Archives, Edition-Making, and
the Future of Scholarly Communication

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When thinking about the future of libraries, archives, and publishing, I am reminded of the young humanist at one of the Oxbridge universities long before digital media had become so important. He invented a new genre of print publication to present his work, but was worried that his innovation would be too controversial. He therefore spent considerable time scouring the archives at the university and elsewhere to ensure that it was fully consistent with departmental and disciplinary practice. Fully assured at last, he took the idea to his senior colleagues. The presentation was elaborate and thorough, and he made sure to explain how he had fully searched the records of the last 500 years of scholarly communications in print and had found nothing seriously inconsistent with his proposal. One of the college dons interrupted him at this point, lifting his head wearily, and observed: "But you would agree, would you not, that the last 500 years have been somewhat exceptional?"

In 1983, Professor Jerome McGann also had a brilliant idea about a particular form of scholarly communication. By then a tenured professor at the California Institute of Technology, he was able to dispense with academic diplomatics and, with the publication of the *Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, dropped a bombshell on the world of textual criticism and scholarly editing. By asking tough, hard questions about social, institutional, and collaborative factors in the creative process, the *Critique* unseated the prevailing structure of attention that documentary editors of literary works gave to the author and the author's intentions. In the aftermath of his *Critique*, a variety of alternative paths opened. Scholars began vigorously exploring new ways of conceptualizing scholarly editions in general and this activity, in turn, helped stimulate new ways of conceptualizing archives and special collections of primary sources and how editions and archives feed the creation, growth, and development of knowledge in various fields of study.

Many of our current interests and concerns regarding scholarly publishing and librarianship—our fascination with the glamour of digitizing; our fear in the age of Amazon and Google that special collections may be the most, if not the only, distinctive quality of research libraries; our desire to expose and manage, or "curate," vital but often hidden collections of data and other kinds of primary sources; our wrestling match over whether libraries are becoming publishers and publishers are becoming libraries; and our deep anxiety over whether there can be a viable publishing business at all in the land of free and open access—all of these issues can be better illuminated and understood when seen in the light of the revolution that McGann helped articulate and stimulate twenty-five years ago. Why? The answer is that so much of what currently qualifies as "digital scholarship," "digital humanities," and "digital-" or "e-science" is, or heavily depends on, digital edition-making.

Initial premises and definitions

I will return momentarily to McGann's seminal intervention, but first let me set the stage with a few definitions and assumptions, beginning with the notions of scholarly editions and edition-making. Scholarly editions are reliable, authoritative presentations of primary source evidence. There are two types of editions well-known in the humanities: documentary and literary editions. A documentary edition generally consists of an authoritative compilation and transcription of a set of letters, manuscripts or other documents, usually of historical value. A literary edition is a type of documentary edition that presents a literary text or related set of texts. McGann's roots are literary, but he has had much wider impact, as we shall see.

The practice of edition-making is an ancient one, formed as part of the general study of history and philology, or the study of languages. The practice includes methods of selection, transcription, and annotation, and in evolving over time, these methods have been formalized, sometimes in inflexible ways that, having proven more burdensome than useful, and have had to be modified. But it is crucial to recognize that edition-making is at bottom a core task of disciplined scholarship. Many scholars, at some level, produce editions of textual and other kinds of evidence, even if only for their own use. They must arrange, qualify, normalize, and account for anomalies in the evidence that they are using. If they do not undertake these tasks, and do not demonstrate that they have done so, then their scholarship may be judged to be suspect or incompetent. Publishing an edition is the highest form of disclosing the evidence on which one's scholarship is based, and the more general is the appeal of the evidence, the more scholars will mine and use it, and the greater chance it will have to serve as a basis not just for a particular work of scholarship, but also for building and sustaining a broader field or fields of study.

Edition-making, defined at this general level as the authoritative presentation of evidence, takes place in all fields even though the procedures have been particularly well articulated in the humanities. Over the last 50 years, the authoritative collection and arrangement of data has become increasingly prominent in the social sciences and the sciences, especially with the formation of key databases that have become essential to sub-fields in political science, sociology, economics, biology, astronomy, chemistry, and other disciplines. The rising interest in edition-making in these other fields has recently coalesced under the rubric of data curation. The special designation emphasizes the peculiarities of using a variety of automated techniques for assembling, organizing, presenting, and managing databases of evidence in an online environment. However, as far as I can tell, the intersection of data curation and the long tradition of edition-making in the humanities has rarely been observed much less sufficiently explored. One of the hypotheses, I will explore in this paper is that the future of scholarly publishing depends on identifying and exploiting this intersection.

