only omits through a policy of selection, the "undesirable" period of his life. Just as Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire tells us as much or more about eighteenth-century England and about Edward Gibbon's intellectual and emotional biases than it does about the fall of Rome, so too does Adams's historical writing and the edition of Gallatin's correspondence in particular reveal Henry Adams as much as it does Albert Gallatin.

The work remains a monument, however, and one that we must come to terms with. As I contemplate and prepare for a new edition of Gallatin's writings, various issues come to mind. One entire area of discussion which is highly pertinent is that of how much decisions are interpretive from the start, and how seemingly methodological or pragmatic choices very quickly, and with great subtlety, can become substantive. They can determine the direction of the project. I suppose we could compare them to the "accidentals" of Greg's copy-text, recognizing that they are not an accident and that they will be very important to the shape of the edition. A few examples might be the choice of a title, the order of materials (chronological or by series, or in some cases a topical grouping of some materials within a volume); the distribution of volumes (will all parts of the subject's life receive equal treatment, or is there a reason to publish a larger percentage of materials for one given portion of the life?); these are only three obvious examples. In the Gallatin edition, for example, of the proposed six volumes, only half will deal with what has traditionally been characterized as the important portion of his career. The final two volumes will publish a much larger percentage of the extant documents than the preceding volumes, not only because Adams printed a smaller percentage of them, but because they seem to be much more interesting to historians of our time than to those of previous generations.

This is an interpretive decision, and it raises the important question of the influence which outside forces and fashions can have upon the editing of volumes. Adams chose to edit Gallatin because of his profound sense of identification with him. Gallatin was the ideal American statesman, and Adams wrote that his work on Gallatin was a labor of love. Some contemporary editors have chosen to work on particular figures because of a strong sense of attachment to them; some editors, on the contrary, have clearly disliked the figure whose papers they were editing. I can think of two particular examples here. First, a review of an early volume of the Franklin Papers which wished the footnotes did not make it quite so clear the editor disliked Franklin. The second example comes from a review by Aileen Kraditor in 1973 of the Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, in which she noted that clearly the editor of the first volume disliked Garrison, and the editor of the second volume had great admiration for him. So I think that an editor's attitude toward the subject can be very important in assessing what sort of edition will be produced. What is central is that we consider how our own personal, academic, psychological, and even ideological presuppositions can influence our editing.

I mentioned the impact which outside forces and fashions can have upon the edition, and this is an area which has been of great concern and fascination to me. In the most general sense, what we choose to edit is influenced
by very practical matters. What publishers choose to publish and agencies or foundations choose to fund, grows out of the intellectual currents around us. Why do we ask the particular questions of the past which we do at any given time? Why is social history more prominent than political history right now, and what accounts for the attention being directed from editions of individual political leaders to groups, to institutions, to leaders of economic and social causes? The very choice of whom to edit, or who is worthy of an editor, raises for the entire field of historical editing the question of interpretation. To decide to edit someone’s papers is to make a subjective statement. An edition could be a kind of “compensatory history” (the phrase is Gerda Lerner’s) to make up for an area of history previously “underrepresented.” An edition could be subjected to use for a particular partisan, ideological purpose. I am presently highly sensitive to this danger, because Gallatin’s language and fiscal theories can have a highly contemporary and partisan ring to them. It may be that we risk outsiders putting their own interpretations on our work. We want, therefore, to be quite clear in our own minds what it is that we are doing and what interpretation governs the editorial enterprise we are undertaking.

Review


There is rarely unanimity of opinion about how manuscripts should be edited. Some argue for a literal transcription, others for silent emendations made for reader utility. But what of texts where the process of composition is as important as the finished product? The editors of The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin: A Genetic Text have had to face this question, and their solution will be of use to us all.

In those rare instances where we are fortunate enough to have an author’s working copy (usually a manuscript) for a printed work, this earlier form of the text allows us to see the author’s mind—and often his literary skill—during the act of artistic creation. The editor of this type of manuscript usually has two choices: he may present a clear text with textual notes, or he may provide a running commentary or genetic text. (A photo-facsimile text is not a useful solution, both because it is prohibitively expensive and because it does not of itself fully explain the compositional process.)

Placing the textual information in notes appended to a clear text (usually the first stage of the text or the last level of revision) is perhaps the easier solution. For simple revisions, a prose description is sufficient: ‘Herman inserted before Melville’, for example. But when the revision is complicated, the prose summary often becomes confusing and needlessly long. For example, in the published text of Emerson’s essay on “Thoreau” (1862) appears the sentence “But he, at least, is content.” In the manuscript, Emerson wrote ‘But lie there the’; deleted ‘lie there the’; interlined ‘he can’; wiped out ‘can’; continued interlining ‘at [over where ‘can’ was] least, is content.’; and added a comma after ‘he’. One way to handle this is to adopt a formulaic system employed by Fredson Bowers in the William James edition and described in Transcription of Manuscripts: The Record of Variants, Studies in Bibliography 29 (1976): 212-264. In employing Bowers’ system, the quoted text is usually the final revised manuscript reading while the process of revision is described within square brackets. All bracketed readings are cancels and have been cancelled in the manner indicated by the italicized description. An asterisk before a word indicates that the inscription of the word(s) and punctuation immediately following was done in a manner described by the bracketed information coming after; all words and punctuation between that asterisk and the square bracket are part of the described material. In cases where further revision takes place within described material preceded by an asterisk, a double asterisk is employed before the first word of such intermediate material. Thus, the formulaic rendering of the Emerson passage is ‘But [‘lie there the’ del.] *he, **at [over wiped out ‘can’] least, is content.’ intrl.; comma after ‘he’ added. Bowers’ system, which I have employed in my “Emerson’s Thoreau: A New Edition from Manuscript” (Studies in the American Renaissance 1979 [Boston: Twayne, 1979], pp. 17-92), does take some getting used to, but repays the effort by its careful attention to the exact stages of composition.

