

A UNION WORLD CATALOG OF MANUSCRIPT BOOKS

PRELIMINARY STUDIES IN METHOD

- I. The World's Collections of Manuscript Books; a Preliminary Survey. By E. C. Richardson. 1933.
Price fifty cents
- II. The Manuscript Book Collections of Spain and Portugal.
By Henry A. Grubbs. 1933.
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- III. A List of Printed Catalogs of Manuscript Books.
By E. C. Richardson. 1935.
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- IV. A Demonstration Experiment with Oriental Manuscripts.
By N. A. Faris. 1934.
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- V. A Supplement to The Manuscript Book Collections of Spain and Portugal. By Henry A. Grubbs. 1935.
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- VI. Summary of Method. By E. C. Richardson. 1937.
Price fifty cents

A UNION WORLD CATALOG
OF MANUSCRIPT BOOKS

Preliminary Studies in Method

Made under the direction of
ERNEST CUSHING RICHARDSON

VI. SUMMARY OF METHOD

by E. C. RICHARDSON

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PREFACE

In the preceding prefaces it has been explained that in the failure of the American Library Association to obtain grants for the purpose, these studies have been made with "very limited means" and printed quite without the "editing" which will be applied to a final edition in which it is the expectation (Pt. V, p. v.) that "a high percentage of accuracy" will be possible.

The lists were described as "rough material," "published as *manuscript*." They were published in this unfinished state as "strictly a study in method form not a contribution in a model form."

The reason for printing in this rough unfinished state was said to be that in the absence of financial grants "it seemed idle to spend more time and money elaborating preparations" which "would contribute little which is material to the present purpose" but rather the contrary since for a study of method the editing out of the errors of the many original catalogers would be misleading as to the difficulty of the task and its expense.

It was printed it was said as a guide to the Committee "in rethinking its method" and as an aid "to whatever agencies shall in the end undertake the preparation of this much needed tool for research library service." It was "published as manuscript" instead of merely printed for the private use of the Committee because it was "believed that this material rough as it is will be of some service to scholars meantime." With this explanation, it was said, "the material is offered without further apologies."

I still do not think that further apology is needed. The language seems to be plain and the situation plain while the material published has in fact served its purpose as a useful basis for a study of the method and has in fact also proved useful to several appreciative research workers.

Nevertheless the seemingly plain language has been misunderstood by certain foreign language reviewers of highest standing. They have assumed that this material was prepared with adequate financial grants

("Nouvelles subventions") and is presented as a model guide for catalogers attempting a definitive list. They infer therefore that it is a fair sample of what the final results, edited with reasonable means will be.

In view of this misunderstanding it seems necessary to repeat what has been said and try to be still more plain. The material has been prepared with scantiest means. It has not been presented as a model of cataloging but merely as an illustration of the form proposed. It does not constitute a fair sample of what is to be expected from final results, if project should be directed by the present editor who has expressly stated and now re-states that final results will be much more accurate if means are tolerable—and it will not be undertaken if they are not.

The whole story in a nutshell lies in the fact that this material was produced at ten cents per title while as the result of this experience we have asked for grants of a minimum of twenty cents per title and a maximum of thirty three cents per title. With this amount and in this method "a high degree of accuracy" would be insured, although not of course all the meticulousness and detail of those projects which take from two dollars to six dollars per title or of course of those which cost from ten to forty dollars per title.

It should be added that whatever the faults of this work, of whatever kind, the general editor is solely responsible. He refused to allow Dr. Grubbs whose feeling of accuracy was outraged by the publication of uncorrected matter to take the time to edit out errors. It seemed to the editor and still seems, wasted effort in a matter which in the end must be edited carefully. An attempt to edit carefully at this stage would have cost far more money than we had and the results without the extensive and expensive preliminary standardizing projects described in the following pages, worthless and misleading.

ERNEST CUSHING RICHARDSON

*Washington, D. C.
November 18, 1937.*

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CHAPTER I

OF METHOD IN GENERAL.

(1) *Methodology* is the science of applying means to ends. It is the way to an objective. It is the art of getting results.

Method is a main factor in every project in whatever field of human endeavor where effort is exerted to produce a result. In the economic world, where the effort is typically to produce material objects or units of service, methodology is called scientific management or business engineering or efficiency. In science, which is business management applied to the production of new ideas, methodology is called scientific method. Its unit of production is a new idea. In education which is the mass production of these ideas in other minds and where the unit is one copy in one mind, it is called educational method. In religion it is universally known as the Way or Path or Road.

Whatever the field every project involves, first a clean cut definition of the objective, second, a survey of the means available and the selection of suitable elements for the purpose, third, adjustment or adaptation of these selected elements and the devising of new methods, fourth, a detailed plan, fifth, the application of this plan by demonstration experiment to the production of a model or sample of what the method used will produce, sixth mass production.

