



The Chaucer Newsletter

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"Parfit Glorious Pilgrimage": Canterbury '90

A new visitor to Canterbury could be forgiven for thinking that it is Chaucer's hometown. There is the Geoffrey Chaucer School (so *that's* where he received his early education!); the Chaucer Hotel (still swarming with pilgrims); the Chaucer Hospital, heir to that gilded tradition of private medicine in which the Doctor of Physik was a skilled practitioner; Chaucer Hair (creating coiffures called 'The Emily' and 'The Absolon'); Chaucer Motor Factors (in his old age Chaucer needed more horse-power); Chaucer Advertising (evidently a going concern); and so on.

Chaucer would have enjoyed the irony of his name's association with Canterbury, since there is no conclusive evidence that he ever set foot within the city walls. There are, however, many tangible and authentic reminders of the days when Canterbury was at the centre of an international pilgrimage cult. Within the cathedral, the nave built by Chaucer's associate, Henry Yevele, is en route to the spot where Thomas Becket was brutally murdered in 1170. The story of the archbishop's life, martyrdom, and miracles is told in the glorious early stained glass of the Trinity Chapel, which climaxes in the Jesse windows of the Corona Chapel, so called after the relic once kept there — Becket's head. These temples of light and colour, with their exhilarating early Gothic architecture, were designed theatrically, to focus attention on what stood at their centres. In the Trinity Chapel shone the gold, jewel-encrusted shrine of St. Thomas. Only an intricate mosaic floor in costly stones remains

to indicate its former opulence. On the edges of the empty stage-space the tombs of the good and the great (among them those of the Black Prince, and of Henry IV and his queen) cluster as if to benefit from the spiritual supercharge of the saint's bones. Not far away is the tomb of Archbishop Simon Sudbury, decapitated in the Tower of London in 1381 by the Kentish rebels. The city itself contains some less well-known, but equally evocative, places. Two certified relics of St. Thomas are kept in the Catholic church of that name in Burgate. The Chequer of the Hope (now a jeweller's shop), the city's major pilgrim inn during the later part of the fourteenth century, is still substantially intact, with its medieval cellar gratings and stone arcading. According to the author of *The Tale of Beryn*, written within a few decades of Chaucer's death, this is where Chaucer's pilgrims would have lodged.

Part of its interior is recreated at 'Pilgrim's Way,' a de-consecrated medieval church in which the originators of the Jorvik Centre at York have simulated five of Chaucer's Canterbury tales. Those who do not have time for the strenuous experience of walking from Southwark can do so here in the space of forty minutes. Children love it. The curator of Canterbury Heritage, a 'time-walk' museum housed in a thirteenth-century poor priests' hospital, takes a more mature approach to Canterbury's cultural inheritance. His museum recreates the city's history from its foundation as the Roman city of Durovernum, its conversion by Augustine into the spiritual centre of the English church, through its middle-aged prosperity (there is a fine collection

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New Ellesmere Chaucer Facsimile Project

The Board of Trustees of the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens of San Marino, California, has approved, subject to funding by private donors, the preparation and publication of a state-of-the-art facsimile volume of the Ellesmere Chaucer manuscript (Huntington MS EL 26 C 9) and a companion volume of scholarly essays which will explore a wide variety of topics related to this landmark manuscript. The facsimile will replace the imperfect Manchester quasi-facsimile of 1911. It will attempt as faithfully as possible to reproduce the colors and the size of the original, taking advantage of the various technical advances that have been made in photographic reproduction over the last decade. An edition of the new facsimile will be subsidized to make it available at low cost to scholars. Daniel Woodward, Librarian of the Huntington Library, will serve as editor of both volumes. Martin Stevens, Executive Officer of the Ph.D. Program in English at the City University of New York, will chair the advisory board for the project. (The rest of the board has not yet been appointed.)