The major drawback to a clear text with notes is that the reader must reconstruct the revisions in a separate effort. The genetic text—in which the notes are incorporated into the text—does not have this problem. Perhaps the best-known genetic text is the long-running The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. William H. Gilman et al., 14 vols. to date (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-). In this edition, cancellations are indicated by angle brackets (<> ) and insertions by up-and-down arrows (↑↓). Write-overs are indicated by having the closing angle bracket flush with the initial letter of the word written over the cancelled word, as in ‘<good> well’. Thus, in the first example I gave, we would have ‘↓Herma↑Melville’. The second example is more complex: ‘But <lie there the> ↓he↑, ↓can > at least, is content.’. This form of genetic text allows the reader to see the original reading, the process
of revision, and the final reading in one motion and in one
place.

However, the more complex the manuscript, the more
strain is placed on the system of reporting. One of the
most intriguing examples is Melville's *Billy Budd Sailor*
(*An Inside Narrative*), ed. Harrison Hayford and Mer-
ton M. Seals, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
1962), wherein eight stages of the text (with twenty-nine
substages) have been identified, the manuscript is in-
scribed in ink or pencil (or both), and the revising process
is described using some dozen editorial symbols. The
genetic text is sometimes hard going, but the result is emi-
nently useful, especially when read in conjunction with
the "reading text" (that is, a technically uniform text such
as a publisher would prepare for the general reader).

Lemay and Zall have chosen to present a genetic text
similar to that used in the Emerson *Journals*, with two ad-
ditional symbols. Angle brackets and arrows still indica-
te, respectively, cancellations and insertions, but braces
now surround "material written over by the follow-
ing material." Because Franklin wrote "in only one
column on each page, leaving the other half of the page
blank for later additions or revisions, "double arrows
(↑↑ . . ↓↓) are employed around these columnar addi-
tions. A section of textual notes elaborates on material
not fully described in the genetic text. The result is an
easy-to-read genetic text which accurately presents the
growth of Franklin's *Autobiography*.

In addition to the genetic text, the editors' introduction
discusses the four stages of composition; the manuscript
(now at the Henry E. Huntington Library) in terms of
its physical properties (type of paper and watermarks),
foliation, and pagination; gives a history of the manu-
script's provenance; describes four other contemporary
copies of the manuscript; and gives a history of the early
printings of the *Autobiography*. A detailed index to
the introduction and Franklin's text completes the book.

One surprising finding of this edition is that the 1964 Yale
University Press edition (edited by Leonard W. Labaree
et al.) was prepared from "a photocopy—not the original
manuscript," and "perpetuates more than fifty substan-
tive errors from previous editions" while failing to report
many of the cancellations in the manuscript.

We should be grateful to Lemay and Zall for giving us
this detailed study of how Franklin wrote his *Autobiog-
raphy*. It should become, as the editors say in their in-
troduction, "the basis for every future conscientious edi-
tion of a clear text . . . of the autobiography."

JOEL MYERSON
University of South Carolina

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**Editing Conferences**

The Eighteenth Annual Conference on Editorial Prob-
lems will be held at the University of Toronto on Friday
and Saturday, 5-6 November 1982. It will be devoted to
the topic of *Editing Polymaths: Erasmus to Russell*. For
further information and registration forms, please write
to the Treasurer, Dr. Sharon Butler, 14285 Robarts Li-
brary, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario,
Canada M5S 1A5.

The second meeting of the Society for Textual Scholar-
ship will be in April 1983. Instead of holding conferences
annually as originally planned, the society will meet bi-
nially. Special meetings in conjunction with the conven-
tions of various professional organizations may be sched-
uled during the off years.

The first annual volume of *TEXT* (1981), scheduled for
publication by the summer of 1982, will include G.
Thomas Tanselle's presidential address as well as pieces
by Claire Badaracco and Fredson Bowers. Volume 2
(1982) may be published later in the year. Submissions for
future volumes are invited.

Further information about *TEXT* and the Society for
Textual Scholarship is available from D.C. Greetham,
CUNY Graduate Center, 33 West 42nd Street, New
York, NY 10036.

