

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

AUGUST 2012

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. While the current membership does not include a representative from a university press, it does include at least two

members with specialties in electronic publishing. The membership of the committee for the period July 2011–June 2012, with their terms of service noted, was as follows:

Julia Flanders, Brown University (2011–15)
 Steven E. Jones, Loyola University, Chicago (2009–13; coch., 2011–13)
 Zachary Lesser, University of Pennsylvania (2010–14)
 Stephen G. Nichols, Johns Hopkins Univ. (2011–15)
 Jesús Rodríguez-Velasco, Columbia University (2010–14)
 Susan Schreibman, Royal Irish Academy (2010–14)
 Robin Schulze, Pennsylvania State University (2008–12)
 Raymond G. Siemens, University of Victoria (2011–15)
 Marta L. Werner, D'Youville College (2008–12; coch., 2010–12)

MLA liaison: Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Director, Office of Scholarly Communication
 MLA staff assistant: James C. Hatch, Acquisitions Editor

Activities of the Committee

The committee's cochairs are appointed to serve, whenever possible, in staggered rotation. For 2011–12, Marta Werner and Steven Jones cochaired the committee. As of 1 July 2012, Werner was replaced by Susan Schreibman, who will serve as cochair with Jones for 2012–13 and thereafter for another year.

At its annual meeting, held on 9 September 2011, the committee welcomed new members Stephen G. Nichols and (in absentia) Raymond G. Siemens and Julia Flanders. The CSE's liaison, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, discussed the MLA's new office of scholarly communication and outlined its relationship to the CSE. Among other things, the new office is committed to helping the CSE foster closer working relationships with allied organizations such as the Society for Textual Scholarship and the Association for Documentary Editing.

At that same September meeting, the committee formally evaluated review materials compiled for James Sappenfield and Lance Schachterle's edition of Cooper's *The Bravo* and awarded the seal. During the cycle of activities from the beginning of July 2011 to June 2012,

four additional editions were awarded the MLA seal by electronic ballot after thorough discussion via the committee's Listserv: (1) *The Collected Writings of Charles Brockden Brown: volume 1: The Letters and Early Epistolary Writings*, edited by Philip Barnard, Elizabeth Hewitt, and Mark L. Kamrath; (2) James Fenimore Cooper's *The Autobiography of a Pocket Handkerchief*, edited by Matthew Wynn Sivils and James P. Elliott; (3) Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*, edited by Roger Osborne and Paul Eggert; and (4) *The Complete Letters of Henry James, 1876–1878*, volume 2, edited by Pierre A. Walker and Greg W. Zacharias. Finally, during this cycle four new editions were submitted to the CSE for review, and review managers were appointed. Information as to who served as specialist reviewers and review managers for the editions reviewed during the latest annual cycle and for the other editions currently under review 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 September 2011 meeting the committee approved minor revisions to the template of the letter sent to potential veters. Specifically, the following sentence was added to that document so as to curtail expenditures unnecessary in this electronic age: "Only under extraordinary circumstances, and with prior consultation with the committee, will veters be reimbursed for mailing, travel, or other expenses incurred while preparing their report." At the committee's 2010 annual meeting, the possibility of providing veters with model reviews drawn from the CSE's archives was raised. After some debate at the 2011 annual meeting, this idea was rejected on the grounds that it might unduly standardize responses from veters and encourage the production of formulaic reviews.

An important topic raised in recent years concerns the committee's Web pages. Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Anna Chang facilitated a productive discussion about potential modifications to

the Web site, including adding navigation links to the “Guidelines for Editors of Scholarly Editions” page and distributing different parts of the “Guidelines” page onto new pages. Committee members also proposed a number of strategies for linking the Web pages more closely to the inspection process, e.g., using Dropbox to provide committee members with easy access to inspection materials and reports and further automating the review process by incorporating links to Dropbox, the “Guiding Questions for Veters of Scholarly Editions,” and other elements in the Guidelines page. Additionally, there was general support for a CSE presence on MLA Commons and for the creation of a shared online space in which editors and veters might meet virtually to discuss their work. The committee also agreed to continue to build the “Annotated Bibliography: Key Works in the Theory of Textual Editing.”