Factors of means are time, material, brains, research, experience, system (order) and labor. In a business project these means on last analysis resolve themselves chiefly into financial means. The project may include a variety of means, materials, voluntary labor, leisure and brains but these may, in general, and for the most part, be translated into terms of money.

The practical point of method is to get the best results possible in the shortest time with given means.

The application of means to a project, whatever the objective and whatever the means, involves first the brain factor in defining the problem and framing the detailed plan. The plan is expressed in terms of the means to be used and the cost of these means. If a man intends to build a tower or a union catalog or a military campaign he "sitteth down first and counteth the cost whether he have sufficient to finish it."

The commonest vice of projects is that they attempt too much quantity or too much quality for the money or time available. They fail to sit down and count the cost beforehand. The result is that at the end of the time set the project must have more time and more money or stop. The experienced producer plays safe. He estimates well within the limits of means while all the time trying to produce more results in a shorter time than his safety first estimates require. In order to do this

he relies on the carefully prepared and detailed plan with analysed costs and the application of the plan in a demonstration experiment before attempting general application.

A union catalog is a business proposition. The object to be produced is a joint index of books in two or more libraries. Its unit is a located book. It takes on existence first in one place only but copies may or may not be made by printing, photography, photostat, film, typewriting or handwriting and set up in as many places as desired. These replicas are exact duplicates of the catalog but the methodology of each kind of replica is again peculiar to itself and differs from that of the original.

These studies have to do both with the problem of the original formation of a catalog and with that of possible multiplication but its chief concern is with the formation of the original catalog and its operation, not with the possible multiplication of this unit by printing or film or otherwise.

(2) *The problem.* "The first thing to do," in any undertaking the teachers of scientific method say, "is to get a clearly defined conception of what the problem is."

The problem in this case is to locate promptly and surely for a research student of early manuscript books, all the manuscripts of any work with which he is concerned. The heart of the problem is to find quicker, surer and less expensive ways of doing this than those now in operation.

Uses of manuscripts. The main purposes for which American research scholars use book manuscripts are; text criticism, art study and paleographical science and teaching. Manuscripts are used also directly more or less in all kinds of historical research; social, political, linguistic, literary, medical, theological and the rest. This direct use however is relatively small in this latter field and is limited mainly to the use of a few unpublished works or the crosschecking of works that are very badly edited in printed editions. The bulk of such work is done not from manuscripts but from printed editions and satisfaction in the use of printed editions depends on the accuracy of the editions used, hence the increasing use of manuscripts by text critics.

The direct use of manuscripts for art, paleography and text criticism is on the other hand considerable and increasing. In spite of the handicap of distance from the great collections of manuscripts, American scholars have made distinguished contributions in all these fields during the last sixty years. Recently the work in art has reached a high degree of international distinction and recognition. American paleographical teaching and instruction too has advanced by strides and produced scholars of international distinction. The chief use and demand here however has been, as it is the world over, for the production of better editions of early writings. This is by far the greatest use of manuscripts. The demand for texts for this purpose is extensive. The introduction of the genealogical method has made

pretty much all editions before 1868 obsolete. The demand for better texts is insistent and textual critics have not been able to catch up with the situation. The demand far exceeds the supply. Naturally the bulk of new editions is by European scholars. They are nearer the manuscripts and can visit or borrow them much more readily than American scholars and what is still more to the point their nearness to their material has led to a greater familiarity with the subject and to much better and more extensive paleographical and text criticism instruction in the schools of higher learning. Until the recent rapid development of research work in American universities too the demand by reseachers for better editions was much more general and insistent among European than among American scholars but recent developments have changed the situation radically. American scholars in every field of early history are realizing the situation and demanding better texts.

In this field American scholars have already made noteworthy contributions both to the science of textual criticism and to production. Ezra Abbot, Caspar René Gregory and Charles Henry Thayer, among the pioneers are outstanding world figures and the number of internationally known names among contemporary or recent producers is becoming large.

It is a most promising field for real service by American scholarship and bound to be a great field if the handicap of distance from the great collections can be overcome by practical aids. Much has been done in aid of the work of collation through the development of photographic copying and the development of international lending. Much more can be done by improving present finding aids, in methods now well understood. Most can be done by a union catalog.

All the manuscripts. The problem of manuscript finding is far more exacting today than it was a couple of generations ago when the "best manuscripts" were the oldest and handsomest manuscripts. It was not so hard to locate these. They were mostly well known and the scouts for learned societies and private bibliographical tourists were fast gleaning out the remainder.

The discovery of the genealogical method changed all that. In this method a poorly written late manuscript may be worth a dozen older ones or a dozen more beautiful ones. The cry now is therefore for all the manuscripts. No textual critic is any longer satisfied with his work until he has examined test passages from every manuscript and found a provisional place for each in his stemma.

