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November Meeting of the NHPRC

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"November Meeting of the NHPRC" (2001). *Documentary Editing: Journal of the Association for Documentary Editing (1979-2011)*. 460.

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November Meeting of the NHPRC

At its meeting on November 13 and 14, held at the United States Supreme Court, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission passed a resolution adopting the following criteria for evaluating second-tier documentary editing projects:

Resolution

The NHPRC is proud of its long history of support for the creation and publication of documentary editions of the papers of people and events of significance in American history—indeed, it was for this reason that the Commission was created—and renews its dedication to this purpose.

Since the implementation of its current Strategic Plan in October 1998, the Commission has experienced an extraordinary surge in the number and quality of the proposals submitted to the NHPRC and in the dollars requested. Throughout this same period, however, NHPRC's appropriations have not been sufficient to meet the needs of those who turn to the NHPRC for help: the non-Federal communities dedicated to preserving and making accessible the American documentary record.

As a consequence, at the May 2001 meeting of the NHPRC, members passed the following resolution: "That the Commission directs the Commission staff, working with a committee of Commission members and others, as appropriate, to develop a set of criteria to be used for the evaluation of the second-tier documentary editions for review and approval at the next meeting of the Commission."

In complying with the resolution, staff sought the informed views of some members of each of the following groups: the Commission, editors of current documentary editing projects, and historians who have used NHPRC editions.

The resulting statement, presented below, is basically a codification of the criteria already employed by staff when evaluating new and ongoing projects and are addressed in the staff reports submitted to the Commission regarding each documentary editing proposal to be acted upon at Commission meetings. These criteria are outlined within the NHPRC publication, *Grant Guidelines: How to Apply for NHPRC Grants; How to Administer NHPRC Grants*, which is available free of charge in hard copy to all who request a copy and online on the NHPRC's website, www.nara.gov/nhprc. Each criterion listed be-

low is followed, within parentheses, by the evidence utilized by staff.

General Criteria for Evaluating New Second-Tier Documentary Editing Projects

All four of the following criteria must be met by a proposed new documentary editing project in order to receive a positive recommendation from staff:

1. National significance of the subject material to the research public and the potential range of audiences and uses of the planned products. (Proposal narrative, peer review by historians.)

2. The project proposes to make accessible in published form documents never before available, or available in one place, to the research public. (Proposal narrative, peer review by historians.)

3. The project demonstrates a solid financial foundation from its sponsoring institution and others, a base of support that promises to complement NHPRC funding over the life of the project. (Budget section of the proposal, project narrative.)

4. The project promises a reliable return on the investment of NHPRC funds. (Proposal narrative: efficient and effective plan of work.)

General Criteria for Evaluating Ongoing Second-Tier Documentary Editing Projects

The following criteria are utilized by staff in evaluating ongoing documentary editing projects:

1. Positive results in return for the investment of NHPRC funds. (Completion of the work promised in previous grants as described in grant narrative and financial reports, volumes produced on a regular basis, a positive result in grant performance measures; the information provided in the narrative and budget sections of the proposal for the latest grant.)

2. Demonstration of effective project management, i.e., the project meets all or most of the goals of previous grants, makes steady and measurable progress, is adhering to its work plan, demonstrates dedication and ingenuity in overcoming problems, and in recent years has indicated little slippage in its projected completion date. (Completion of work promised in previous grants as described in grant narrative and financial reports, volumes produced on a regular basis, positive result in grant performance measures.)

3. Demonstration of a solid financial foundation from the sponsoring institution and other funders; a base of support that complements NHPRC funding. (Grant financial and narrative reports, budget section of the proposal, past funding history.)

4. Projects within two years of completion or projects threatened with extinction absent Commission funding may be given special consideration.

Recommendations for Second-Tier Editions in Times of Budgetary Shortfall

It has long been the practice of the Commission to maintain steady support of documentary editing projects. The Commission has responded to appropriations increases or decreases with across-the-board actions for ongoing editing projects. However, in times of budgetary shortfall, which the Commission defines as 'times when appropriations are insufficient to allow the NHPRC to fund all projects judged to be worthy of funding,' the Commission may implement the following in order to make the best and most productive use of scarce resources:

Staff recommendations for funding ongoing editions are to be presented to the Commission in two or, if conditions warrant, three tiers:

- 1 Projects recommended to receive flat funding,
- 2 Projects recommended for some reduction in funding,
- 3 Projects for whom it is difficult to justify continued funding.

These recommendations are to be arrived at by careful oversight of the projects, review of reports from previous grants, and review of the level of achievement of agreed-upon performance measures from previous grants.

Grants Awarded

The Commission approved a funding strategy for Fiscal Year 2002 that aims for a 50-50 split of available funds for competitive grants between documentary editing projects and records projects. Over the year, this would provide a total of \$3.218 million for each category. The Commission recommended that the Archivist of the United States make grants totaling \$3,359,140 for 38 projects, including 8 grants for Founding-Era documentary editing projects totaling \$1,330,636; 2 Founding-Era subvention grants totaling \$20,000; 5 non-Founding-Era subvention grants totaling \$40,167; and 4 grants for education projects totaling \$148,172. The Commission reinstated its annual fellowships in historical documentary editing and archival administration.

Founding-Era Documentary Editing Projects

- Massachusetts Historical Society, comprehensive book edition of The Adams Papers
- Yale University, comprehensive book edition of The Papers of Benjamin Franklin
- Princeton University, comprehensive book edition of The Papers of Thomas Jefferson
- University of Virginia, comprehensive book edition of The Papers of James Madison
- University of Virginia, comprehensive book edition of The Papers of George Washington
- The George Washington University, The Documentary History of the First Federal Congress, 1789–1791
- Board of Regents, University of Wisconsin, selective book edition of The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution
- Supreme Court Historical Society, selective book edition of The Documentary History of the Supreme Court, 1789–1800

Founding-Era Subventions

- University Press of Virginia, for *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, Vol. 10
- State Historical Society of Wisconsin, for *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. 19

Non-Founding-Era Subventions

- University of Oklahoma Press, for *Louis D. Brandeis: The Family Letters*
- Southern Illinois University Press, for reprinting *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, Vol. 7
- Southern Illinois University Press, for *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, Vol. 25
- Southern Illinois University Press, for *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, Vol. 26.
- The University of North Carolina Press, for *The Papers of John Marshall*, Vol. 11

Education Proposals

- Wisconsin History Foundation, Inc., to support the 31st Institute for the Editing of Historical Documents
- Host/Fellow for Fellowship in Historical Documentary Editing

Complete information, including other Commission decisions and amounts awarded, is available at the NHPRC Web site: <http://www.nara.gov/nhprc/>