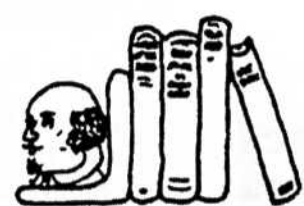


# BIBLIO-NOTES

Issued by the  
English and American Literature Section  
of the Association of College & Research  
Libraries, a division of the American  
Library Association



#24 Fall 1994

ISSN 1076-8947

## *News from the Chair*

**T**he EALS Bylaws, so ably drafted by Tim Shipe, were discussed at the section June 27th business meeting in Miami. Though the number of attendees was small, discussion was lively, ranging from philosophical issues such as changing the name of the section to reflect the wider universe of literature written in English to the more mundane question of the duties of the immediate past chair. As a result of these deliberations, several sections of the draft published in *Biblio-Notes* #23 have been changed. Members wishing the current draft of the EALS Bylaws should email [mburnett@library.berkeley.edu](mailto:mburnett@library.berkeley.edu) or call me at (510) 642-0956.

To facilitate gathering the widest possible input from members, the proposed bylaws will be a topic for discussion at the Midwinter general meeting on February 5th. The Bylaws Committee, consisting of Rob Melton, Madeleine Copp, Michaelyn Burnette and chaired by EALS Vice-Chair/Chair Elect Shipe, will then meet to shape the final version. EALS members wishing to attend the Bylaws Committee meeting should check the midwinter program for time and

place. After the Bylaws Committee has finished its work, the Bylaws go to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee of ACRL and then to ACRL Board of Directors for consideration.

As a Victorianist, I have some (diminishing) faith in tradition, and it's traditional for the elected leader of this group to ask its members for program ideas. What would you like to discuss at Midwinter and Annual? Here's your chance to shape the program. Ideas eagerly accepted at the above email address or telephone number.

While we're on the subject of member contributions, let's give a hearty thanks to William Baker for overseeing the transformation of a discussion group into a section and for planning EALS' first program. A loud hurrah also to Scott Stebelman for editing *Biblio-Notes* and twisting arms and otherwise gently persuading people to run for EALS offices. Tim Shipe deserves our gratitude for drafting the bylaws. Thanks to you all.

Michaelyn Burnette

### **IMPORTANT MESSAGE**

***This is the last issue of Biblio-Notes that will be mailed to all names on our old Discussion Group List. To keep receiving issues of the newsletter, you must be a member of the English and American Literature Section. Please remember to check the appropriate box the next time you renew your ALA membership.***

**Building Author Collections: Brownson Revisited**  
**by Rob Melton**

**E**ach of you undoubtedly has an article or book relating to collection development that you return to repeatedly, perhaps because you find yourself skeptical of its premises but always provoked by them. Mine is Charles Brownson's chapter on Contemporary Literature in *English and American Literature: Sources and Strategies for Collection Development* (Chicago: ALA, 1987), which I re-read whenever I am either required or feel it necessary to revise my collection development statement and/or conspectus. Brownson's argument is that we should largely abandon attempts to build our collections of contemporary literature with much regard to quality, but rather devote our efforts to the creation of as *representative* a collection as possible. He then discusses strategies and provides a still useful list of selection tools for

doing so. On the topic of "tools," Brownson argues that those for contemporary literature "should not be used in the same way as tools for older literatures. They are actually more like the wood from which the doghouse is built than the hammer and saw used to build it. The crucial, and limiting, question is not whether the wood is pine or fir, but the design of the doghouse." (p. 107)

After a summer of a stimulating professional development--ALA Conference, a course at Rare Book School at UVa, a day at UVa's Electronic Text Center, and an intensive workshop devoted to humanities resources on the Internet included--I returned to the Kansas dogdays to find a smaller budget for English, a scaled-back approval plan, inflation estimates higher than last year's, and a strategic planning document in place which de-emphasizes acquisition of anything not known to be of immediate need or interest to identifiable Libraries clientele: in short, a budgetary doghouse such as I haven't yet experienced. So I return to Brownson's essay with hope for guidance.

The issue that Brownson's essay doesn't address head-on, it seems to me, is: How does one define, either for a conspectus or for one's own working definitions, terms such as "research-", "advanced study-", and "study-level" collections in a field in which a fixed (or even fluid) canon has not been sufficiently set? Can we really ignore whatever guidelines of "taste" are available to us (e.g. book reviews, citation frequency, circulation data) as we deploy scarcer resources to satisfy known or at least the more predictable research needs? Is a library that seeks to be reasonably comprehensive in its collection of, let's say, 350 carefully selected contemporary English-language authors, including the bulk of the original manuscripts and ephemeral publications of three or four of them, more or less of a research collection of contemporary literature than one which uses the same allocation of resources to buy much more broadly from the available published literature but with little attempt to acquire

*Biblio-Notes* (ISSN 1076-8947) is published twice a year by the English and American Literature Section of the Association of College & Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611; 800.545-2433 ext. 2519. Copies are free to members.