The key point of intersection between data curation and traditional editing in the humanities is that cultural evidence, like scientific and social scientific data, is increasingly born digital, and traditional forms of evidence are being converted to digital

formats. The task before us, as Jerry McGann has written in several places, is that "in the next 50 years, the entirety of our inherited archive of cultural works will have to be re-edited within a network of digital storage, access, and dissemination." Defined as an editing project, this massive conversion cannot be achieved by Googles and Amazons, although they will surely play an important role. Rather, the process requires extraordinary forms of collaboration among librarians, publishers, and scholars, and it needs to be motivated by the traditional values that excite scholars, publishers, and librarians to action, namely the opportunities to contribute to the building of new and durable fields of study, to create and transmit new knowledge within those fields, and to get credit from peers for their accomplishments. Fortunately, the system of components and incentives for this project is already under development. My purpose in this paper is to summarize these developments and to suggest a road-map of next steps. In this effort, I will draw heavily on the experience my colleagues and I have gained at the Mellon Foundation in our program of scholarly communications, but now let's return to the McGann bombshell.

Breathing new life into the edition-making process

In 1983, under the prevailing Anglo-American theory of textual criticism, a scholarly editor was supposed to use manuscripts and published witnesses of a work to produce a critical edition that reflected the author's original intentions. Editors could alter a copy text in an edition if a case could be made that the modification was consistent with the intentions of the author. With similar justification, they could also merge texts from different sources to produce a so-called clear copy edition for pedagogical purposes. These practices and the theory underlying them arose in part in opposition to what was thought to be the undue constraints of German-Dutch theory, which held that a scholarly editor was simply supposed to "document" a text and its variations, not correct them.

Against both of these prevailing theories, McGann's *Critique* held that texts are neither sacrosanct in and of themselves, nor are they fully controlled by the author and therefore able reliably to reflect authorial intention. Instead, texts are socially constructed. They are produced under the influence of a multiplicity of factors in the author's environment, including the interaction with editors, copyeditors, printers, publishers, and especially in the case of multiple published versions, the audience. As a result, McGann argued, critical editions need not and cannot adhere simply and slavishly to a single, prevailing theory. Critical editors must respect the documentary evidence of the texts, and take the author's intentions into account. However, given the inherent complexities of the texts and their structure and the history of the text, its readership, and its interpretation, they must also be able to appeal to a broad theoretical apparatus in order to deal pragmatically with specific problems they have identified with particular readings. Like any other scholarly product, critical editions are works of informed judgment and argument. And even as editors work out and resolve particular problems, the new editions they create are themselves contingent works that become part of the intellectual and textual history.

By recognizing and articulating this "social construction" theory of the critical edition and convincingly arguing against practices that were constraining intellectually, McGann opened new issues for study and experimentation and thereby breathed new life into edition-making and the field of literary studies. McGann himself began to organize and undertake some of these new experiments, and much of his subsequent published scholarship could be said to represent a series of reports from the field on his successes and failures. The power of his *Critique* also extended across a range of disciplines. The influence of his ideas can be seen in other forms of textual editing, such as historical documentary editions and, with the audiovisual turn in scholarship, increasingly in the scholarly treatments of audio, visual, and multimedia evidence as well.

It was not entirely coincidental for the success of McGann's argument that rapid developments in computer technology offered new ways of representing textual, audio and visual evidence, all in relation to each other in a single digital medium. With the emergence of hypertext, markup languages, and HyperCard in the late 1980s came examples of new kinds of digital publication on CD-ROM. Bob Stein, the brilliant innovator and information designer, led one exemplary effort. He and his collaborators produced new, highly popular editions of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and an interactive social history called *Who Built America?* At the University of Virginia in 1992, McGann joined Edward Ayers, a rising young historian, to create the founding projects of IATH, the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities. McGann developed an online edition of the art and writings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, while Ayers mounted an online multimedia archive of datasets, newspaper articles, correspondence, and other evidence from the so-called Valley of the Shadows. When the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and the Web emerged on the Internet, McGann and Ayers moved their projects quickly to the new medium, and there followed elsewhere numerous sophisticated experiments in online edition-making in a variety of fields, including the Beowulf and Boethius projects, editions of Chaucer, Piers Plowman, and Shakespeare, the Women Writers Project, the Dolley Madison and Walt Whitman editions, to mention just a few.