As part of its professional mission, the committee sponsored two closely related interdisciplinary sessions at the January 2012 MLA convention in Seattle: Susan Schreibman organized a roundtable discussion titled “Reconfiguring the Scholarly Edition,” and Marta Werner 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. Plans for the 2013 MLA convention in Boston include three sessions sponsored by the CSE. Susan Schreibman has organized a preconvention workshop on the future of scholarly editing, Stephen Nichols has organized a session on editions of continental medieval works, and Marta Werner has organized a session on the interplay of print and digital bibliographical codes in editions both ancient and modern.

Finally, the committee reviewed its openings for 2012–16 and decided to request coverage in American literature. John Kevin Young, from Marshall University, and Kenneth M. Price, from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, joined committee beginning in July 2012.

In sum, during the current annual cycle, as is noted above, the CSE completed five reviews of scholarly editions. Four other reviews are in progress. These nine reviews are listed below.

Reviews Completed:

1. Author: James Fenimore Cooper
 Title: *The Bravo. A Venetian Story*
 Editors of this title: Lance Schachterle and James A. Sappenfield
 CSE Inspector: Sandra Tomc
 Review Manager: Marta Werner
 Status: Seal awarded

2. Author: Charles Brockden Brown
 Title: *Collected Writings of Charles Brockden Brown: Volume 1: The Letters and Early Epistolary Writings*
 Editors of this title: Philip Barnard, Elizabeth Hewitt, and Mark L. Kamrath
 CSE Inspector: Reiner Smolinski
 Review Manager: Marta Werner
 Status: Seal awarded

3. Author: James Fenimore Cooper
 Title: *The Autobiography of a Pocket Handkerchief*
 Editors of this title: Matthew Wynn Sivils and James P. Elliott
 CSE Inspector: Wesley Raabe, James West
 Review Manager: Robin Schulze
 Status: Seal awarded

4. Author: Joseph Conrad
 Title: *Under Western Eyes*
 Editors of this title: Roger Osborne and Paul Eggert
 CSE Inspector: Paul Armstrong
 Review Manager: Susan Schreibman
 Status: Seal awarded

5. Author: Henry James
 Title: *The Complete Letters of Henry James, 1876–1878, volume 1*
 Editors of this title: Pierre A. Walker and Greg W. Zacharias
 CSE Inspector: Leland Person
 Review Manager: Steven Jones
 Status: Seal awarded

Reviews Currently in Progress:

1. Author: Joseph Conrad
 Title: *The Shadow-Line*
 Editors of this title: J. H. Stape and Allan H. Simmons
 CSE Inspector: John Peters
 Review Manager: Steven Jones
 Status: In progress

2. Author: Charles Sanders Peirce
 Title: *The Writings of Charles S. Peirce*, volume 9
 Editors of this title: Jonathan Eller
 CSE Inspector: Nicholas Griffin
 Review Manager: Raymond G. Siemens
 Status: In progress

3. Author: George Meredith
 Title: *“Modern Love” and Poems of the English Roadside, with Poems and Ballads*
 Editors of this title: Rebecca Mitchell and Criscillia Benford
 CSE Inspector: Nicholas Frankel
 Review Manager: Julia Flanders
 Status: In progress

4. Author: Sarah Robinson Scott
 Title: *The Collected Letters of Sarah Robinson Scott*
 Editors of this title: Nicole Pohl
 CSE Inspector: Elizabeth Eger
 Review Manager: Steven Jones
 Status: In progress

In conclusion, the two cochairs wish to thank the individual members of the committee—especially outgoing member Robin G. Schulze—for their generous and thoughtful contributions, and the MLA staff members, Kathleen Fitzpatrick and James Hatch, for their unstinting support of the committee’s work.

Respectfully submitted by Marta L. Werner and Steven Jones, cochairs