*Editor:* Scott Stebelman, Gelman Library, George Washington University, 2130 H Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20052; 202/994-6049; [scottlib@gwis2.circ.gwu.edu](mailto:scottlib@gwis2.circ.gwu.edu)

*Chair, 1994-95:* Michaelyn Burnette, 390 Library Annex, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720; 510/642-0956; [mburnett@library.berkeley.edu](mailto:mburnett@library.berkeley.edu).

*Chair, 1995-96:* Timothy Shipe, University Libraries, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA; 319/335-5824; [timothy-shipe@uiowa.edu](mailto:timothy-shipe@uiowa.edu).

© American Library Association 1994.

comprehensively (including manuscript and other rare sources) in any area?

These questions are not just rhetorical in my case. Until this year, I had the available resources to do both--i.e., to acquire the monographic publications of 350 living authors comprehensively, along with the manuscripts of four of them, and to buy representatively and rather widely, using many of the strategies and tools Brownson suggests, from the output of less-recognized authors and presses. I even fought (successfully) some members of my institution's English Department who wanted me to cancel all "little" magazines (especially the non-academic ones) before canceling a single scholarly journal.

This year--and perhaps permanently--the design of my doghouse must be considerably scaled back. One way or another, I can no longer buy as much contemporary literature as in the past and still acquire the necessary scholarly publications in all other fields of English language and literature. So, do I abandon or at least trim the Authors List? Keep the Authors List intact and reduce the others? Stop buying the papers of one or two of "our" authors? Cancel more journals and literary magazines? A little of each? Does my institution's strategic planning initiatives, and budget allocation procedures largely based on them, leave me much choice? Are they at odds with the goal of contributing to an overall national effort to collect contemporary literature comprehensively? "The selection of contemporary literature for library collections is notably vexing and controversial:" so began Brownson's essay. Eight years of the budgetary difficulties we've litanized, not to mention issues of ownership vs. access, electronic texts, strategic planning, and TQM, haven't changed that; and I predict that many future EALS programs and discussions may be fruitfully devoted to this topic. I for one would welcome it, would welcome your private dialogues with me, and will continue to visit Brownson's metaphorical doghouse for mental chew-toys.

Rob Melton (rmelton@ukanvm.cc.ukans.edu) is Bibliographer for English & American Literature, Theater and Film at the University of Kansas Libraries, Lawrence.



### ***Make Way for Electronic Texts*** ***by Susanna Bartmann Pathak***

**T**he odds are great that full-text electronic resources are coming soon to a library near you. Like the inevitability of the irrepressible Lucia (a. k. a. Mrs. Emmeline Lucas) becoming the social intelligence center of her little English village in E. F. Benson's delightful novel (*Make Way for Lucia*), libraries will have to stand and deliver electronic texts or find themselves out of the loop.

Many of us working in the humanities want to deliver full text resources like the OED, the ENGLISH POETRY FULL-TEXT DATABASE, the works of Locke, Hume and other philosophers, and of course, portraits from the National Gallery Collection, London. To be honest, acquiring these databases (once you get over the sticker shock and decipher the licensing agreements) is the easy part. In fact, we had acquired the OED2 on CD-ROM and many of the PASTMASTERS philosophy texts in our library long before we had an electronic text center. The OED was installed on a workstation in General Reference, its virtues known only to a few lucky adventurers who happened to choose it from a menu of mostly bibliographic databases. The PASTMASTERS fared even worse as they were installed on a machine in a "back room" where only a privileged few were taken by the one librarian who knew how to search it. We had two laserdiscs as well, I discovered, one on Italian culture and another on German Painters, which could be accessed at a lone workstation "under the clock" in the middle of the General Reference department. Again, I never actually saw anyone using these laserdiscs, and as a literature librarian, I did not know what scholarly purpose they would serve.

The proverbial lightning bolt about electronic texts struck me in late 1992 when I read the announcement about the opening of the Elec-

tronic Text Center at the University of Virginia. I first read the announcement on the internet on SHARP-L (Society for the History of Authorship, Reading & Publishing) but soon my inbox contained the same announcement from other lists which colleagues had seen and forwarded to me. What seemed remarkable to me about UVA's center was what its creation signified to the academic community: a library had made a commitment to provide a place where electronic texts, librarians and patrons could come together to discover the transforming potential of a growing array of rich and complex tools. I forwarded the announcement to our department head and to someone in the library's development office with the not-too-cunning but sincere observation that "We should have one of these places."

To argue effectively for creating a place for electronic texts in your library, you must believe that all e-texts are not created equal. Your conversion will be brought about rapidly by exposure to one or two databases. Educate yourself about hypermedia products like PERS-EUS and textual analysis software like WORDC-RUNCER. Find out what types of research questions can be asked of an electronic Kant or the Dartmouth Dante Project. Get a group of colleagues together and visit a center in your region. When a group from our reference department visited the Electronic Text Center at UVA, we were joined by a networking specialist and a representative from the JHU Press. It is important to systems people and computing center staff as you are developing plans for a center.

