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Pell Letters (1978): Correspondence 130

Howard R. Swearer

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MAY 16 1978

AC

BROWN UNIVERSITY
PROVIDENCE, R. I. 02912

*See
new letter*

Love -

CP

May 11, 1978

*congratulate them
on saying I am
glad to want to*

THE PRESIDENT

Dear Clai:

During the years you have served as a Trustee, you have heard about or seen various reports on a massive scholarly bibliographic project called the Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue. This project is of international importance to the humanities and all those who use materials printed from 1701 to 1801. Because of your demonstrated interests in the humanities, in international cooperation and not least in Brown, we thought it convenient for you to summarize what progress has been made and what remains to be done.

First a word about the project. The Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue will be the definitive bibliography of books and broadsides printed in English in Britain, the colonies and the United States. Bibliographies exist for the period from 1475 (when printing was introduced in England) to 1700. These comprehensive works include entries for 100,000 books and documents. The ESTC project must cope with upwards of 800,000 bibliographic items. I think it is easy to see why some scholars claim that this bibliography may well be the most important humanities research tool to be produced in our century. No serious research using any materials from the century will wish to proceed without it once it is available.

do whatever!

Let me describe the three stages of the ESTC:

can't be of help.

Stage I: This is the British project in which the British Library is researching and encoding in machine readable form the most important 300,000 records available and in the possession of primary sources in the United Kingdom. The costs are being borne by the British government.

Stage II: Test Project for the ESTC of English Books. This has already been funded by a grant to Brown from the NEH in the amount of \$64,518. Needless to say, we were greatly encouraged by this funding and the overwhelming encouragement it gave to the overall project.

Stage III: American Imprints Publication Project. A three-quarter of a million dollar cost for the total project has been established. A request for major support lies in the office of the NEH's Division of Research Material, George Farr, Assistant Director.

I should note that the entire project -- both sides of the Atlantic -- would be supervised by an Anglo-American Executive Committee. The personnel who would be involved in the project as advisors or staff members would be drawn from such places as Oxford, Cambridge, Manchester, the Bodelian and the British Library on the British side, and Brown, Harvard, Columbia, the Library of Congress, Texas, and the Ohio College Library Center, just to name a few in the U.S.

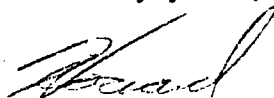
Another point worth highlighting is that the American source materials will be found in at least 104 libraries, including the great treasures at the American Antiquarian Society, the Library of Congress, Harvard, New York Public, Yale, Princeton, John Carter Brown and many other historical societies and special collection libraries.

This is truly an international undertaking. Several years have been devoted to its planning and many more will be needed to see it through to completion. Hopefully, the staff and review panels at the National Endowment for the Humanities will consider funding the \$629 thousand requested or a considerable portion of the total project cost. I doubt that any more welcome support may be found, nor will it be forgotten, in the aid of basic humanistic scholarship, library funding, or Angle-American cooperation.

Should you want a copy of the more than 200 pages of proposals or organized materials for the Eighteenth Century Short Catalogue and its third stage American Imprints Publication Project, we will be glad to provide it. If you want a more extended summary, we certainly can provide that also.

In every case, once we have the funding, we hope you may play a key role in the public endorsements or the announcement of the beginning of the American Imprints Publication Project, the third stage of the ESTC.

Sincerely yours,



Howard R. Swearer

Senator Claiborne Pell
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