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Canterbury '90

of pilgrim badges), down to the destruction of many of its medieval buildings in a German bombing raid of 1942. Due attention is paid to the richness of the city's literary past. Christopher Marlowe is, of course, a son of the city; Joseph Conrad is buried in Canterbury cemetery; and Thomas More's head lies in the vault of St. Dunstan's church. (Canterbury specialises in severed heads.)

The University of Kent, which celebrates its silver jubilee in 1990, lies 1 & 1/2 miles to the north, on the crest of St. Thomas's Hill. From each of its four colleges (Darwin, Eliot, Keynes and Rutherford) there are spectacular views of the city and of the cathedral, like a great ship in full sail. The campus occupies land fringed by the ancient forest of Blean (through which some of the University's jogging routes now pass). Other place-names within easy reach will warm the hearts of Chaucerians. Harbledown, for instance, is a mile to the west of the University; the 'bob-up-and-down' configuration of the land is clearly visible.

Canterbury lies in the valley of the River Stour where hops and fruit-trees flourish. The river was once navigable to sea-going ships at nearby Fordwich, one of the Cinque Ports and a place recommended by Izaak Walton for trout-fishing. Canterbury's streets are thronged in August with European visitors, witnessing to its strategic position on one of the main arteries between London and the Continent. Dover is a thirty-minute drive away, while the fishing port of Whitstable (famous for its oysters) and the seaside town of Herne Bay (where many a bargain is to be had in the back-street second-hand shops) are close enough to be popular with Kent students for living quarters.

Road communication with London is along a familiar route: through Boughton to Rochester and on to Greenwich. The road (A2/M2) is fast and congested, although another ancient trackway connecting the two cities, on an escarpment of the south downs, remains relatively unspoilt. Of

the two London railway services which serve Canterbury (leaving hourly), the line from Waterloo and Charing Cross (to Canterbury West) is the prettier, while that from Victoria (to Canterbury East) follows more closely the direction taken by Chaucer's pilgrims. If Chaucer had been a London commuter, he would have used Victoria. Whether one travels by road or rail, the journey time is approximately the same (1 & 1/2 hours).

It is only in recent years that Canterbury has begun to acquire London commuters in any significant numbers. The completion of an orbital motorway for the capital (M25) has put Canterbury within reach of city folks. The channel tunnel project has also focussed attention on the south-east, now more than ever the gateway to the Continent. In consequence, Canterbury is enjoying a boom. It is a mecca for the region's shoppers, since a number of prestigious names (Liberty's, Laura Ashley, Habitat) have recently opened up for business. So have the multinationals: MacDonald's, Pizza Hut and Pizzaland all have outlets (the last in a former pilgrim inn). But the charms of medieval Canterbury are not effaced by the homogenising effects of modern commerce: affluence has also brought a tripling of second-hand bookshops (one named after Chaucer), a multiplying and diversifying of local eating-places (which include The Wife of Bath Restaurant), and an increase in tea shops and pubs (among which figures the Miller's Arms). For Chaucerians, Canterbury is full of atmosphere.

Peter Brown
University of Kent, Canterbury

Ellesmere Chaucer

The preparation for the facsimile edition will include the disbinding and repair and flattening of the manuscript, a process that will be carried out in the Huntington's conservation center, directed by a visiting expert, and observed by invited specialists. The project is expected to include also a cyclotron examination of the manuscript by a team of experts at the Crocker Nuclear Laboratory of the University of California at Davis. This team, which brings to the project its experience in the nuclear analysis of the Gutenberg Bible, indicates in a preliminary proposal that their examination could be a beginning toward ascertaining the number of artists who worked on the portraits, clarifying the disputed use of a stylus in three pictures of the horses, distinguishing gradations of ink used in the manuscript and consequently making external comparisons with other medieval manuscripts, reaching new conclusions based on a study of the animal skins used — about the preparation of the manuscript, and making further significant discoveries. It is anticipated that other scholars will have suggestions about further lines of investigation. In projecting its work, the team concludes that the prospect of analyzing the Ellesmere Chaucer is "immensely exciting," not only because of the discoveries that may be made concerning this significant manuscript, but also for the criteria that the project will set for the scientific support of manuscript study and for other facsimile productions in the future. The team assures the Huntington that "the cyclotron offers an entirely non-destructive technique for chemical analysis, to be applied in this case to the parchment, to the ink, and to the pigment." In light of this extraordinarily important examination, an essay in the companion volume will describe not only the technical analysis but also its scholarly implications.

