

A Critical Edition of Folk Songs and Plays: Imaginings and Constraints

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In 1928 the American James Madison Carpenter first visited Britain and Ireland in order to collect additional material for a thesis on sea shanties.¹ Returning to Harvard in 1929, he was awarded his doctorate. Subsequently, he spent the next six years in England and Scotland, travelling the length and breadth of the land collecting ballads, shanties, and other kinds of folk songs, instrumental tunes, and folk plays, and a smaller amount of other material such as narratives, customs, dialect speech, and children's folklore. Carpenter's work was supported by a series of scholarships, facilitated by his Harvard mentor, George Lyman Kittredge, and in 1932 he spent a year living in Oxford. On his return to the USA in 1935, he continued to collect folklore materials and also endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to publish his ballad collection. He supported himself at first by giving occasional lectures on his work, and later held teaching posts in English at Duke University (in Durham, North Carolina), the College of William and Mary (in Williamsburg, Virginia), and, finally, at Greensboro Women's College (North Carolina). In later life, he turned his attention to writing his own songs, and following his retirement in 1964 he returned to his native town of Booneville, Mississippi. There Alan Jabbour of the Library of Congress tracked him down and in 1972 arranged the purchase of the collection on behalf of the library.² Carpenter, who was born in Booneville in 1888, died there in 1983.³

¹ For an account of Carpenter's life, from which most of the information included here is drawn, see Julia C. Bishop, "'Dr Carpenter from the Harvard College in America": An Introduction to James Madison Carpenter and his Collection', *Folk Music Journal*, 7.4 (1998), 402–20.

² Washington, DC, Library of Congress, American Folklife Center, Archive of Folk Culture, James Madison Carpenter Collection, AFC 1972/001.

The Carpenter Collection runs to some thirteen and a half thousand pages of paper-based materials; sound recordings contained on around one hundred and eighty dictaphone cylinders (the dictaphone was a kind of phonograph), of which there are also lacquer disc copies, made probably in the late 1930s; as well as 564 photographs. Most of the paper materials were microfilmed in the 1970s and tape copies were made of the discs, but the collection generally received little attention until in 2001 a team of six scholars received funding to catalogue it, a process made possible by the decision of the Library of Congress to digitize the materials. In truth, the very first application for funding was to produce a critical edition of the collection, and with hindsight it was no small mercy that it was turned down at that stage, for the collection turns out to be a quite disordered mass of materials, including multiple iterations of many of the same items, posing multiple editorial problems, so that the first essential task was to bring some conceptual order to it.⁴ This was achieved to an extent through the cataloguing, and initial funding has now been granted to begin work on a critical edition.

In various different formats, the collection comprises the texts and tunes of approximately a thousand Child ballads; eight hundred sea shanties; seven hundred and fifty other folk songs from Britain and America, and fifty instrumental tunes; three hundred British folk plays; two hundred children's singing games, riddles, and nursery rhymes, along with miscellaneous folktales, African-American spirituals, and so forth, besides the photographic images and some drawings, the latter including a sequence of drawings by George Baker of folk play characters and scenes.

The Child ballads – that is, narrative songs belonging to one of the 305 titles defined by Francis James Child in his standard edition of *The English and Scottish*

³ For the 1983 date, see Julia C. Bishop, 'Grouping, Grawping and Groping towards a Critical Edition of the James Madison Carpenter Collection of Traditional Song and Drama', paper presented at the 'Dialect and Folk Life Studies in Britain: The Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture in its Context' conference, University of Leeds, 19 March 2005, p. 4 (n. 2)

<<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/english/activities/lavc/Conference%20Paper%20PDFs/JuliaBishop2.pdf>>.

⁴ For the catalogue, see David Atkinson, Julia Bishop, Elaine Bradtke, Eddie Cass, Thomas A. McKean, and Robert Young Walser, *The James Madison Carpenter Collection Online Catalogue* (Sheffield: hriOnline, University of Sheffield) <<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/carpenter/>>. For some early reflections on the problems of editing the collection, see David Atkinson, 'Editing Carpenter, Conceptualizing Folk Song Collections', in *Ballad Mediations: Folksongs Recovered, Represented, and Reimagined*, ed. by Roger deV. Renwick and Sigrid Rieuwerts, *Ballads and Songs – International Studies*, vol. 2 (Trier: WVT, 2006), pp. 88–99; Bishop, 'Grouping, Grawping and Groping'.

