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The ADE Annual Meeting Sessions

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The ADE Annual Meeting Sessions

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, OCTOBER 1998

Gateway to the West: Exploring Editorial Terrain

Chair: Tom Quirk

This panel brought together the general editors of important western writers. Gary Moulton, editor of the Lewis and Clark Journals, surveyed the twenty-year history of the editions from the enviable prospect of one who has now completed his work. He described the unanticipated difficulties in editing the documents, particularly the complexities and intricacies involved with cartography and with annotating references to botany, geology, archaeology, ethnology, linguistics, meteorology, and medicine. His solution was to enlist the aid of consultants; eventually, more than a hundred persons served as consultants and advisors for the project. Robert Hirst, director of the Mark Twain Project, noted that the revolution in textual theory, most notably represented by Jerome McGann, has had good effects, but these theorists have undervalued or misunderstood what textual editors have, in fact, been doing for some time. Acknowledging that authorship is indeed a collaborative activity and pointing out that this is not really news, Hirst observed that the Greg-Bowers editorial method still serves perfectly well both to represent Twain's intentions and to identify the influences of agents, typesetters, and the rest. Susan Rosowski described the somewhat surprising history of the Willa Cather editions; for conventional wisdom had it that prepublication forms of Cather's texts did not exist, that she did not significantly revise her work, that she received near perfect editing from her publishers, and that her work required little or no explanatory commentary. All of these as-

sumptions, it turns out, were wrong. Corrected typescripts, galley and page proofs, as well as a wealth of background and biographical material promise to alter our perception of Cather as an artist and our appreciation of her texts. Finally, as respondent, Tom Quirk posed a series of questions about the responsibilities of textual editors. Does one owe primary allegiance to the funding agencies that make the work possible? to those historical and literary researchers who will profit from the efforts of textual editors? to one's professional constituency? to the general reading public? Or to the authors whose intentions one means to preserve?

Note: Gary Moulton's paper from this session appears in this issue.

Documentary Editing: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Chair: Beth Luey

This panel reviewed the changes in documentary editing that have occurred over the past twenty years and offered predictions and recommendations for the future. Michael Stevens reminded the audience of the disputed status of the field and its practitioners. He then discussed the development of

documentary editing as a craft, as a profession, and as a legacy. He reviewed the changes in the way editors transcribe documents (noting the response to Thomas Tanselle's criticisms) and the practice of annotation and selection. Recalling Charles Cullen's naming of the "soft money generation," he warned that they were being replaced by the "no money generation." Finally, he pointed out the profession's



ADE Founding Members: front row, Roger Bruns, David L. Wilson, Charlene Bickford, Harriet F. Simon, and Ann D. Gordon; middle row, Mary A. Giunta, Charles T. Cullen, Don L. Cook, and Robert A. Rutland; back row, John P. Kaminski, David Chesnutt, and John Y. Simon.

legacy—beyond the monumental contributions of the editions themselves—in the form of training programs, publications to assist in teaching future editors, and the ADE itself. For the future, he pointed out the need for reliable funding, for attention to school audiences, for quality control on the World Wide Web, and for exploiting new media such as digital television. Joel Myerson reviewed the evolution of textual editing, beginning in the 1960s with the dominance of Greg, Bowers, and Tanselle. He described the way this school of editing gained its influence, noting its compatibility with the “New Criticism,” the then-dominant school of literary criticism, and its good fortune in coming along at a time when funding and bibliographical source material were both plentiful. He then moved to the 1980s and Jerome McGann’s insistence on the collaborative nature of authorship, resulting in “socialized texts.” Myerson offered a resolution of the dispute in the form of a compromise: “each text is different, and blind adherence to any theory leads to ruin.” David Chesnutt pointed out both the difficulties editors have experienced in mastering new technology and the benefits it has offered, notably gaining better intellectual control over documents, producing more accurate and reliable texts, finding information that enhances annotation, and providing better intellectual access through indexes. In looking to the future, Chesnutt emphasized the importance of partnerships among editors, archivists, publishers and librarians, and the possibility of establishing a self-sustaining database of edited documents.

Note: The papers from this panel appeared in the December 1998 issue of Documentary Editing.

Twenty Years of Documentary Editing: Personal Views

Chair: Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr.

Raymond W. Smock reviewed twenty years of ADE presidential addresses, focusing on the lasting themes that many of these introduced. For example, funding has been a frequent focus: Charles Cullen used his address to describe the “soft-money generation,” Joel Myerson discussed the politics of funding; and Charlene Bickford talked about government relations and the need for reliable funding sources. John Kaminski reminded his audience of the importance of documents to our culture and civilization and stressed the importance of getting

documents into the classroom, a theme that David Chesnutt also addressed. In recent years, presidential addresses have touched on the importance of quality and standards. Mary-Jo Kline focused on the future. She pointed out the need for better coordination and cooperation among editors and among the agencies that support them. She also brought up the need to help editors meet the needs of their customers and plan for change. Finally, she offered some advice to editors: take advantage of new technology, take a chance, reassess your assets, make plans, and ask the right questions.

Present at the Creation: The Founding of the Association for Documentary Editing

Moderator: Richard Leffler

This lively session defies summary. The founders who were able to attend the twentieth anniversary recalled, with a modicum of consensus, how, when, where, and why the ADE began, leading those who had not been present at the creation to wish they had been.

Hooked on Editing: Moving on to New Projects

Moderator: Robert A. Rutland

Three editors who have worked on two or more projects discussed the difficulties and benefits of such documentary mobility. Ralph Orth pointed out the need to adapt to very different subjects that require very different kinds of background knowledge and approaches. He also noted the differences in working for a very large project expected to last for decades to one that is smaller and likely to last only a few years. Martha King described the difficulties of adapting to different editors’ preferences and ways of working, particularly when staff size is very different. She also discussed the importance of outreach and described the various approaches her projects have taken to this task. Beverly Palmer recalled the need to develop new sources and the ability to gather various kinds of data. She also experienced differences in the ability to find funding and in outside interest in her subjects.