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A Message from the President

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A Message from the President

DAVID R. CHESNUTT

Response to the call for support and the dues notices which Harriet Simon sent out at the first of the year has been great! More than forty members renewed at increased levels and many of you made additional contributions. John Kaminski reports having sent out more than 100 copies of Beth Luey's *Editing Documents and Texts* while Dennis Conrad notes that contributions totaled more than \$2,000. The membership list stands at 475, though a number of second notices had to be sent out this summer. In short, we weathered another financial crisis.

Charlene Bickford's Federal Policy Committee has been hard at work this year. President Bush's budget targeted the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) at \$4 million, a decrease of \$1.45 million from the FY91 appropriation. Given the NHPRC's inability to fund ongoing editions at a level which would expedite completion, Bickford and her committee mounted an effort to make key members of Congress aware of the problems which would be engendered by reduced funding. In spite of those efforts, the markup by the House subcommittee remained at \$4 million. By the time this column reaches you, we should know whether our friends in the Senate were able to get the figure back up.

Ironically, the NHPRC adopted a report from its long-range planning committee in February which calls for initial funding at more than \$12 million to meet what the Commission feels are the essential needs of its program. As the Commission's executive director Jerry George put it: "This is not pie-in-the-sky." The Commission developed a series of long-range priorities, then asked the staff to do a least-cost analysis for each priority. The long-range plan will serve as the basis for the Commission's effort to increase both the reauthorization and funding levels for its programs over the next six years.

The basic thrust in long-range planning for the editions supported by NHPRC is to provide the kind of increased funding that would enable the editors to move their projects more rapidly toward completion. When I discussed a draft of the report with Jerry George and Roger Bruns, George was very clear about the importance of additional funding in carrying out the Commission's goal of bringing the long-term proj-

ects to completion. George and Charles Cullen, our representative on the NHPRC, will give us a closer look at the Commission's long-range plan at the annual meeting in Williamsburg. Plan to be there!

Down the street from the National Archives at the Old Post Office, Lynne Cheney and her colleagues at the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) have been quietly augmenting their support for editions. Since Cheney's appointment as Chairman of the Endowment in May 1986, the level of funding for editions has risen from \$3,583,996 in 1987 to \$4,447,698 in 1991. This increase of nearly a million dollars is in many ways a reflection of Cheney's own commitment to basic research in the humanities, and the editorial community has been one of the major beneficiaries of that commitment.

Though everyone groans at the thought of preparing the lengthy applications required by the Endowment, the effort has certainly paid off for the editions community. Over the last decade, many of our long-term projects would have come to a screeching halt had it not been for the support of NEH. Though we have to compete de novo every two or three years, NEH's peer review process does provide us with useful feedback from our major audience—the scholars in our fields. And having to develop a plan of work is equally useful because it forces us to take stock of what we have accomplished and to set reasonable goals for the next few years.

Whenever I think about grant applications, I remember a story Charles Cullen told me some years ago when he headed the *Jefferson Papers*. The NHPRC cover sheet had a box you were supposed to fill in with the estimated completion date of your project. Charles told me he always just put "Gok" in the box—"God only knows."

As we prepare to head toward the annual meeting in Williamsburg, I'm once again reminded of the good will and the generosity of all of you. A colleague of mine across the campus noted after his first ADE meeting several years ago that it was the friendliest professional meeting he had ever attended: "The editors don't seem like such prima donnas. They're really willing to share. I guess it's because they're accustomed to working as a team." Let's keep it that way.