As these and other experiments developed, grander ideas emerged for new forms of scholarly publication that combined editions of primary source evidence with other types of scholarly products. Robert Darnton famously articulated his pyramid theory of the electronic book in which the base of the book would consist of an edition of primary sources; in the middle there would be bibliographic and historiographic essays covering the relevant primary and secondary sources; culminating the work and represented at the peak would be scholarly studies of a monographic form on particular topics. Ed Ayers and Will Thomas attempted to implement the Darnton model in a well-known experimental article linked to the Valley of the Shadows database, published in the *American Historical Review*, and entitled "The Differences Slavery Made: A Close Analysis of Two American Communities." The Gutenberg-E and History E-Book projects were two Mellon-funded attempts to experiment further with Darnton's ideas. However, all these high profile and ambitious projects were difficult and costly to carry out. Although the published databases of evidence supported the argument of the linked monographic work, and could be pedagogically useful, they tended to be highly selective,

tailored to the particular scholarly argument, and not particularly useful to researchers working on related but different topics. Pushing limits with mixed success, these projects overshadowed the steady progress being made by McGann and others in working out the myriad of practical details of markup and other aspects of the digital technologies needed to produce new and useful types of scholarly editions.

Of course, there have been other, even more extreme notions arising from the application of technology to humanistic research. Among my favorites is the big "just" statement: "let's *just* digitize everything." Another is the related assumption that full-text indexing and search of what exists digitally can supplant much scholarly analysis and judgment. These two notions combined in a particularly disturbing way last year when Congress subjected scholarly edition-making to public scrutiny and asked why, given the current capacity to digitize and index, the Founding Fathers' papers were taking so long to complete, and why the volumes that have been completed have not been made freely accessible on the Web to the public. Rather than offering a nuanced and positive reply, the formal responses by many editors and publishers were defensive, and in some ways the responses were even more disturbing because they failed to build on so much of what we have learned in the last 25 years about edition-making in the digital environment and how to organize and divide the labor. Why is it not possible, for example, to satisfy public demand for access to these historic papers by offering free access to facsimiles of the original documents and out-of-copyright transcriptions where they exist without appropriating rights to the annotations and other parts of the critical apparatus that represent painstaking scholarly work?

So, where in fact do we stand today, 25 years after McGann's *Critique*? Where should we look for opportunities for new kinds of publishing outlets? I have five suggestions, and I will welcome your help in expanding the perspective later during the question period.

Opportunities for new kinds of publishing outlets.

My first suggestion: *Resist the temptation to frame solutions in terms of "digital scholarship" or "digital humanities."* It is sometimes useful to raise these flags in order to signal one's allegiance to a particular cause. However, in general these concepts are too vague and operate in common discourse at such a high level of generality that they tend to obscure rather than illuminate specific intellectual breakthroughs and opportunities.

Digital technology is an important factor in identifying new publishing opportunities, but the driving questions are not primarily technical in nature. They are not about the digital. They are rather more conventional and mundane. They are about the scholarship: What are the most significant and demanding research questions that need to be addressed? What are the relevant bodies of evidence and how do they need to be arranged and qualified to address these questions? Will arranging the evidence in digital form generate answers and approaches that are not possible in any other way? Do

these digital approaches lend themselves to peer review and other formal means of recognizing quality and allocating credit for high quality work?

The answers to these questions tend to be found not in the abstract but on the ground in specific fields of study and, in academic institutions where allocation of credit emerges as perhaps the most important issue, especially at the departmental level where scholars live and breathe and draw their salary. Not all scholars are prepared to address these tough, on-the-ground questions in their encounters with the technology. Moreover, their readiness is often conditioned by the state of their discipline, and there is considerable variation among fields of study in the commitment scholars are willing to make to create and rely on digital scholarly output and activity. In our experience at Mellon, the leading fields in the humanities include art and architectural history, classics, archaeology, medieval studies, and some subfields of literary studies and history. In these fields, development tends to follow a regular and predictable sequence: Once compelling research priorities are clarified and set, the next essential step is to arrange the evidence so it can be usefully exploited in pursuit of answers. The interaction among librarians and archivists, scholars, and publishers is crucial in this step and typically results in edition-making of various kinds.