Popular Ballads (1882–98)⁵ – best illustrate the complexities of the collection. Most of these songs exist in the form of:

- a) a rough copy text (mostly typescript, with handwritten alterations)
- b) a fair copy text (typescript)
- c) a dictaphone recording of at least a few stanzas of the song
- d) a lacquer disc copy of the dictaphone recording (sometimes more than one copy)
- e) Carpenter’s own music transcription made from the sound recording (sometimes more than one attempt).

Carpenter described his method of ballad collecting in an interview with Alan Jabbour in 1972.⁶ He said that initially he had his contributors sing a few stanzas into the dictaphone (the bulk and the cost of the wax cylinders preventing him from recording songs in their entirety), and then he had them dictate the entire text, two lines at a time, which he took down on a portable typewriter. These texts typed ‘in the field’ are believed to be the rough copy texts. He made it clear, however, that he also discussed the songs with the contributors, asking them, for example, if they knew of further stanzas that he himself knew from printed sources; on occasion, he would revisit a contributor after a lapse of time and go through the texts again. It is at this stage, or stages, that some of the handwritten amendments to the rough copy texts are thought to have been made. Certainly, some of the amendments take the form of altered readings, additional stanzas, and the like.

There are also many more mundane alterations to these rough copy texts – insertion of punctuation, standardizations of spellings, and so forth – which look to have been made, quite possibly at a significantly later date, in anticipation of the eventual publication of the ballad collection. Although there is evidence of the use of different writing implements, it is regrettably not possible to distinguish the nature of all the

⁵ *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. by Francis James Child, 5 vols (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1882–98; repr. New York: Dover, 1965); digital edn (New York: ESPB Publishing and Heritage Muse, 2003).

⁶ Interview conducted 27 May 1972, at Booneville, Mississippi. The tapes now form part of the Carpenter Collection, Reel Tapes, AFS 14,762–14,765. A cassette copy and photocopy of a transcript of the interview are held in London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, cassettes 121–122.

alterations simply on the basis of their appearance. By and large, the fair copy texts then reproduce the rough copy texts with all their amendments in a neat form, but also with a large number of minor variants, especially as concerns the spellings of Scots words, and a smaller number of more substantial variants, some of which do not appear to have any evident precedent.

In addition, the sound recordings frequently preserve sets of words that vary to a greater or lesser extent from the typescripts. The dictaphone recordings are of extremely poor quality, in part because Carpenter slowed the speed right down in order to fit as much as possible onto each wax cylinder (normally a six-inch cylinder could be expected to hold a maximum of around nine minutes of recorded sound, whereas some of Carpenter's run to twice that length) and in part because of wear from playing and deterioration with time. Consequently, in some cases the disc copies, which in theory should be no more than faithful copies, actually provide a better (though still not very good) signal. Carpenter's music transcriptions, with accompanying words, were made from the sound recordings. He was, however, self-taught at music transcription, and my musical colleagues are still engaged in comparing the accuracy of his notations against those that they are able to make for themselves from the recordings.

Now, in the parlance of folk song research, a particular song as taken down from a particular contributor is most usually said to constitute that person's *version* of that particular song *type* – *type* being an abstract conception that refers to a range of constants that unify all of a set of potential manifestations of what is recognizably the 'same' song.⁷ So it would be normal practice to speak of, say, Sam Bennett's *version* of 'Our Goodman' (Child 274), or Sarah Phelps's *version* of 'The Outlandish Knight' (Child 4), where both the titles and the Child numbers designate the two different *types*.⁸ Note (a) that this is not at all the same use of the word 'version' as is usual in the

⁷ The standard definition of *type* is by Stith Thompson in *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, ed. by Maria Leach, associate ed. Jerome Fried, 2 vols (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1949–50), II, 1137–38: 'A term used by students of folk literature to designate narratives capable of maintaining an independent existence in tradition' (p. 1137). A certain circularity in the pragmatic relationship between *type* and *version* must be acknowledged.

