

COMMITTEE ON SCHOLARLY EDITIONS
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION
AUGUST 2011

Background

The Committee on Scholarly Editions (CSE) is a standing committee of the MLA, created in September 1976 to replace the advisory board of the MLA Center for Editions of American Authors (CEAA) when the CEAA ceased to be a grant-making body funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. As the change in name implied, the CSE was charged with fostering high standards not just for scholarly editing of American authors but for scholarly editing of any author in any language or historical period embraced by the MLA. From the start, but especially over the last twenty years, the committee has steadily but cautiously enlarged the range of editions, periods, and languages for which it is willing and able to provide professional advice. In recent years, the committee has substantially revised its guidelines and its guiding questions for specialist reviewers so as to take electronic scholarly editions into account. It has also instituted new procedures to ensure continuity of process across the limited terms of committee members and chairs. The committee's most prominent mission is to evaluate the merits of particular scholarly editions and to award the MLA's "seal of approval" to any that are judged worthy of that distinction.

Current Membership

The committee normally has nine members, eight of whom represent various areas and historical periods of literary scholarship while one member represents scholarly presses. The membership of the committee for the period July 2010–June 2011, with their terms of service noted, was as follows:

Jennifer Crewe, Columbia University Press (2007–11)
David F. Hult, University of California, Berkeley (2008–11)
Steven E. Jones, Loyola University, Chicago (2009–13)
Zachary Lesser, University of Pennsylvania (2010–14)
John D. Niles, University of Wisconsin, Madison (2007–11), cochair
Jesús Rodríguez-Velasco, Columbia University (2010–14)
Susan Schreibman, Trinity College Dublin (2010–14)
Robin Schulze, Pennsylvania State University (2008–12)
Marta L. Werner, D'Youville College (2008–12), cochair

MLA liaison: David G. Nicholls, Director of Book Publications

MLA staff assistant: James C. Hatch, Associate Acquisitions Editor

Activities of the Committee

The committee's cochairs are appointed to serve, whenever possible, in staggered rotation. For 2010–11, John Niles and Marta Werner cochaired the committee. As of 1 July 2011, Niles was replaced by Steven Jones, who will serve as cochair with Werner for 2011–12 and thereafter for another year.

At its annual meeting, held on 1 October 2010, the committee welcomed new members Jesús Rodríguez-Velasco, Susan Schreibman, and (in absentia) Zachary Lesser. The appointment of Robin Schulze, Susan Schreibman, and Marta Werner as review managers for three new inspections met with the committee's approval (see the concluding section of this report for details).

At that same October meeting, the committee formally evaluated materials for four inspections and acted as follows. (1) After discussion of the specialist report on an edition of Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*, ed. by J. H. Stape and Ernest W. Sullivan II, the committee awarded that edition its seal. (2) After discussion of the specialist report on an edition of Joseph Conrad, *Tales of Unrest*, ed. by J. H. Stape and Allan H. Simmons, the committee awarded that edition its seal. (3) After discussion of the specialist report on an edition of Joseph Conrad, *Within the Tides*, ed. by Alexandre Fachard, the committee awarded that edition its seal. (4) After discussion of the specialist report on an edition of James Fenimore Cooper, *Autobiography of a Pocket-Handkerchief*, ed. Matthew Sivils, the committee voted to ask for additional information so as to clarify certain details pertaining to the establishment of the text. A supplementary specialist report was later received. No final action has yet been taken on this edition. While reluctant to ask members to spend more time evaluating a single project, the committee cochairs agreed to consider a revised manuscript of this edition at a later time.

In addition, during the cycle of activities lasting from the beginning of July 2010 to the end of June 2011, the committee awarded the MLA seal by electronic ballot to five editions after due consideration of reports that were submitted electronically. These were as follows: *The Collected Stories of Ray Bradbury*, volume 1: 1938–1943, ed. by William F. Touponce and Jonathan R. Eller; Willa Cather, *Song of the Lark*, ed. by Guy Reynolds and Kari Ronning; Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, ed. by Joseph McElrath; *The Complete Letters of Henry James, 1876–1878*, volume 1, ed. by Pierre A. Walker and Greg Zacharias; and Gertrude Stein, *Stanzas in Meditation: The Corrected Text*, ed. by Susannah Hollister and Emily Setina. Information as to who served as specialist reviewers and review managers for these editions and for the other editions

under review during the latest annual cycle is provided in summary fashion at the end of the present report.

For the last several years the committee has been working to clarify the procedures for inspections. At its October 2010 meeting the committee made minor revisions to the document titled “CSE Review Process” that is posted on the MLA Web site. In particular, the following sentence was added to that document so as to allow for greater flexibility in cases where the initial review of an edition is found problematic: “In exceptional cases, the review manager may request that the committee solicit an additional inspection.” In addition, the committee discussed how its list of “Guiding Questions” for reviewers could be rationalized through the use of subheadings. David Hult subsequently, via e-mail, made recommendations for improvements along those lines. These were discussed and approved on the committee’s Listserv. A third item discussed at the October 2010 meeting was whether or not to provide current reviewers with “model” reviews, drawn from the committee’s archives, to serve as rough guidelines for their work. Marta Werner agreed to look into this matter with an eye to making specific recommendations to be taken up for action at the fall 2011 meeting.