My second suggestion is to *pay special attention to the existing forms of the scholarly edition to which the digital environment is especially well suited and the new forms that it makes possible*. The variorum edition is an old form which is flourishing digitally and the forms that are new include multimedia editions, the edition as archive, and the edition of editions. Allow me to define and illustrate each of these types in turn.

Arranging variant texts of a work in a printed variorum has been accomplished to useful effect in some cases, but it is generally a difficult and awkward process, particularly compared to the facility with which the task can be accomplished online. Examples of Mellon-supported online variorum editions include the *Roman de la Rose* project at Johns Hopkins. This famous medieval work is represented in hundreds of different variants and the project is creating an online edition of over one hundred witnesses. Another example is the Chopin project at the Royal Holloway in London, which is arranging online variant scores by Frédéric Chopin who famously and deliberately registered slightly different versions of his works, each as a "first edition," in Britain, France, and Germany to preserve his copyrights in those countries.

In the category of multimedia editions, scholars use the digital medium to arrange, comment on, and present various kinds of image, video, or audio evidence. The Ethnomusicological Video for Instruction and Analysis Digital Archive, or EVIADA, at Indiana University is creating a cluster of editions of video field recordings. Ethnomusicologists submit proposals to participate in a summer workshop in which they would digitize, edit, and critically annotate their recordings. Proposals are selected in a peer review process, and the final edition is also peer reviewed for quality and potential scholarly impact. The participants highly value this selection and review process, which they now include among their credentials for promotion and tenure.

Also, the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) is, in collaboration with ARTstor, setting up an Architecture Resource Archive through which scholars can make peer reviewed submissions of images of key architectural monuments to create collectively a comprehensive database of monuments. The database is expected to give scholars an opportunity to create—and for SAH to publish—various editions of special kinds of architectural forms. For example, rather than treat Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater house as unique and exceptional, a scholar would be able to draw on evidence elsewhere in the database to place Fallingwater in a larger economic, political, legal, and cultural context as a type of country retreat home built during the Great Depression.

Under the category of "edition as archive," scholars assemble the available evidence on a particular theme in order to show the basis of an argument or conclusions, but also to facilitate different arguments and conclusions. There are many examples in this category. Again in the field of medieval studies, Professor James Ginther at St. Louis University is building on the major effort at Corpus Christi College in Cambridge University to digitize all of the distinguished Parker Library of medieval manuscripts. One of these texts, the *Norman Anonymous* manuscript, has been previously produced in two scholarly editions, both of which are regarded in the field as flawed. Professor Ginther is now preparing a new edition that will link to the new online facsimile of the original text and include both previous editions so that readers can trace the history of the text and compare editorial approaches.

The Stalin Archive being prepared by the Yale University Press is another notable example of the edition as archive. The Press is working with Russian archivists to digitize Stalin's papers. It plans to distribute the papers in an online database and then to commission several scholarly editions as well as monographic studies that document and explore particular themes, all of which would be available together in a cross-searchable online database.

Finally, the "edition of editions" brings to multiple related works together to represent and facilitate the study of fields of discourse at particular times and places, or on particular themes. The best example in this category is the Electronic Enlightenment project. Organized by the Voltaire Foundation at Oxford University, now based at the Bodleian Library, and distributed by the Oxford University Press, the project has developed a fully searchable, online scholarly database of the correspondence among 18th-century writers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Adam Smith. The database now includes 53,000 letters, 6,000 correspondents, 230,000 scholarly annotations, and 80,000 records of early document sources. Most of this material has been drawn from previously published print editions, but the database makes it possible to review all correspondence on particular topics, on a particular day, or in other arrangements that would be extremely difficult with access only to the editions in print. Future plans for the project include accepting peer-reviewed contributions of new editions of letters, which would be available only online. At the University of Virginia Press, the Rotunda imprint, which specializes in the publication of online documentary and critical editions, is also building an online edition of editions of the Founding Fathers papers and related documentary

editions. The Washington Papers alone contain approximate 19,000 separate documents and 7,000 diary entries, 50,670 scholarly annotations, 3,000 unique named document authors, and 1,900 unique named document recipients.

My third suggestion is to *exploit further the rich continuum between the raw materials as they exist in libraries, archives and other collecting organizations and the various types of scholarly editions, all of which arrange these materials for scholarly use*. Earlier, I mentioned the potential utility of separating the online distribution of facsimiles of original documents from the distribution of the scholarly apparatus resulting from the edition-making process. The online environment is especially well-adapted to supporting divided and distributed processes, and much more attention needs to be given to particular publishing opportunities that arise in the edition making process. A variety of specific examples come to mind.

