

Application for NINES Workshop in Digital Scholarship

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Project: digitization of *Victorians Institute Journal* “Texts” sections using XML and NINES standards and software

Scholarly rationale:

In 1986 *Victorians Institute Journal* instigated a new “Texts” section for material newly edited from manuscript and previously unpublished, as well as the reprints of obscure or unnoticed texts from the print archive. The first of these was a story by George Meredith (“The Friend of an Engaged Couple,” edited by Lewis Sawin) and subsequent volumes have featured such material as new letters by J.S. Mill to Sarah Austin, previously unpublished chapters of Pater’s *Gaston de Latour*, John Blackwood’s letters to George Henry Lewes and George Eliot, Ruskin’s letters to Emma Forman, Wilkie Collins’s notes for *The Moonstone*, etc., edited by a number of distinguished scholars (e.g., William Baker, Terry Meyers, Gerald Monsman, Leslee Zillmer).

VIJ content is currently not available on the web or in proprietary databases, and I would like to begin making the transition with the “Texts” section, with the hope that in the future the print journal might publish samplers of some longer texts which would then be fully edited and presented via NINES. One such edited text, Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s drama *Griselda*, has been submitted by a colleague, the medieval scholar Charlotte Morse who discovered it while working on the variorum “Clerk’s Tale.” Another text I have in mind is the long series of interesting letters (at the British Library) written to his family from India by the young William Gifford Palgrave who, after taking a First in Classics at Oxford quixotically joined the Bombay Native Infantry and then converted to Catholicism.

Such texts, while unlikely to find traditional print publishers, are a revealing part of the tapestry of Victorian England, and I think, along with the archive of previously edited texts, will be of some use to scholars when edited in a uniform electronic format.

Technical and Theoretical Problems:

I have been working in Unix and Apple OS since the early eighties (vi, html, hypertext), and have authored and maintain the web sites for both *VIJ* and *Stand Magazine*, but have not worked in XML yet. What I know is mostly based on Alan Liu’s intriguing

“Transcendental Data: Toward a Cultural History and Aesthetics of the New Encoded Discourse” (*Critical Inquiry* 31 (2004): 49-84). I would hope to gain from the workshop practical experience, as well as an exchange of ideas relating to on-line editing of Victorian texts.

Expected duration:

I would hope that over the next couple of years I would be able to bring on line the archive of “Texts” from the journal and introduce one or two new ones. Procedures and methods would be worked out so that future editors of the journal could carry forward in a rational manner.

Digital technology used / technical support from home institution

I would expect to prepare texts using Mac OS X and house the texts on a VCU server, using the new software devised by NINES. The English department has a full-time technology staff person, as well a new audio-visual computer lab en route via a state grant (which will be used in part to support the on-line creative writing journal *Blackbird*). We are also in the process of proposing a doctoral program in “Media, Art, and Text” jointly with the Schools of the Arts and of Mass Communication, and I expect institutional support to grow for projects such as this one if the program is approved by SCHEV. For *VII* I am currently supplied with an office, computer, and part-time graduate assistant. I would expect to use the assistant to help prepare the “Texts” sections.