

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Documentary Editing: Journal of the Association  
for Documentary Editing (1979-2011)

Documentary Editing, Association for

---


2009

## President's Letter 2009 : *DOCUMENTARY EDITING IS ALIVE AND WELL*

Cathy Moran Hajo

New York University, [cathy.hajo@nyu.edu](mailto:cathy.hajo@nyu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/docedit>

 Part of the [Digital Humanities Commons](#), [Other Arts and Humanities Commons](#), [Reading and Language Commons](#), and the [Technical and Professional Writing Commons](#)

---

Hajo, Cathy Moran, "President's Letter 2009 : *DOCUMENTARY EDITING IS ALIVE AND WELL*" (2009). *Documentary Editing: Journal of the Association for Documentary Editing (1979-2011)*. Paper 70.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/docedit/70>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Documentary Editing, Association for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Documentary Editing: Journal of the Association for Documentary Editing (1979-2011)* by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

*DOCUMENTARY EDITING IS ALIVE AND WELL*



Cathy Moran Hajo

Last summer, I spent a week on the banks of Lake Mendota in Madison, Wisconsin, the home of the NHPRC-sponsored 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Institute for the Editing of Historical Documents. It was just as beautiful and relaxing a setting as it was eighteen years ago, when I attended “Camp Edit” as a student. Coming back as an instructor was a wonderful experience, reminding me about the vitality of scholarly editing and the wide array of people who have dedicated their time and efforts to its practice. I met new staff members from the Freedom History Project, the Jefferson Davis Papers, the Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Papers, the Albert Einstein Papers, and the Abraham Lincoln Papers, among others; scholars who are publishing the Civil War pension files of African Americans, Cotton Mather’s *Biblia*

*Americana*, the Simeon-Prosper Hardy Diary, or the World War II letters of students from the New Mexico State University. What they and the other fellows attending shared was a deep commitment to spreading the use of historical documents among the public.

As experienced editors, we sometimes see change as a negative—complaining about the paucity of funding, or about the new requirements that digital publishing has forced on our projects. But when you meet so many enthusiastic newcomers, it is hard to remain a pessimist. We have made great strides in the last thirty years, bringing our editions to a far broader segment of the public than the founders of ADE had ever thought possible. We have honed our practices, paving the way for new editors to follow using our publications in microfilm, book, and digital format as examples of best practices, a massive output that has provided an invaluable resource for the study of history to millions.

“Camp Edit” is a structured interaction between experienced editors and those just beginning their work, but similar interactions happen less formally at the ADE’s annual meetings, and via phone calls, meetings, and e-mails all year long. Whether an editor is just beginning or has worked at a project for twenty years, we learn best from each other—how to handle tricky questions of selection or annotation, recommendations for the best software to handle electronic publishing, or new insights on sources of funding.

Our members work on projects that range across American history, from the earliest settlements to the twentieth century; in recent years ADE has attracted additional

members who focus more broadly on European history. We range in our professional training, from humanities professors to graduate students, including archivists, librarians and public historians. Our editions vary widely, from comprehensive multi-volume book editions of the Founding Fathers or other prominent historical figures, to digital presentations of diaries or personal letters. But at our core, we all share the same goals.

I encourage ADE members of all levels and experience to participate more fully in the Association's efforts. At our long-range planning meeting, we raised a variety of ideas and issues and questioned old assumptions about the way that both the ADE and its members' projects have operated. But to position ourselves to face the challenges ahead, we need to know more about our members, especially those that cannot attend annual meetings regularly. What are your projects like, where do you receive funding, and what kinds of help could ADE offer you to make your work easier and more productive? Should the ADE seek or administer private grants for projects? Should it fund educational workshops? How many ADE members apply for and receive federal funding, and should we broaden our advocacy efforts to include private grant makers as well as federal agencies?

In the coming months we will be polling our members on these and other top-

ics, and I want to encourage all ADE members to participate. We will be seeking volunteers to join committees, create an ADE e-Newsletter, improve and broaden advocacy, and develop new fund-raising ideas to support the Association and its member's projects. We need your input, no matter how many years or months you have been a member.

At the Association's Annual Meeting in Tucson, Arizona, held from October 23 to 25, attendees had an opportunity to both learn from and educate their colleagues and to promote their work. This year, in addition to the panel discussions, we organized a series of poster exhibits. These presented an opportunity for both new and established members to describe their projects, highlighting interesting editorial questions or materials in a concise format.

Seeing the breadth of the work we are doing, the enthusiasm with which it is being undertaken, and the innovative ways that editors are publishing historical documents demonstrates that documentary editing is alive and well.

I look forward to hearing from you in the coming months about any ideas you may have to help editors do more successfully what they have been doing for so long—preserving and making accessible our documentary heritage.