You will want to get support from as many faculty as you can, but realize in creating a center you are creating an environment which will be both experimental and in constant flux. You and your colleagues who are charged with developing the library's collections already know many of the special interests of faculty and students in your departments so don't waste too much of your valuable time touting the virtues of the library of the future but work instead to make it visible and tangible. If the

***"You will want to get support from as many faculty as you can, but realize in creating a center you are creating an environment which will be both experimental and in constant flux."***

mission of your library is not only to acquire resources but to make them accessible and to help patrons use them, then the rationale for creating a suitable and institutionally correct environment for electronic texts is at hand.

Our library being heavily involved in a strategic planning process, it was just two months later that I found myself sitting around a table with colleagues who, like me, were known to be in some way turned on by technology and willing to speculate about the library of the future. We discussed ways we could aggressively pursue electronic resources and how we could effectively arrange services. We realized we would

be acquiring more full text resources but we wondered what our role was in teaching patrons how to use them or in helping them with electronic texts. When I wrote a proposal for a center, I was guided by two principles: 1) We

needed new place for special resources like the electronic OED, PASTMASTERS, and others we would undoubtedly be acquiring 2) The place was to be in the library.

I described our future center as a laboratory-like environment set up to facilitate the use of electronic text and image databases acquired to support scholarly research and course-related study. I proposed that the humanities librarians who chose electronic resources be involved in educating their constituents about their potential. I proposed that graduate students be hired to staff the center during open hours and that they assist my colleagues and I in the teaching mission of the center and in publicizing its resources on our campus. I also stresses the collaborative potential of the center and how it would function as a test site for electronic tools being developed at JHU and elsewhere.

Though rather far from the center I was imagining, a site for the center was offered by the director and we took it. The place for our center turned out to be a large, glass fronted room one floor below the main level (where reference and information services are located). It seemed rather telling that to make way for

the Electronic Text & Imaging Center, a huge collection of microfilm would be moved to some "back room," a displacement which mercifully proved to have no political consequences. The Center would share the site with a new Electronic Classroom. This turned out to be a dynamic and efficient way to share space and equipment and underscored the teaching mission of the Center.

Once startup money for machines and furniture was approved (it was absolutely "scraped together" out of end-of-year funds which are traditionally used for equipment) it was time to catch up to what we were putting in place. E-texts in the abstract can sound like so much glitz and glamour to library staff and administrators that you will need to do some explaining. I imagined Gilda Radner's bespeckled and slightly askew character, Miss Emily Litella (Saturday Night Live) asking, "What's all this fuss about electronic texts?" I wrote a three page answer to that question which our department head sent to other department heads and administrators to let them know what our new enterprise was all about. The questions I posed and answered were very basic: What are electronic texts? What does one do with an electronic text? Why put them in the library? How will databases be chosen for the center? How will it operate? Who is responsible for it?

The Electronic Text & Imaging Center at the Eisenhower Library opened in the Fall of 1993 with less than half a dozen databases available on two workstations. I hired and trained five humanities graduate students (more than a dozen applied for the positions) each of whom worked one three hour shift each weekday afternoon. Our beginnings were very modest and that turned out to be for the best. Had we offered too much too soon we would have been done in by technical problems and lack of expertise. As we added more resources we learned even more, for nearly every new database had a different interface and inevitably posed new technical problems.

While I worked to coordinate the Center and its services and worked with others to develop it, responsibility for the Center's research and teaching functions is shared. The five librarians who work in the humanities disciplines are re-

sponsible for learning how to use the databases according to their language and subject expertise. For each database we offer, at least two librarians who have agreed to learn how to use it are available to help patrons seeking information or wanting to search it. The Graduate



Student Assistants have the task of reading all the documentation, putting the databases to the test, and writing concise user guides.

We track all patrons who use the Electronic Text & Imaging Center by recording their name, department, database used, and their research goal. Our log of Center activity shows that most of the databases were used by faculty or students from more than one department. I doubt we could have predicted that the PATROLOGIA LATINA DATABASE would be so heavily by used by the art history department or that the most enthusiastic user of the ENGLISH POETRY FULL TEXT DATABASE would be a music professor writing a history of the term "orchestra" in the 19th century. We could not have imagined that engineering students would want to investigate how PERSEUS operates nor that a film studies professor would ask us to acquire THE HALDEMAN DIARIES on CD-ROM. So when publicizing your center, think in broad terms about users and the transdisciplinary nature of so much of their research.

This Fall we offer more than twenty databases in the Center and will bring up three databases on the campus network. Several collaborative projects are underway with JHU departments and with the JHU Press and more are in the works. The Center is open approximately twenty hours per week and the librarians are available at other times to demonstrate resources to individuals and groups by appointment.

