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The ADE Annual Meeting Sessions, Boston, Massachusetts, October 1997

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The ADE Annual Meeting Sessions

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, OCTOBER 1997

Joys and Horrors of Editing Scientists and Scientific Philosophers

Chair: Nathan Houser

This panel, chaired by Nathan Houser of the Charles S. Peirce Edition, addressed three broad questions: What are some of the special problems and characteristics that distinguish editions of scientists from other editions? How has the growth of computing changed the editing practices in these projects? And what are the likely consequences of shrinking federal funding? Frederick Burkhardt, Albert Lewis, Robert Rosenberg, Mark Rothenberg, and Robert Schulmann each briefly described their editions (Charles Darwin Letters, Bertrand Russell, Thomas A. Edison, Joseph Henry, and Albert Einstein, respectively). After discussing the questions posed initially, they concluded that there are no inherent differences between editing documents of literary or historical figures and scientists, but that there are some additional difficulties. For example, editing scientific papers may require technical competence that editors may not have; inclusion of drawings, diagrams, and notebooks may create special design and typographical problems; authorship may be difficult to determine when scientists worked collaboratively in research groups. Both the computer revolution and funding cutbacks have affected scientific as well as historical and literary projects.

Forum on Federal Spending

Chair: Herman Saatkamp

Herman Saatkamp introduced the panel by pointing out that this is a difficult time to acquire federal funding as well as institutional support and funding from other sources. Margot Backas described the organization of programs and the likely situation for funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities in the coming year and reviewed the awards given in the past year. In response to questions, she explained the role of the National Trust for the Humanities and the status of the American Legacy Editions. Kathryn Hammond Baker of the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administration stressed the importance of cooperation between archivists and editors to find nonfederal funds for joint projects and projects of mutual interest. Charlene Bickford reviewed the activities of ADE and its members in achieving reconsideration of the NHPRC November decisions on allocation of funds. Charles Cullen described the evolution of the November plan and its revision. He noted the increase in the NHPRC budget from \$5 to \$5.4 million and the congressional directive to focus on editions over electronic records. He then described current NHPRC activities, including the search for a

new executive director and the exploration of common interests between the editorial and the archives and records communities. Roger Bruns, acting director of the NHPRC, was introduced and said that the Commission will be doing more publicity and fundraising.

What Documentary Editions Can Tell Us and What They Cannot

Chair: Beverly Wilson Palmer

At the 1996 New Orleans meeting Gregg Lint suggested this panel's topic, one familiar to most documentary editors. For example, in the panel, "The Joys and Horrors of Editing: Scientists and Scientific Philosophers," Robert Schulmann, editor of the Albert Einstein Papers, stated that there is no evidence about Einstein's purported collaboration with his wife; that is, no documents tell us whether she assisted him with his revolutionary work, and no documents indicate that she did not. Documentary editors regularly encounter such situations, where the documents that could answer key questions about a person's life or career are missing, or maybe never even existed. As Carolyn De Swarte Gifford stated, "We don't always have perfect sources." In the case of John Adams, Gregg Lint warns that we may confuse the "paper person, the product of his own writings and what others wrote about him" with the real John Adams. Three editors explored this problem in the session. Each of these editors made concrete and compelling statements about the difficulty in getting to know the real person, the one who wrote the journal, the letters, or the speeches. From this session, we were given new words: "gaps" and "silences" help us explain our difficulties in bringing a subject to life. Two of the panelists concluded that we editors can use annotation to fill in the gaps or create a context for the missing links in our subject's life. Yet we must at the same time be careful about the leaps we take in our eagerness to create that context. For some situations, where no documents exist, one simply cannot risk a hypothetical interpretation. As Robert Hudspeth advises, we editors need in our introductions to call readers' attention to "the fragmentary nature of the record."

Note: The three papers from this panel appear in this issue.