⁸ Sam Bennett, 'Our Goodman' (Child 274): Carpenter Collection, Cylinder 031 00:00; Disc sides 064 02:18, 065 00:00; MS pp. 05701–05703, 07592–07593, 08622–08623. Sarah Phelps, 'The Outlandish Knight' (Child 4): Carpenter Collection, Cylinder 131 04:21; Disc side 310 03:05; MS pp. 04924–04926, 06997–06998, 08480–08481.

context of scholarly editing, and (b) (just to add to the confusion) that folklorists have a tendency to use the terms ‘version’ and ‘variant’ interchangeably.

These, however, are not texts intended for publication, or songs intended for issue as recordings, and so there is nothing definitive about any particular rendition of either the words or the tune. Accordingly, the words on the sound recordings may, as already mentioned, differ quite noticeably from those the contributors dictated to Carpenter, and the editor is obliged to consider the two as being at least as distinct as the acknowledged versions of certain literary texts – say, the second quarto and the folio *Hamlet*. To minimize potential confusion over terminology, the sound recording and the dictated text can be referred to as different *renderings*, which are of equivalent status.⁹ This is despite the fact that their genesis may be separated in time by no more than a matter of a minute or two. In contrast, the fair copy typescripts derive directly from the rough copy typescripts, even though their genesis may have been separated in time by a space of several years, and so these texts need to be considered as variant textual states of the same *rendering*. Much the same can be said of the relation between both the sound recordings and Carpenter’s own music transcriptions, and the sound recordings and our own modern transcriptions – although while the recordings represent the primary documentary source, it is important to bear in mind a potential caveat in that the cylinders may have deteriorated in the time since Carpenter made his own transcriptions.

The ballads, as noted above, represent the most complex part of the collection, largely because Carpenter himself did the most towards their intended publication – marking up the texts, having fair copies made, transcribing tunes, and so forth – but the same basic observations apply to all the other textual items in the collection, both words and music. The folk plays, for instance, are in typescript but with handwritten

⁹ Many folklorists, though, would tend to refer to these *renderings* as different *versions* – illustrating the fact that the word *version* in folklore studies can be used in (at least) two different, interchangeable ways. This is the reason why the term *rendering* (some of my colleagues prefer *rendition*, but to my mind that term is too closely tied to the act of vocal reproduction) is adopted here, and *version* is avoided as far as possible. (What these different *renderings* really are, of course, is *texts*; but that term has proved too confusing where it is sometimes necessary to distinguish (a) between the words, which are widely referred to as the text, and the music; and (b) between a vocal rendition and a written text of both words and music.) An appropriate term to describe all the *renderings* of the ‘same’ song by the same contributor is still proving elusive: song *concept* is our working terminology, but it arguably implies too great an assumption of an underlying organizing principle at work.

amendments, which probably reflect corrections of a similar nature to those introduced into the ballad rough copies. In one or two instances, a play from a particular location was taken down from more than one contributor, thus providing more than one *rendering*; and at least one play was recorded in its entirety as well as taken down from dictation, again providing two different *renderings* of equivalent status.

The aim of a critical edition, then, must be first and foremost to bring order to disparate materials and multiple iterations. It must also be to provide access to the collection in a user-friendly manner for the people who are most likely to want to consult it. Among the potential uses and users for the edition are:

- a) linguistic, literary, and musical scholars engaged in textual, historical, and comparative work
- b) social and family historians and students of vernacular culture
- c) modern-day performers seeking to revitalize songs, plays, shanties, and the like from the 1930s.

Now it should be evident that these different groups will not necessarily require the same things from a critical edition. Users in groups (b) and (c) will most likely want above all a clean, readable transcribed text, with some explanatory annotation. In practice, that is also what many users in group (a) will want, with the possible exception of linguists who may be concerned about the exact form(s) in which dialect words, for example, may appear. Of course, the genesis of any particular text offered for study should be of concern to literary and musical scholars of all kinds, but it is well known that this is not generally the case even for Shakespeare, let alone for a disparate corpus of vernacular literature and music.

