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ADE NEWSLETTER

News of the Association for Documentary Editing

Volume 1, Number 2

May 1979

FIRST CONVENTION SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 8-9 AT PRINCETON

President Arthur Link has responded to many requests for a separate ADE convention by calling for a convention November 8 and 9 at the Nassau Inn in Princeton, N.J. Program Chairman Lester Cappon (also vice president of ADE) has asked that all members wishing to participate by delivering papers or serving on panels should write him with ideas or offers to serve at the Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, Ill. 60610.

Meanwhile, Charles Cullen and David Chesnutt have volunteered to conduct a panel on the use of computers in preparing the index for an editorial project. Sessions for literary editors are particularly desirable, Cappon said, and he hopes to have at least four sessions ready for the August newsletter announcement of the final program.

The November 8-9 dates replace the October 18-19 tentative schedule announced at the ADE luncheon in New Orleans. The availability of rooms at the Nassau Inn made the November dates more feasible.

President Link reported that the first convention will be held in what is nearly the geographic center of the ADE membership. As editor of the Woodrow Wilson Papers, Link (with his editorial aides at Princeton) has set the pace in historical editing with the recent publication of Volume 31 by the Princeton University Press. The Press also publishes the papers of Henry Thoreau and Thomas Jefferson. Director Herbert Bailey has indicated the Press will serve as host for a reception November 8 at their main offices.

"Many of our members will never attend an OAH or AHA convention, so it made good sense to call our own separate meeting," Link said. "Our interests are broad, and by holding a convention of its own ADE can best serve the diverse concerns of its members."

When writing to the Nassau Inn, Princeton, N.J. 08540, for reservations, ADE members should note that they will be attending the ADE meetings. Room rates and the full program will be available in the August newsletter.

FIFTY ATTEND OAH LUNCHEON IN NEW ORLEANS

Growing interest in scholarly editing was evident at the luncheon meeting of ADE recently held in New Orleans during the Organization of American Historians convention. Dr. George Farr of the National Endowment for the Humanities spoke at the session and gave a rundown on the types of projects NEH has supported or will help fund in the future. Dr. Farr spoke of both editorial subventions and of grants which are available for subsidizing the publication of books from scholarly editing projects.

President Arthur Link said that the rapid growth of the ADE was further proof that editors are searching for an organization which will serve as a clearinghouse for ideas and give cohesion to the editing discipline. Ms. Charlene N. Bickford, secretary-treasurer, reported that 153 editors have paid dues since the ADE was formed in November 1978.

"VERBATIM ET LITERATIM"

By Arthur S. Link
Princeton University

[The introduction to Volume 31 of the Papers of Woodrow Wilson provided President Arthur Link with an opportunity to repeat some of his editorial rules. Their relevance to

some recent pros-and-cons voiced on literal transcribing and other facets of editorial decision-making make these excerpts from Link's most recent volume appropriate.]

. . . We have never and do not intend to print critical, or corrected, versions of documents. We print them exactly as they are, with a few exceptions which we have always noted. We never use the word sic except when words are repeated in a document; in fact, we think that a succession of sics simply defaces a page.

As we have said, we repair words in square brackets only for clarity and ease of reading. Our general rule is to do this when we ourselves cannot read the word without stopping to determine its meaning. Jumbled words and names misspelled beyond recognition of course have to be repaired. However, we are usually able to correct the misspelling of a name in the footnote identifying the person.

However, when an old man writes to Wilson saying that he is glad to hear that Wilson is "comming" to Newark, or a semiliterate farmer from Texas writes phonetically, we see no reason to correct spellings in square brackets when the words are perfectly understandable. We do not correct Wilson's misspellings. For example, for some reason he insisted upon spelling "belligerent" as "belligerant." Nothing would be gained by correcting "belligerant" in square brackets.

We think that it is very important for several reasons to follow the rule of verbatim et literatim. Most important, a document has its own integrity and power, oftentimes particularly when it is not written in perfect literary form. There is something very moving in seeing a Texas dirt farmer struggling to express his feelings in words, or a semiliterate former slave doing the same thing. Second, in Wilson's case it is crucially important to reproduce his errors in letters that he typed himself, as he always typed badly when he was in an agitated state. Third, since style is the essence of the person, we would never correct grammar or make tenses consistent, as one correspondent has urged us to do. Fourth, we think that it is obligatory to print typed documents verbatim et literatim. For example, we think that it is very important that we print exact transcripts of Charles L. Swem's copies of Wilson's letters. Swem made many mistakes (we correct them in footnotes from a reading of his shorthand books), and Wilson let them pass. We thus have to assume that Wilson did not read his letters before signing them, and this, we think, is a significant fact. Bryan had one abominable stenographer. In letters in this volume, he spells the name of the steamship Falaba as Fabala and "principle" as "principal." (We did not correct these and similar errors.) We think that it tells us a great deal about Bryan, who was himself a sloppy speller and writer, that he should have let such letters go to the President of the United States. Finally, printing letters and typed documents verbatim et literatim tells us a great deal about the educational level of the stenographical profession in the United States during Wilson's time.