A second topic raised in recent years has been the desirability of advertising the committee’s activities more widely so as to encourage the submission of editions representing language areas and historical periods that at present are underrepresented in the list of editions awarded the committee’s seal. After the October meeting, committee members sent James Hatch a number of e-mail communications citing Listservs, journals, and newsletters where notice of the committee’s mission might regularly be posted. In addition—thanks to the efforts of MLA staff liaisons—announcements are now periodically made in the *MLA Newsletter* when editions are awarded the seal, and postings are made in the News section of the MLA Web site.

A third topic of perennial concern to the committee, intersecting with these other matters, is updating and improving the CSE Web pages. At its October 2010 meeting, following up on discussions held the year before, the committee discussed improvements to the document titled “Annotated Bibliography: Key Works in the Theory of Textual Editing” that Dirk Van Hulle prepared a few years back for the benefit of all MLA members. The committee was pleased to receive an updated version of that document, completed by Van Hulle with the assistance of Marta Werner. Subsequently, other committee members made a few additional suggestions for improvements to the bibliography, and a new version of that document, dated 2010, has been posted on the Web. It is expected that this document, in turn, will be updated periodically in future years.

As part of its professional mission, the committee sponsored three lively interdisciplinary sessions at the January 2011 MLA convention in Los Angeles: “Textual Scholarship and New Media,” organized and chaired by Steven Jones and cosponsored by the Committee on Information Technology; “Silent Night: The Archives of the Deaf and Blind,” organized and chaired by Marta Werner; and “Editing from Medieval Manuscripts: Current Challenges and Debates,” a roundtable discussion organized and chaired by John Niles and cosponsored by the Division on Old English Language and Literature. For the 2012 convention in Seattle, the committee will sponsor two sessions. Susan Schreibman has organized a roundtable discussion titled “Reconfiguring the Scholarly Edition,” while Marta Werner has organized a panel titled “Reconfiguring the Scholarly Editor: Textual Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle,” featuring members of the textual editing program at the University of Washington.

During the current annual cycle, as is noted above, the CSE completed eight reviews of scholarly editions. Four other reviews are in progress. These dozen reviews are listed below.

Reviews Completed:

1. Author: Ray Bradbury
 Title: *The Collected Stories of Ray Bradbury*, volume 1: 1938–1943
 Editors of this title: William F. Touponce and Jonathan R. Eller
 CSE Inspector: Jesse Crisler
 Review Manager: Marta Werner
 Status: Seal awarded

2. Author: Willa Cather
 Title: *Song of the Lark*
 Editors of this title: Guy Reynolds and Kari Ronning
 CSE Inspector: Marilee Lindemann
 Review Manager: Marta Werner
 Status: Seal awarded

3. Author: Joseph Conrad
 Title: *Lord Jim*
 Editors of this title: J. H. Stape and Ray Stevens
 CSE Inspector: Peter Shillingsburg
 Review Manager: Steven Jones
 Status: Seal awarded

4. Author: Joseph Conrad
 Title: *Tales of Unrest*
 Editors of this title: J. H. Stape and Allan H. Simmons
 CSE Inspector: David Holdeman

- Review Manager: Marta Werner
Status: Seal awarded
5. Author: Joseph Conrad
Title: *Within the Tides*
Editors of this title: Alexandre Fachard
CSE Inspector: Judith Law Fisher
Review Manager: David Hult
Status: Seal awarded
6. Author: Frederick Douglass
Title: *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*
Editors of this title: Joseph McElrath
CSE Inspector: John Young
Review Manager: Robin Schulze
Status: Seal awarded
7. Author: Henry James
Title: *The Complete Letters of Henry James, 1876–1878, volume 1*
Editors of this title: Pierre A. Walker and Greg Zacharias
CSE Inspector: David Nordloh
Review Manager: John Niles
Status: Seal awarded
8. Author: Gertrude Stein
Title: *Stanzas in Meditation: The Corrected Text*
Editors of this title: Susannah Hollister and Emily Setina
CSE Inspector: Edward Burns
Review Manager: Marta Werner
Status: Seal awarded

Reviews Currently in Progress:

1. Author: Charles Brockden Brown
Title: *The Letters of Charles Brockden Brown*
Editors of this title: Mark Kamrath, Philip Barnard, Beth Hewitt
CSE Inspector: To be determined
Review Manager: Robin Schulze
Status: In progress
2. Author: Joseph Conrad
Title: *Under Western Eyes*
Editors of this title: Roger Osborne
CSE Inspector: Paul Armstrong
Review Manager: Susan Schreibman
Status: In progress

3. Author: James Fenimore Cooper
Title: *Autobiography of a Pocket-Handkerchief*
Editors of this title: Andrew Sivils
CSE Inspector: Wesley Raabe
Review Manager: Robin Schulze
Status: In progress

4. Author: James Fenimore Cooper
Title: *The Bravo*
Editors of this title: Lance Schachterle
CSE Inspector: Sandra Tomc
Review Manager: Marta Werner
Status: In progress

The committee's next meeting will be held on 9 September 2011 at MLA headquarters in New York City.

In conclusion, the two cochairs wish to thank the individual members of the committee—especially outgoing members Jennifer Crewe and David Hult—for their generous and thoughtful contributions and the MLA staff liaisons, David Nicholls and James Hatch, for their unstinting support of the committee's work.

Respectfully submitted by John D. Niles and Marta L. Werner, cochairs