One reason for this lies in assumptions about the locus of authority for folklore materials. Just as 'Shakespeare' has been invoked as an unproblematic governing authority in literary discussions, so in the field of folklore authority is readily ascribed to the informant, the performer. Context and performance are favoured objects of study, and the mediating hand of the collector/editor is airbrushed out of the equation. When it cannot be ignored, Thomas Percy, Walter Scott, and Peter Buchan have been vilified for their (real or supposed) sophistications of ballad texts, notwithstanding their crucial role in the preservation and transmission of folk songs. As the ballad scholar Albert Friedman observed of Thomas Percy, 'scholarship has consigned him to the special hell

reserved for bad editors'.¹⁰ From a slightly different, Marxian perspective, the mediating role of the collector/editor has been regarded as wholly damaging, representing an act of cultural appropriation across a class divide, and rendering the whole folk song project virtually worthless – *Fakesong*, in the title of Dave Harker's influential book.¹¹

Editing, then, has a bad press in the field of folklore, because it is seen as interfering in the direct line of communication between the informant and the audience or scholar. The unspoken assumption is that the modern collector can and will record, write down, preserve, and publish texts exactly as they came 'from the horse's mouth', so to speak. Scholarly editors, who distinguish between *work* and *text* and *document*, and concern themselves with processes of text production, would not, of course, see things in quite that light. It has to be said, though, that there is precious little tradition of textual criticism in the folklore field.¹² To be fair, editors of folk songs and plays, especially editors of historical materials, have mostly found themselves faced with a single manuscript, which they have sought to represent as clearly as possible, in something like a semi-diplomatic edition.¹³ The state of the items in the Carpenter Collection, however, unequivocally precludes any such approach. What the paper-based

¹⁰ Albert B. Friedman, *The Ballad Revival: Studies in the Influence of Popular on Sophisticated Poetry* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 204–05.

¹¹ Dave Harker, *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British 'Folksong' 1700 to the Present Day*, Popular Music in Britain (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985).

¹² Two studies that might be expected to be concerned with this matter are Elizabeth C. Fine, *The Folklore Text: From Performance to Print* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984); and Jeff Todd Titon, 'Text', in *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture*, ed. by Burt Feintuch (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), pp. 69–98. The former, however, deals primarily with performance theory and with the challenge of representing performance, particularly in its non-verbal aspects, in print; while the latter traces the move in folklore studies away from cultural artefacts altogether and towards performance as an intersubjective process that can be studied in its entirety as a 'text'.

¹³ Child's ballad edition, immensely scholarly as it is, fits this general description. Unlike most ballad volumes, Sir Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, Consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads, Collected in the Southern Counties of Scotland; with a Few of Modern Date, Founded upon Local Tradition*, rev. and ed. by T. F. Henderson, 4 vols (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1902; repr. 1932), can be regarded as a critical edition. Nick Groom's work on Percy's *Reliques* approaches text production from a perspective evidently influenced by the work of Jerome McGann; see Nick Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques*, Oxford English Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

materials in particular represent is a collaborative process of text creation, driven by the shared agency of Carpenter and his contributors.

One way of presenting this process of text creation is through an archive of the original collection materials, most conveniently displayed as an electronic archive comprising digitized images and sound files and delivered over the Internet. This, in fact, the Library of Congress has expressed the intention of providing, although there is a tortuous process of clearing copyright permissions to be gone through first, so that it cannot be expected soon. The existing catalogue would then function as a finding aid for materials within the collection. Though scarcely an edition – certainly not a critical edition – such an electronic archive would cut the Gordian knot and do away with numerous intractable editorial decisions. Nevertheless, on the one hand, Thomas Tanselle has warned of the pitfalls of relying on reproductions for scholarly purposes;¹⁴ while on the other, Peter Shillingsburg observes that ‘a “mere” archive of source materials will strike most new readers and researchers from other fields as an undigested chaos of material in which everyone must become an editor before proceeding’.¹⁵

The requirements of a critical edition are thus:

- a) the requirement of the majority of users for a clean, readable, transcribed, and annotated text
- b) the textual critical requirement that what should be represented is a process of text creation and shared textual authority
- c) the requirement that the edition complement and enhance, without merely duplicating, the accompanying electronic archive.

In practice, the Carpenter Collection editors are conscious of constantly walking a tightrope between these three things. To these three might be added two further requirements:

- d) to ensure permanence

¹⁴ G. Thomas Tanselle, ‘Reproductions and Scholarship’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 42 (1989), 25–54.

¹⁵ Peter L. Shillingsburg, *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age: Theory and Practice*, 3rd edn, Editorial Theory and Literary Criticism (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 165.

e) to provide maximum searchability and flexibility of access.

