This approach runs counter to an analytical trend that has been gaining in momentum since the 1970s and 80s, following on the pioneering work of historian Roy Bridges (1973, 1977, 1987, etc.).

Put simply, this work advocates for a return to the original field notes and other such sources of explorers and travelers like Livingstone and argues that such unabridges sources need to be read alongside more revised and/or published materials in order to develop the most comprehesnive critical understanding of encounters in the field.

The work has gained traction not only in terms of more traditional “analogue” scholarship such as the recent publication of the lavisly illustrated volume on Explorers’ Sketchbooks (Lewis-Jones and Herbert 2016), but also in the digital humanities via such projects as Olive Schreiner Letters Online, Livingstone Online, and, of course, the Livingstone Spectral Imaging Project.

Bridges outines the variety of revisionary stages through which such work passed and the complexities in differentiating among those stages (see, especially, 1977:3-4), but also highlights the heterogenous nature of the contents of the earliest stages and, most importantly, that the earliest stages contain the most direct information from informers, “what the explorer *heard*” (1987:181, italics in original).

Of such original records, Bridges indicates, “Livingstone’s notebooks are the most important example” (1987:181).