Editors on the Web

Chair: Esther Katz

This session explored the use of the World Wide Web as a method of outreach for documentary editing projects. With "So You Think You Need a Website: Designing World Wide Web Access to Documentary Editing Projects," Cathy Moran Hajo argued that websites need careful planning, and that editors

need to determine their audiences and goals before launching a webpage. She also gave an overview of the different features existing documentary editing sites provide. Frank E. Grizzard, Jr.'s World Wide Web-based presentation, "Come on In, the Door's Open: The Who, Where and Whys of Visitors to Our Websites," explored the subjects contained in its title by exhibiting the statistical and anecdotal material taken from the websites of the Association for Documentary Editing and the Papers of George Washington editorial project. Sally Thomas's "Using Web Pages to Reach K-12 and High School Audiences," which was read by Candace Falk, challenged documentary editors to offer high-quality web-based curricular tools that will both educate K-12 students and inform the public about the value of documentary editing. Carol DeBoer Langworthy then offered some insightful comments drawn from her experience with the Women Writers Project, and questions followed.

Curating and Editing Ernest Hemingway

Chair: J. A. Leo Lemay

In "Publishing Ernest Hemingway's 'A Lack of Passion': True Adventures of a Documentary Editor," Susan Beegel told of her numerous perilous adventures as a result of publishing a new Hemingway story, together with advice on how to deal with publicists intent on turning an artful story into a notorious confession by the author. James Edward Nagel, who surveyed the history of the Hemingway manuscripts, commented on the numerous revisions present in most of the manuscripts, and explained the forces underlying the refusal of the Hemingway heirs to allow their publication. Stephen Plotkin, archivist of the Hemingway Collection at the Kennedy Library, discussed the various challenges facing archivists and manuscript librarians in dealing with scholars, collectors, and trustees, using the Hemingway manuscripts as an example.

Are Religious Records Different? Types, Transcriptions, Translations

Chair: Maureen Ursenbach Beecher

The projects described in this panel present unusual difficulties, but not necessarily because they are based on religious records. Robert Cain, of the Colonial Records of North Carolina, described the dearth of material from the colonial era but noted that religious records have been preserved better than secular material, because of the existence of missionary letters. Although the attitudes exhibited in these letters may differ because of their religious origins, the editorial problems are the same. Patricia Holland described the work of *Afro-American Religion: A Documentary History*. Her sources are not much different from those you would find in secular studies of the period: they all share problems of having to translate documents from Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin; deciding how to treat oral history materials; and determining ways to include artifacts. J. Barton Starr, of the Papers of Robert Morrison, described a project that includes both religious and business material. Rowena

McClinton, who is editing the Moravian Springplace Diaries, described a project in which she must deal with missionary and Native American materials, and the attitudes of these groups toward one another. Charles Nolan's project, *The Community Journal of Sister Mary Bernard Deggs*, presents unique problems. The document is a history of a religious community, but the problems arise from the unusual characteristics of the historian, who was semiliterate, a native French speaker writing in English, and in extremely bad health. The unique point of view of the writer and her eloquence, Nolan said, make the effort to surmount these problems worthwhile.

The Epistemology of the Electronic Text

Chair: Julia Flanders

The three papers delivered at this conference session offered two specific and opposed perspectives on the role of images in electronic text resources, together with a more general discussion of the epistemological issues involved in the way we imagine the relationship between images and text. John Lavagnino's presentation critiqued the role played by a "lingering strain of positivism that afflicts both humanities computing and text editing," and the various arguments for including images that develop therefrom: that digital images are necessary to provide accurate documentary information about the source text, that they are capable of doing so, that good scholarship relies on such evidence being available. Carol Barash's paper, in response, offered arguments for providing images that centered on the pedagogical importance of situating the electronic text in a material cultural context, thus giving it historical specificity as a circulating object of consumption. The third paper, by Julia Flanders, attempted to provide a framework within which to understand more distinctly the arguments on each side, by understanding them as emerging from different models for thinking about how electronic editions present information, and by considering these models historically in light of the long debate about the relationship between images and text.

The session thus dramatized a central debate in the growing world of electronic editing, one which all too easily degenerates into the oversimplification of "pro-image" versus "anti-image." As this session sought to show, definite practical considerations such as funding and logistics frequently dictate the necessity of including or excluding images in electronic editions. However, the question of how *ideally* the electronic edition should be constituted needs to be addressed apart from these considerations. The theoretical issues that are most pressing here include questions of how an electronic edition gains its authority, how it positions itself in relation to source documents, and how it constructs the relationship between the editor and the reader. These questions, although they may in many cases be overridden by practical issues of file size or cost, are methodologically fundamental to any well-considered electronic edition, and without addressing them we can never have a sound basis for our use of images in the electronic edition.