Permanence – the establishment of the edition in a tangible, stable, and permanent medium, to quote our own funding application – is a *sine qua non*. If the end product does not meet those simple criteria, then the work is simply not worth doing.

Searchability, on the other hand, is a desirable. As an editor, one has experience of constantly wanting to compare like with like in order to ensure consistency of treatment and documentation, and to move between items and supporting annotations, such as the glossary of words. One immediate problem, of course, is that ‘like’ is not necessarily identical, whereas searching within a conventional word-processing program demands exactitude. Later researchers working on folk songs and plays might well want to compare, for example, verbal formulas or onomastic elements, which are often not formulated or spelled identically. Comparable kinds of searches within music texts are even more difficult. Possible solutions would appear to involve fuzzy searching and/or the coding of elements to an XML data standard such as EAD.¹⁶

Flexibility of access – the so-called ‘decentred text’ – is another desirable. Here one immediately thinks of grouping items in the collection by differing criteria of similarity – by contributor, by type, or by geographical location, for example – and the ability to mix media, so that the sound recordings can accompany the transcribed verbal and musical texts.

Clearly these last two considerations – searchability and flexibility – arise directly out of the possibilities of the electronic environment, although in practical terms the flexibility of access afforded by printed works – the power of indexes and cross-referencing, as well as the physical possibility of holding multiple pages open simultaneously – should not be overlooked. But editing has to start from the fundamental position that the problems to be solved are the same regardless of the ultimate platform of presentation.¹⁷

¹⁶ See the preliminary discussion of problems of music information retrieval within the context of the Carpenter Collection by Robert Young Walser, ‘Herding Folksongs’, in *ISMIR 2005: 6th International Conference on Music Information Retrieval, Online Proceedings* (London: Queen Mary, University of London, 2005), pp. 676–79 <<http://ismir2005.ismir.net/proceedings/2138.pdf>>.

¹⁷ See, for example, G. Thomas Tanselle, ‘Textual Criticism at the Millennium’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 54 (2001), 1–80 (pp. 32–46, especially p. 44).

To take one example, Carpenter mostly imposed a reasonably consistent, syntactic, and rather heavy system of punctuation, in keeping with 1930s' American practice, at some point in the preparation of his ballad texts, prior to the fair copies, probably with a view to publication. In doing so, he actually introduced at least one crux, where his punctuation is clearly wrong, and smoothed out certain ambiguities that may be inherent to the ballad texts.¹⁸ He also created a rather cluttered, old-fashioned-looking text. Given that Carpenter was taking down these texts from dictation, and therefore his punctuation does not have even the authority that has been conventionally accorded to a literary author's accidentals, there is a legitimate argument for applying a much more sparing, consistent system of punctuation that gives full play to the free-standing impact of, for instance, verse line endings, and offers a text of much greater clarity. This is the editorial policy that has in fact been adopted. However, the point here is not to defend the decision, but to insist that it has to be made one way or the other, whatever the medium of presentation.

Again, while it would be quite possible to create a fully genetic edition by encoding all the different marks that appear on the paper-based materials – splitting into layers, so to speak, the materials present in the digital facsimiles – one has to ask whether, in view of the expected use that will be made of the edition, that particular game would be worth the candle. The alternative is simply to list the substantive (in the editor's opinion, of course) variants in an apparatus which the user will be free to consult or to ignore. While the opportunity to foreground the process of text creation and the imprecise nature of textual authority appeals to the scholarly editor, it would probably conflict with, say, the social historian's requirement for a nice clear text. Again, the point is that this decision has to be made with a view to the potential value of the edition, and not on the basis that a genetic text is a possibility in the electronic environment while an apparatus of variants looks rather conventional and boring.

In fact, no decision concerning the final format of the edition has been taken. There are various reasons for this, not the least of which is that the decision is essentially out of our hands. A publisher has shown an interest in the edition, as a prestige project which will no doubt require a financial subvention, and discussions, such as they have been, have been around the codex format. The only real recent

¹⁸ David Atkinson, 'What Did the People All Say? Ballad Editing and the Problem of Punctuation', paper presented at the 35th International Ballad Conference, Kiev, Ukraine, 6–11 July 2005.

precedent for the edition is the *Greig–Duncan Folk Song Collection* which was issued in eight volumes over a period of twenty-one years, the last of them appearing in 2002.¹⁹ The general editor wrote in the introduction to the final volume: ‘There will . . . be many people that love books as well as their contents, and will place a high value on these eight red-bound volumes sitting solidly on a book-shelf.’²⁰ It is quite true that there is a strong tradition of book collecting among the folk song and folk play enthusiasts who could be expected to account for a significant proportion of potential sales of such an edition. To put this another way: users might reasonably demand something more for their money than a password giving access to an Internet site.