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**NEH Editing Program**

The deadline for applications to the Program for Edi-
tions of the National Endowment for the Humanities is
1 October 1982. The program accepts applications for
funding of scholarly editorial projects (book or micro-
film) in all fields of the humanities. Final decisions on ap-
lications are made in late May for funding beginning as
early as 1 July 1983.

For information on eligibility and the program's spe-
cific guidelines, contact:

Program for Editions
Division of Research Programs, MS 350
National Endowment for the Humanities
806 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20506
(202) 724-1672

Hearings on the FY 1983 budget for the National En-
dowment for the Humanities were scheduled for April 29
(House) and May 11 (Senate). The administration's
budget request was for $96 million, which is $34.6 mil-
lion less than the $130.6 million appropriated for FY
1982.

William Bennett, Chairman of the NEH, recently an-
nounced a new grant program for projects commemorat-
ing the bicentennial of the Constitution.
Editors and Their Work

As this issue was going to press, we learned of the death of LYMAN HENRY BUTTERFIELD in Boston on 25 April. A former associate editor of the Thomas Jefferson Papers and director of the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Butterfield was best known as editor in chief of the Adams Papers at Massachusetts Historical Society. As editor of the Adams Papers from 1954 until his retirement in 1975, Butterfield set new standards for historical editing in the United States.

WILLIAM J. MORGAN recently retired as Senior Historian of the Naval Historical Center (Naval Documents of the American Revolution) and as head of the Historical Research Branch, a position now held by WILLIAM S. DUDLEY. MICHAEL J. CRAWFORD, formerly an NHPRC Fellow with the Adams Papers, joined the Naval Historical Center in February.

ROBERT R. CROUT, previously an editor of Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution at Cornell, has become an associate editor with the Jefferson Papers in Princeton.


DAVID CHESNUTT (The Papers of Henry Laurens) is conducting a survey of editorial projects to see whether there is sufficient demand to justify the purchase of a Kurzweil KDEM scanner by the Computer Center of the University of South Carolina. The Computer Center would charge only enough to recover costs. Initial estimates indicate that a page of typescript could be scanned for about $1.30 instead of the $2.00 a page charged by commercial service bureaus.

The Papers of John Marshall is seeking an assistant editor, to begin 1 September 1982. Advanced degree(s) in American history, with specialty in early national period; research background in constitutional and legal history preferred; training or experience in documentary editing highly desirable. Successful candidate must demonstrate ability to write well and capability to do exacting research. Salary negotiable depending on qualifications and experience. Send credentials by 1 June 1982 to Charles F. Hobson, Editor, P.O. Box 220, Williamsburg, VA 23187.

Commentaries Celebrated

The first volume of Commentaries on the Constitution was presented to representatives of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and Congressional leaders at a ceremony in the Old Supreme Court Chambers in the Capitol on 23 February 1982. The four-volume series is part of the Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution being edited at the University of Wisconsin.

Editors from the Jefferson Papers, the Marshall Papers, editing projects in the Washington area, and staff members from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission joined the Wisconsin editors to celebrate the publication of these documents which are so rich for interpretation of the Constitution of the United States.

The collection and publication of these public and private commentaries from widely scattered newspapers, pamphlets, broadsides, and manuscripts, were made a part of the Ratification of the Constitution project by the late Merrill Jensen, to whom the first volume of the Commentaries is dedicated. The project is sponsored by the University of Wisconsin and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission; the State Historical Society of Wisconsin is the publisher.

Following remarks by William Proxmire, senior Senator from Wisconsin, Robert Warner, Archivist of the United States, John Kaminski on behalf of the project's editorial staff (Gaspare Saladino, Richard Leffler, Douglas Clarin, Michael Stevens, Charles Hagermann and Gail Walter), and Norman Risjord of the University of Wisconsin, volumes were presented to Mark Cannon, representing Chief Justice Warren Burger, Senator Proxmire, and Hyde Murray, clerk to the House minority leader. A reception followed in the Dirksen Senate Office Building.
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Job Placement

The ADE is offering job placement assistance on an experimental basis. If you know of positions in which ADE members might be interested, please contact:

David W. Hirst
The Papers of Woodrow Wilson
Firestone Library
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey, 08544
Telephone (609) 452-3212

Members who wish to use this service should send 10 copies of a resumé (not to exceed 3 pages) and include a covering letter with additional information for the placement officer.

Mark Your Calendar

The fourth annual ADE meeting will be held in Columbia, South Carolina, on 7–9 October 1982. David Chesnutt and Charles Lesser are in charge of local arrangements. Charles Cullen is chairman of the program committee.

ADE Memberships

The Association for Documentary Editing was founded in 1978 to "encourage excellence in documentary editing by providing means of cooperation and exchange of information among those concerned with documentary editing and by promoting broader understanding of the principles and values underlying the practice of documentary editing." Membership is open to any person interested in documentary editing upon payment of one year's dues.

To join the ADE or to begin an institutional subscription to the Newsletter, please circle the appropriate category and send the form with payment to Ray Smock, Secretary-Treasurer, History Department, University of Maryland, College Park MD 20742.

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