EDITORS AND THEIR WORK

W. J. MORGAN, editor of Naval Documents of the American Revolution, reports that volume 8 is now in press. . . . CHARLES F. HOBSON, co-editor of the James Madison Papers, will become editor of the John Marshall Papers at the College of William and Mary in September. . . . Ms. BETH WITHERALL is serving as associate editor of the Henry Thoreau project at Princeton University, where WILLIAM L. HOWART is editor-in-chief. . . . Volume 5 of the Papers of Andrew Johnson, edited by LEROY P. GRAF AND RALPH W. HASKINS, will be published in September by the University of Tennessee Press. . . . PAUL MACHLIS, assistant editor of the Mark Twain Papers at the University of California / Berkeley, reports that volume 3 of Twain's Notebooks & Journals and volumes 1-3 of Twain's Collected Letters are in press. . . . During the spring of 1980 the University of Tennessee Press will publish volume 1 of a projected 15 for the Papers of Andrew Jackson, edited by SAM B. SMITH and HARRIET CHAPPELL OWSLEY. The time span covered is 1770 to 1803. . . . First Lady Rosalynn Carter presented

Pope John Paul II with a six-volume set of the Works of William James during her recent visit to the Vatican. The volumes were published by Harvard from texts supplied by the James project at the University of Virginia. . . . CHARLES VANDERSEE and editorial associates on the Henry Adams letters, University of Virginia, are stumped by several quotations and seek help. Please write them (c/o English Department) if you can identify: (1872 or earlier) "Like that famous cow we are 'not hurt much, but some discouraged'" and (1873 or earlier) "Poor old horse! / Bury him decent! / 'Twasn't his fault! / After all!"

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES?

Editors planning to attend the Princeton convention November 8-9 should be sure that they are in good standing with ADE. A number of participants in the organizational meeting at St. Louis apparently have assumed they are members, but have failed to send Charlene N. Bickford a \$15 check. Please help us hold down bookkeeping and postage expenses by sending \$15 to Ms. Bickford, c/o First Federal Congress Project, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. 20052, and then your dues will be paid to December 31, 1979.

"EXTERNAL FACT AS AN EDITORIAL PROBLEM"

By G. Thomas Tanselle
Guggenheim Memorial Foundation

[editor's note: In 1978 a provocative article by Dr. Tanselle, "The Editing of Historical Documents," appeared in the annual volume of Studies in Bibliography, edited by Fredson Bowers. In the 1979 edition of Studies, Dr. Tanselle has followed his earlier survey with a probe of specific problems. The Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia has permitted the newsletter to reproduce several paragraphs from Tanselle's latest contribution.]

When Keats in his sonnet on Chapman's Homer wrote of "stout Cortez," rather than Balboa, staring at the Pacific with eagle eyes, he created what has become the classic instance of a factual error in a work of imaginative literature. Yet few readers have been bothered by the error or felt that it detracts from the power of the sonnet, and editors have not regarded it as a crux calling for emendation. . . . The view that an historical error does not detract from the greatness of a poem is of course grounded on the argument that an imaginative work creates its own internal world for the communication of truth: the work can express a "truth" relevant to the outside world without being faithful to that world in the details out of which the work is constructed. No one is surprised by the expression of this principle, which is, after all, central to an understanding of literature as metaphorical statement. What is less often considered, however, is the complexity of its editorial implications.

Certainly a critical editor cannot take as a general rule Thorpe's comment that "Poetically, it does not matter." Whether or not a particular error matters depends on more than whether or not it occurs in a poem or a "creative" work: sometimes a factual error in a poem may indeed call for correction, while at other times it may not, and the editor must decide which is the case in any given instance, and why. . . .

The editor of a critical text sets out to eliminate from a particular copy-text what can be regarded as errors in it; defining what constitutes an "error" is therefore basic to the editorial procedure. Any concept of error involves the recognition of a standard: an editor can label certain readings of a text erroneous only by finding that they fail to conform to a certain standard. Determining appropriate standards for editorial judgment must take into account the nature of the piece of writing as a whole and the nature of each individual passage in it as well as the nature of the edition that is to result, and it must recognize that errors may fall into discrete classes, each demanding different treat-

ment. One may feel that errors of historical fact, for instance, should be corrected in some kinds of works (or passages) and not in other kinds, but that decision involves some consideration of authorial intention and will thus be affected by the attitude that the edition is to take toward questions of intention. If the goal of an edition -- as with most scholarly critical editions -- is to attempt to establish the text intended by the author at a particular time, one's decisions about what constitutes errors will be affected accordingly. Intention and error are inseparable concepts, because errors are by definition unintended deviations (unintended on a conscious level, that is, whatever unconscious motivation for them there may be). If a writer intentionally distorts historical fact for the purposes of a work, that distortion is not an error in terms of the work, nor is it a textual error from the editor's point of view.

An editor must distinguish, however, between accepting factual errors because they are intended features of a literary work and accepting them because they reveal the mental processes of the author. The latter interest is a legitimate and important one, but it may conflict with the aim of establishing the intended text of a work. Both interests can be accommodated through the use of textual notes, but one of those interests must be chosen as the rationale for the editor's treatment of the text itself. If one's aim is to reproduce the text of a particular document, then obviously one reproduces it errors and all, for the errors may be revealing characteristics of the author's direction of thought and in any case are part of the historical record to be preserved. But if one's aim is to offer a critical edition of that text as a finished literary work, one can no more follow a policy of retaining all factual errors than pursue a course of correcting all such errors. In a critical edition the treatment of factual errors can be no mechanical matter, covered by a blanket rule; instead, the editor must give serious thought to the circumstances surrounding each one, thought that will involve settling basic questions about the nature of the editing being undertaken. . . .