The difference between then and now in the number of manuscripts to be seen is illustrated by three cases of manuscript searching by the editor. In the first case the number of manuscripts found was ninety two compared with the two used in the previous edition of 1838, reprinted in the Migne. In the second case one hundred and eighteen were found (and 114 personally seen) compared with five used in the current Teubner edition. In the third case the standard edition does not seem to have used anything but printed editions and most of the previous

one hundred or more editions seem to have used only one or no manuscripts. Ninety nine manuscripts of this work have been seen and a provisional stemma of 65 of these was printed some twenty years or more ago. Recently the list has been increased by a Johns Hopkins graduate student, Mr. Hugo Weisgall, from ninety nine to more than four hundred manuscripts, gleaned from printed catalogs alone.

And the story does not end even here as the list of Spanish manuscripts prepared for these studies shows. It adds several manuscripts to the Golden Legend list, gives locations of manuscripts of other Varagine writings, not hitherto listed and adds items to one and perhaps both of the other lists. This is in spite of the fact that the chief Spanish printed catalogs had already been exhausted and the chief libraries had been visited and their written catalogs exhausted during three manuscript hunting journeys to Spain. It is likely that even after the long, laborious and expensive work of compiling these three lists so far, a good union catalog would add possibly ten percent more, on the average. A main object of Part V. of these studies was expressly to illustrate this point and it does show that even an incomplete and hastily executed union list of a rather small number of libraries will contribute automatically an appreciable amount to almost any list of any work whose manuscripts are widely distributed. It is the whole problem in a nutshell.

Altogether the finding and cataloging (which must include test passages and stemma) have taken on altogether new and vital importance, in recent times, exacting a very much larger share of research time and cost than before.

Altogether too the problem calls for much quicker and surer methods of finding. Too much time has to be spent getting ready for work. At present one must spend months and perhaps years exhausting available sources, printed and manuscript, before he gets at the real work of collating the manuscripts and editing his text.

Present finding methods being so slow and expensive discourage production and are therefore a serious handicap to the development of scientific text critical and paleographical studies in America. The aids are insufficient and cumbersome. The would be producer gleans the prolegomena of earlier editions, the literary histories and biographies and gets very little help as a rule, except from very modern editions and these are of course the texts which least need re-editing, while what the research scholar looks for is precisely those which most need editing. Now and then he finds a monographic list in some periodical article or literary history which is really helpful but very few even the best of these are definitive enough to satisfy his scholarly conscience and spare him the pains of going through the printed catalogs and extensive bibliographical journeys.

His chief dependence is the printed catalogs and even to exhaust these is a

laborious task costing months of diligent work. There are literally thousands of such printed lists of whole or partial collections to be examined and he does not dare skip any of these.

The task is comparatively simple in the case of volume catalogs. There are now tolerable collections of such catalogs in many American libraries especially at the L.C., Harvard and N.Y. Public Library. None of these is equal to the Vatican or Paris or other great European collections and few or none of them are grouped for the convenience of users. They are generally scattered through the literature about libraries, general and individual, or at least mingled with the catalogs of printed books in a way which doubles the time cost of handling, compared with collections arranged like those of Rome and Paris. At best all the American collections put together do not equal the great European collections. A few years ago a union card list of the Harvard, N.Y. Public and L.C. material was made and was found to fall a good bit short of the printed Paris list and this collection is short of the Vatican.

The American researcher, after he has exhausted the Boston, N.Y. and Washington centers may pick up other titles in Baltimore, Chicago, Phila. or other centers and locate other individual items here and there by means of the L.C. union catalog of printed books but this is a slow process and he cannot very well borrow the items located just to see whether they contain his item or not. He may in some cases under modern methods of information service have the catalog searched for him but this is not a simple matter. It may involve looking under a dozen different entries with which no one but the researcher is familiar. At best anything but personal examination is an interminable process, unsatisfactory in its results and the time cost of correspondence and the information service by the libraries, makes it almost or quite prohibitive, except as a last resort in rare cases.

The net result is that after the researcher has exhausted the resources of two or three centers he finds it necessary and economical to go abroad and use the better collections, better arranged for his purposes and quite likely he finds it more economical both in time and money to do this to begin with, as soon as he has exhausted his home library and its near neighbors.

And exhausting the thousands of volume catalogs, although the most fruitful is much less troublesome than the three other factors; the lists in periodicals, the written catalogs and the uncataloged collections.

It is when the searcher comes to his second stage, the periodicals and collective sources, that his troubles really begin. American libraries are happily rich in periodicals and collections and a surprisingly large fraction of the references can be found at any of our book centers but the difficulties and time cost of finding and using these is much greater than in the case of volume lists and the American stock of periodicals while very rich in the best standard serials is far from complete