Winter 2006

ADE 28th Annual Meeting, Quincy, Massachusetts, 20-22 October 2006, Annual Meeting Session Summaries

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ADE ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

ADE 28th Annual Meeting
Quincy, Massachusetts, 20–22 October 2006

Annual Meeting Session Summaries
Compiled by Editorial Staff

20 October 2006


The first session of the annual ADE meeting in Quincy, MA, was a structured discussion about the planning, implementation, and maintenance of digital versions of the “Legacy Volumes” of the writings of Jonathan Edwards, George Washington, and the Winthrops and Adams. All editions reported on their respective experiences with content analysis and coding schemes; how they captured the print version for online presentation; their wrestling with the complexity of indices, especially as those had to be translated into search functionality. Issues of quality assurance and user interface require close collaboration between editors and programmers, an augmentation of the circle of people responsible for making editions work online. All of the editions expressed concern over the extraordinary balancing act that is called for when weighing the need for cost recovery with considerations of marketing and access.
21 October 2006

Breakfast: Robert A. Gross, Draper Professor of Early American History, University of Connecticut.

Robert Gross presented the riveting tale of two examples where editorial insight and skills combined with careful historical reasoning resulted in extraordinary reviews that revealed fraud and deception in writings that had passed muster by many different kinds of historians before those fabrications were finally exposed for what they were.

Explaining Who We Are as Editors: Chair: Beth Luey, Editorial Consultant and Arizona State University, emeritus; Dennis Conrad, Naval Historical Center; Wesley T. Mott, The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau, Journal, Worcester Polytechnic Institute; Barbara Oberg, Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Princeton University; Beverly Wilson Palmer, Florence Kelley Letters, Pomona College; Leslie S. Rowland, Freedmen and Southern Society Project, University of Maryland.
The panel of editors commented in various ways on why and how editors are special. In pursuit of a craft, even art, editors are born as well as made. In the academy of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries they are typically trained in disciplines that are not well understood and are appreciated very little by peers in English, History, and Philosophy. In part, this lack of understanding and appreciation by peers in the discipline is tied to the editors' need for technical expertise as well as scholarship and for an atypical collaborative work mode. It is also a reflection of the misconception by the public at large, which equates editors with copy editors. All panelists emphasized the need to educate peers, and the institution to whose research reputation they contribute, that editing is a field with extraordinarily well-developed research and methodology opportunities for scholars in training and that warrants classification as a career in the academy with all the aspects of productivity and evaluation that characterizes scholarship on the national and international levels. Equally important is the recognition of the impact of the editors' work not only on the research of their peers in the discipline but also on a more general audience that is much larger than most other scholarly treatises can reach effectively and enthusiastically.

Preparing the Next Generation of Editors: Chair: Joel Myerson, Emerson Family Papers, University of South Carolina, emeritus; Ellen R. Cohn, Papers of Benjamin Franklin, Yale University; Theodore Crackel, Papers of George Washington, University of Virginia; Elizabeth H. Dow, School of Library and Information Science, Louisiana State University; Philip B. Eppard, Editor, American Archivist, and Co-director, U.S. Research Team, InterPARES Project, Information Studies Department, University at Albany, SUNY; Elizabeth Hall Witherell, The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau, Davidson Library, UC Santa Barbara.
In their presentations the panelists, all seasoned editors, were cognizant of the generational shift that has begun to take place and that is likely to completely transform the role of editorial projects—large and small—in the first half of the twenty-first century. With increasing emphasis on contemporary projects online, the fragmentation into sub-specialties in traditional disciplines, and with the need to make all forms of scholarship profitable, the panelists, in various forms, underscored the need to draw young scholars into the profession, make the ADE count as a professional association, convince institutions to respect, support, and reward scholarly editors—textual and documentary editors alike—and find ways to install and maintain a new generation of managers of large, long-term projects.

The Impact Editions Have Exerted on Scholarship: Chair: Ronald A. Bosco, Emerson Family Papers, University of Albany, SUNY; Carole DeBoer-Langworthy, Department of English, Brown University; Ann D. Gordon, Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Rutgers University; Larry Hickman, The Center for Dewey Studies, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; Ralph Harry Orth, Emerson Editions and The Vermont Encyclopedia, University of Vermont, emeritus.

This panel's textual and documentary editors reported what effects their respective editions have had, ranging from single-author, single-editor print editions to multiple-volume hard-copy and online projects. In their experience the impact on the scholarship has never been negligible but also has not been a uniformly positive influence. Even with their respective editions in print, in microfilm, or online, authors working on related topics did not always consult the editions, perpetuating mistakes and myths. Balancing that inability of educating all scholars with correct information and new materials and insights is that democratizing effect of the editors' work when it reaches a wide audience—often an international one through the materials posted on the web.
Rewriting New England’s and Women’s Literary History: Chair: Jayne Gordon, Director of Public Programs and Education, Massachusetts Historical Society; Phyllis Cole, Mary Moody Emerson Editorial Project, Pennsylvania State University; Helen R. Deese, Journals of Caroline Healy Dall; Megan Marshall, The Peabody Sisters; Linda Smith Rhoads, Editor, New England Quarterly; Conrad E. Wright, Ford Editor and Director of Research, Massachusetts Historical Society.


This session had two rather specialized foci that posed particular challenges to the editors of Caroline Healy Dall; Sophia Hawthorne Peabody; contributions of female writers in the New England Quarterly, including Emily Dickinson; and Henry Adams’s Education, respectively. Women’s journals and letters typically differ from those of men in terms of content as well as scope, emphasizing private matters and everyday life even in the most extraordinarily gifted writers, thereby captivating non-traditional modern audiences but at the same time being forced to make choices in the selection of materials, editorial methodologies, and forms of output because of considerations concerning cost recovery.

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“The Law Is ... Uninteresting and Boundless”: Documentary Editions of Legal Papers: Chair: Robert F. Karachuk, Ph.D. Candidate in History, University of Connecticut; Anthony M. Joseph, Department of History, Eastern University; Robert Frankel, Associate Editor, the Documentary History of the Supreme Court of the United States, 1789–1800; Don Roper, SUNY-New Paltz, emeritus.


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The final session of the meeting brought together editors of legal papers, ranging from the writings of individual lawyers to decisions of the Supreme Court. Report about the experiences of these specialized editors included fascinating insights into the way lawyers and the courts worked, beginning in the early national period and extending into our own time; what impact legal minds and court decisions have had on American society and culture and whether it is necessary or helpful to undertake the edition of legal papers with formal legal training in place or as editors who learn about the law as they work on the writings of lawyers and justices.