After the completion of the cyclotron examination and the
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photographic and printing work, the manuscript will be rebound by the visiting expert. The Huntington hopes also to conduct a conference of Chaucer scholars and other medievalists for the purpose of discussing these findings as well as the conservation process and the implications that the preparation of the facsimile in all of its facets may have on Chaucerian and other manuscript studies in the future.

The publication of the new Ellesmere facsimile will be of importance in making accessible to scholars a true copy of what is generally regarded as the finest medieval vernacular manuscript in English. It will also contribute importantly toward the preservation of the original, because the disbinding of the manuscript will allow for the repair of any weaknesses and for the flattening of leaves which have been curved over the years by the present and previous bindings. The new binding, replacing the Riviere binding of 1911, will allow the pages to be flat when the manuscript is opened and will offer maximum protection for the manuscript in the future. With the publication of a true facsimile, the need for inspection of the original is expected to be reduced significantly.

A report on the project will be given by the organizers during the first plenary session at the 1990 NCS congress in Canterbury. Depending on the Huntington's progress toward raising the necessary funds, the appointment of the Advisory Board may occur prior to the meeting, and the Board would be convened for its initial session in Canterbury. The organizers are especially eager to hear comments and suggestions from participants of the congress during the meeting, and look forward to answering questions concerning the project.

Martin Stevens
Graduate Center, CUNY

Daniel Woodward
Huntington Library

Chaucer Division Sessions, MLA 1990

Betsy Bowden, current chair of the MLA Chaucer division, announces the following topics and speakers for the Chaucer sessions at the 1990 Modern Language Association convention in Chicago:

I. "Implications of Orality"

Chair: Michaela Paasche Grudin, Univ. of Oregon

1. "Well Could Alison Carp While Jenkin Would Read: Orality and Literacy in the Wife of Bath's Prologue"
James E. Hicks, Univ. of Denver
2. "Live Connections: Reading Chaucer in the Presence of an Oral Culture"
Alastair C. L. Henderson, Univ. of Stellenbosch (South Africa)
3. "Reading Chaucer: What's Allowed in 'Aloud'?"
Alan T. Gaylord, Dartmouth College

II. "Editing as Textual Interpretation"

Chair: Christine Hilary, Bridge Institute for the Humanities

1. "The Case of the Missing Texts: Early Editors' Reading and 'Recovery' of the Canterbury Tales"
Daniel W. Mosser, Virginia Tech.
2. "Reading Minds and Reading Lips: The Pitfalls of Punctuation"
Mary Jo Arn, Univ. of Pennsylvania
3. "Critical but Diplomatic: A Proposal for a New-Philological Edition"
Murray McGillivray, Univ. of Calgary

III. "Oral Genres and the Wife of Bath"

Chair: John Hill, U. S. Naval Academy

1. "The Wife of Bath and the Complaint of History"
Andrew Galloway, Univ. of California at Berkeley
2. "The Wife of Bath's Prologue: Confessional Practice and the 'Space to Speke' the Self"
Jerry Root, Univ. of Michigan
3. "'The Frere Lough': The Wife of Bath's Comic Monologue"
Eric Hyman, Fayetteville State Univ.