It is important to acknowledge that there are certain things that print publications do best – providing a clean reading text, the ability to maintain simultaneous cross-references and to mark one’s place, portability, readability, and so forth – and certain things that electronic publications do best – offering searchability, flexibility of access, the opportunity to correct and update documents, and the like. The relative weight of these various considerations will be determined by reference to the potential uses and users of the edition, and can be placed under a general heading of *accessibility*.

It is important, too, to acknowledge that both formats come with costs attached. It is simply not true that print publication is costly and Internet publication is free. Electronic publications require all of the layout and proof-checking of print, plus additional electronic encoding. IT workers are generally paid more than those of us who work in the publishing industry. Although the editorial team for the Carpenter Collection has experience of XML encoding, which was used in compiling the catalogue, and includes one member with considerable expertise in XML, there is certainly insufficient money in the grant to cover the time that encoding texts into TEI-compliant XML, for example, would require. Specialist text editing programs are beyond both our ken and our budget. When McGann wrote in 1995 that within ‘a few years, these electronic tools will not only be far cheaper, they will also be commonplace’,²¹ he was wrong – in part, one presumes, because (not alone among

¹⁹ *The Greig–Duncan Folk Song Collection*, ed. by Patrick Shuldham-Shaw, Emily B. Lyle, et al., 8 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press; Edinburgh: Mercat Press, for the University of Aberdeen in association with the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1981–2002).

²⁰ *Greig–Duncan Folk Song Collection*, VIII, xxi.

²¹ Jerome McGann, ‘The Rationale of HyperText’ (1995)

<<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/public/jjm2f/rationale.html>>.

tenured academics) he neglected to consider the hidden costs of IT support alongside the more evident prices of computer equipment and software. Without either institutional IT support or the guarantee of permanent, full-time, pensionable employment on the project, we are committed to working with Microsoft Word and Coda Finale – powerful, relatively cheap programs that demand little in the way of IT support, but proprietary packages nonetheless. Apparently, the next release of Word will be fully XML-based, and with the use of styles within Word it is quite easy to tag the most important textual elements, so we hope that this compromise will keep our options open as regards the ultimate format of publication for the edition. But it is still a compromise, driven by *economics*.

An even more important consideration is that a printed work once published is there for all time, with no further costs attached. Electronic publications require maintenance, for which a university may charge, and the possibility of correcting and updating – a major advantage of the electronic format – will invariably be chargeable. There are already CD-ROMs that are no longer accessible under the latest computer operating systems; and while we are assured that the XML format is future-proof as well as platform-independent, we were told that about HTML. The future is more unpredictable than ever and, while the jury is still out on the long-term preservation of electronic materials, I, for one, would not trust a British university to maintain a Web-based edition of a folklore collection a hundred years from now. The evidence shows that codices from three or four hundred years ago are still going strong, so my final concern is for *permanence*.

These three interconnected, competing claims, or constraints, that I have called *accessibility*, *economics*, and *permanence* exemplify how the opportunity to work on the Carpenter Collection edition has fallen at a cusp where printed and electronic editions are held in a fine balance. ‘Hard to see, the future is,’ as Yoda might have said. An increasing exploitation of the potential of the electronic environment can certainly be predicted, but whether that means the death of the book is quite another matter. For instance, print-on-demand might have the potential to open up a symbiosis between the electronic and print worlds. Certainly, where one is fortunate enough to have access to the same works in electronic and printed formats it has become the practice to use both,

for different purposes (searching versus reading, for example).²² Currently unimagined possibilities could open up for the dissemination of variant editions in variant formats, with the capacity to suit the needs of all users, at the same time turning into a literary critical commonplace what scholarly editors have long known, the inherent indeterminacy of the work and its representation by any edition whatsoever.

²² This is certainly my experience with paper and digital editions of Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*; it is an academic luxury to have the benefits of both formats at hand.