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Documentary Editing: Journal of the Association  
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3-1992

## A Message from the President

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Chesnutt, David R., "A Message from the President" (1992). *Documentary Editing: Journal of the Association for Documentary Editing (1979-2011)*. 590.

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# *A Message from the President*

DAVID R. CHESNUTT

Joel Myerson and I have been working together for more than a decade now—drawn together by our common interests in scholarly editing and publishing. We have put together panels and sessions at various professional meetings, worked together on workshops, put together grant proposals, and helped each other in a variety of less formal ways. Our regular luncheons give us a chance to keep up with what's going on in our respective fields, as well as the local scene at our university. They also provide a sounding board for ideas.

One idea we have been discussing is the notion of expanding our network to the larger community of scholars—our “constituents” if you will. One way of extending that network would be to organize sessions at major professional meetings. The model I have in mind is our session at the Modern Language Association. Some years ago, Joel arranged for the Modern Language Association's recognition of the Association for Documentary Editing as an “affiliated organization.” That status enables us to put together a session at the Modern Language Association annual meeting without going through the regular program committee channels.

I frankly don't know how difficult it would be to arrange similar programs at the meetings of other associations, but I think it would be worth investigating. The American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the Southern Historical Association, the Society for the Historians of the Early American Republic, the Society for Textual Studies, the American Literature Association, and the American Philosophical Association are a few that immediately come to mind. We might even think in terms of doing sessions at the meetings of the American Association for State and Local History and the Society of American Archivists. Ann Gordon's survey revealed a keen interest in documentary editing among historical societies and other manuscript repositories. I feel sure there are other associations which you, the members, are actively involved with and which might be equally appropriate for sessions on scholarly editing.

There are several reasons I think this might be a worthwhile enterprise. First and foremost is the question of awareness among our colleagues at large. I suspect that most of them do not have a very clear understanding of what we do and why it takes us so long to do it. Among historians, at least, I do think there is an understanding of the importance of the editions. At the same time, there is an impatience which in part is born out of a kind of cultural “nowness” syndrome. It seems to me that this is a generation which does not really understand the old adage: “Time, Money, Quality—Pick Two.” I suspect most of you understand it all too well, and that the second element in the equation is frequently the stumbling block.

A second reason I think this would be a worthwhile effort is my sense that we as scholarly editors sometimes feel isolated from the mainstream of our disciplines. The Association for Documentary Editing itself combats that isolation by giving us a forum for our concerns—but that's not enough. We need the wider arena of the associations within our respective disciplines. At the university level, certainly, we have much in common with our departmental colleagues engaged in research and writing. The objectives may be different, but the process is inherently the same and we have developed areas of expertise which can often help them in their own work. In the best of all worlds, scholarship is a symbiotic relationship—but it is a relationship that cannot be developed in isolation. We need to talk to each other, but we also need to talk to our colleagues.

Once again, I need your input. Do you think it's a good idea? Would you be willing to participate in such a session? What are the associations you would like to see considered for sessions on editing? Do you feel you are in a position to investigate the possibility of organizing a session for a particular association? Should it be done along the lines of the Modern Language Association model, or should it be done through regular program committee channels?