Several of the projects I have described are structured in ways that lend themselves to small discrete contributions. In the Architecture Resource Archive of the Society of Architectural Historians, individual scholars are encouraged to contribute images, which are reviewed and credited; as the database expands they will be encouraged to edit meaningful clusters of images. Similarly, the EVIADA project encourages submissions of video editions, and the Electronic Enlightenment project is planning to encourage scholars to contribute individually edited letters. Both the *Roman de la Rose* and the Parker projects are expecting scholars or teams of scholars and graduate students to contribute individual editions of works in their databases, just as Professor Ginther is doing for Parker's *Norman Anonymous*.

All of these kinds of contributions represent mini-publications that distribute scholarly labor in the interest of a larger objective while expanding the publishing opportunities for individual scholars. Moreover, they build on a new division of labor in the edition-making process that separates the building of a database of facsimiles from the processes of transcription, translation, and annotation, so as to allow many different scholars to participate in the value-added activities. This division is, of course, very different from the highly centralized edition-making processes that have long been standard practice, which bundle the original sources tightly together with the scholarly work. Even the US Congress has been right when it has questioned the cost and value of these practices. I would also note in passing that the contributory processes that I have described of preparing primary source evidence for scholarly use are structured in a decentralized way. As such, they closely resemble the structures that have emerged in the sciences for managing genomic and astronomical data. This development has contributed greatly to the growth and popular appeal of these scientific fields, and may have similar results when applied in the humanities.

As they are working on the Parker manuscripts, project staff have observed another kind of opportunity for publishing in the humanities. Often, these staff make small but critically important discoveries when they are handling manuscripts page by page in the digitization lab. Pages may have been miscollated in a previous binding and gone unnoticed. Glosses in a common hand may also be observed that connect two

manuscripts that had previously been thought to be unrelated. Similar discoveries are being made in other projects, and it is important to communicate them in a timely way to the wider scholarly community, especially if they affect online usage. The discoveries cannot wait for the staff member to write a monograph or for the appearance of the final edition in which the discovery might be noted. Indeed, given the division of labor, the staff member may not even be involved in the processes that eventually result in these kinds of publications. Instead, a "notes and queries" form of publication is increasingly needed for the humanities, similar to the research reports sections of *Science* and *Nature*, so that it is possible to record and disseminate small discoveries as they occur.

Yet another opportunity for scholarly publication in the edition-making arena is for products that complement and enhance the editions. For example, a large task in editions of historical documents is the identification of personal names, disambiguating people with similar names and connecting formal and informal names to the people to whom they refer. For editions that cover the same or overlapping periods, a common biographical database, or prosopography, would be immensely useful and a time-saver for the editors. With Mellon-funding, Rotunda is now developing a prototype for such a prosopography covering the Founding Era. Similar work would be useful for the Enlightenment, Anglo-Saxon England, the Civil Rights era in the US, and other periods where substantial edition-making is underway or planned.

My fourth suggestion: *It is a myth that there is no innovation in scholarly publication, particularly by university presses and scholarly societies*. I do not mean to suggest that all presses are innovative, but the examples I have already provided clearly illustrate some intense entrepreneurial activity by some society publishers and university presses that have big stakes in digitally-intensive fields, and they are making substantial investments in the creation of various types of digitally-intensive scholarly editions. Rotunda is specializing in documentary and critical editions; Oxford University Press is distributing Electronic Enlightenment; the Yale Press is managing the Stalin Archives project; the Society of Architectural Historians is supporting the Architecture Visual Resource Network. In other developments, the University of North Carolina (UNC) Press is developing editions and related materials on the civil rights era at UNC, and the Johns Hopkins Press is working with the *Rose* project.

More certainly needs to be done. Especially urgent is the development of a standardized online infrastructure of tools and other support for the edition-making process, so that individual scholars do not each have to keep working out all the practical details of producing and sustaining their work. Particularly useful would be shared platforms from which editions could be reliably and economically distributed, read, studied, and linked to related scholarly work. Several presses and scholarly societies are working on elements of this infrastructure.

Another related area, in which entrepreneurial innovation continues to be needed, is the thorny problem of financing scholarly research and publication. For scholarship to thrive, there is little question that data and other forms of evidence need to be open, in the sense that economic, intellectual property, and other barriers must be low enough to

permit an easy flow of information, especially into rich computational environments for search and deep analysis. These barriers have been falling steadily for over a decade with publisher innovations such as embargo periods, moving walls, toll-free access, and special forms of license. In spite of these developments, the temptation for some is still to paint this canvas in broad, either-or strokes—either it's available on an open access basis or its evil. The danger is that opportunities will be lost to use the powerful mechanism of pricing to diversify much-needed sources of funding as well as responsibility for critical resources so that the resources can be sustained. It is the presses, societies, and other scholarly publishers that have the skill and apparatus for organizing peer review processes, and for creating markets for scholarly publications. They also possess many of the business skills that are necessary for generating income from a broad audience to create and sustain ongoing communication.

What is lacking and urgently needed is a broad conception of the scholarly process in the digital environment—how editions of primary sources feed research and analysis that generate deeply linked online publications that in turn define and shape requirements for new forms of evidence. Pricing decisions, even at zero, must be informed by an understanding of consequences on the full system. Unfortunately, the construction of this system is still incomplete. Information about system-wide consequences thus is sorely lacking. Only if system development is accelerated, in part, by investment in edition-making, will it be possible more fully to rationalize the financing models, which will have to include delicately balanced doses of institutional subsidization and market-based pricing.

Finally, I would suggest that the *expansion of evidence-based teaching and research, accelerated in part by McGann's Critique, has led to a profound rethinking of special collections in libraries, archives, and other primary source collections.* The key component in this rethinking for purposes of scholarly edition-making has been concerted efforts to expose hidden, or largely unprocessed and uncataloged special collections and archives. Libraries and archives have adopted a variety of steps to streamline processing tasks, largely taking the advice of leading archivists, who have recognized the social nature of uses of these collections. These archivists have urged that high level guides be produced to help scholars understand the contents of the collections, and that detailed cataloging follow only upon use and demonstrated interest. In addition, many libraries and archives have begun to accept contributed cataloging from graduate students and others. The Chicago, Columbia, UCLA, Johns Hopkins, and the Huntington research libraries, among others, now have formal programs to train graduate student researchers and incorporate their academic knowledge of relevant fields in the cataloging process.

Another form of contribution is perhaps even more notable in the context of this discussion of edition-making and publishing opportunities. Two years ago, Mellon began funding a collaboration among libraries that hold the papers of Dr. Martin Luther King and the editorial project, based at Stanford, which is responsible for producing the documentary edition of the King Papers. The basis of the collaboration is that the editors need the major holding libraries to catalog their holdings fully so that the edition can properly reference the originals for readers who may want to consult them for further

study. On the other hand, because the papers project has made copies of and cataloged documents from many different sources and then comprehensively analyzed these materials, the libraries could benefit from access to the results of their analysis, including especially detailed information about provenance and authorship.

The exchange of information is now underway**,** and one of many lessons learned from the interaction is worth recording. Libraries, of course, are noted for their collections, the bringing together of related materials from a variety of sources. However, editorial projects like the King Papers project are even more concentrated in their collecting activities because they must reach across libraries to extract unique documents by or about a particular person or subject, and this experience runs against the grain of the current thinking in libraries about their special collections: From the perspective of the scholarly editor what is relevant is not how special collections make libraries distinctive, but how libraries need to make these collections connect more effectively to one another than they do now so that related materials can be collected more easily into a scholarly edition.

Conclusion

In these remarks, I have highlighted one area of scholarly activity and the publishing activities and possibilities that are developing in that area. At its most general level, the scholarly activity is field-building, the definition of imaginative, compelling research that engages a community of scholars in an extended program of knowledge-building and dissemination. Imaginative, engaging research, however, requires an imaginative, engaging conception of the evidence needed to conduct the research and a process of arranging that evidence so that it can be usefully exploited. The arranging process includes scholarly edition-making. Twenty-five years ago, Jerry McGann helped reinvigorate edition-making as a vibrant, engaging scholarly activity. If my thesis here is proves to be valid, the vigorous growth and the possibilities for continued growth of edition-making activities are just part of a larger story about the intensive field-building activities currently underway in the humanities that anticipate and begin to exploit a digital future in order to advance the knowledge needed to support a vibrant scholarly culture. The challenge for us all is to ensure that these last 25 years are not exceptional, but a sign of what will become commonplace.