Organizer:

Betsy Bowden, Department of English, Rutgers University
Camden, NJ 08102 -- (215) 386-8991

Electronic Communications and the Chaucer Scholar

New developments in electronic communications offer exciting prospects for improved scholarly exchange among members of professional societies, including the New Chaucer Society. Most colleges and universities in North America, Western Europe, and Japan are linked together by various computer networks, which offer among their attractive functions an electronic mail service, commonly known as e-mail. E-mail allows easy, rapid, and free communication with any one else around the world who also has an e-mail address. Most institutions offer e-mail to their faculty and staff at no charge. Messages are typically typed at one's micro-computer connected to the institution's mainframe computer either by modem over standard telephone lines or by some kind of local area network. Messages usually arrive anywhere in the world within a few hours. E-mail is in wide use by our colleagues in the physical and social sciences, but the number of humanists using e-mail has grown rapidly in the past year or so, and this growth is likely to accelerate in the future. Part of the growth will be a corollary of the conversion of more and more college and university library catalogues to online form: humanities scholars will discover that, with a micro-computer and a modem or other connection to a mainframe computer, they can enjoy the great benefit of access to their own institution's library catalogue from their home or office.

One of the useful adjuncts of the networked e-mail system is the ready capability of the computer's software to manage electronic discussion groups joining scholars around the world with mutual interests. There are over a thousand of these discussion groups in existence now, and their number is growing daily. Most of them are in the sciences, as one might expect, but there are notable examples in the humanities. The largest and most well-established of these, called HUMANIST, is devoted broadly to the field of humanities computing. HUMANIST is managed

from the University of Toronto and has over 700 members, primarily in North America, Europe, and Israel. Another discussion group is ANSAXNET, concerned with Anglo-Saxon England and the early Middle Ages. A discussion group for eighteenth-century studies was established just this February; at the other extreme, perhaps, is a discussion group devoted solely to Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*.

To join a discussion group, one typically sends an e-mail message to the host site asking to subscribe, and one is enrolled automatically by the computer (known as the listserver). As a subscriber to the discussion group, one then receives electronically all the communications that are sent over it. These can be announcements of various kinds that the moderators or editors of the discussion group send along to all the members; or, as a subscriber, one can send a message that will automatically be sent to all the other subscribers. While reading a message on one's computer screen, one can, if one is moved to do so, immediately respond to the message, and that response is in turn sent on not only to the author of the first message but to everyone else in the group. In a managed group, the editor screens the messages to make sure they are appropriate to the purposes of the group before releasing them to everyone else.

A directory of all e-mail addresses of the membership is made available so that any subscriber can send private e-mail to any other subscriber.

If the New Chaucer Society were to sponsor a discussion group it might have the following uses:

▪ A discussion group can effectively fulfill and extend the traditional functions of a newsletter. Postings could be made with announcements of grant opportunities, calls for papers, notices of new journals, and the like. The discussion group would not replace, but supplement, the printed newsletter of the Society. The advantage of the electronic form is that information is disseminated in a much more timely manner.

▪ Discussion groups are often used by subscribers to field queries to the membership at large. These might have to do with either research or pedagogy; e.g., someone might post a notice such as: "I am planning to assign the complete Tale of Melibee in an undergraduate survey course in medieval literature. Does anyone have any experience or advice to share?" If replies were thought to be of general interest, they could then be distributed to all the subscribers of the list. Discussion groups have a way of encouraging informal interchange, and often have a refreshing element of spontaneity.

▪ Discussion groups can also be the vehicle for a more structured exchange of views on a set topic, similar to the Forum section in *PMLA*. One might conduct a discussion on the merits of using modern English translations of Chaucer in undergraduate courses, or hold a forum on the research tools most needed to advance Chaucer studies, whether bibliographies, editions, translations of sources, facsimiles of manuscripts, or the like. It might be possible to invite responses to articles after their appearance in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, with opportunity for reply by the author.

▪ A discussion group could also facilitate a more timely distribution of the very valuable annotated Chaucer bibliography that appears in *SAC*. It should be possible for the bibliography to be updated several times a year, with the revised versions made available, as soon as they are finished, as computer files. Individuals could then transfer files to their own micro-computers.

▪ There are advantages for the administration of the Society. Specialized sublists are easily formed from the master list of subscribers. For example, the director and trustees, planning committee of the biennial congress, and local arrangements committee could be linked electronically and communication down to the last minute would be quick and cheap.

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▪ Electronic mail in general greatly eases the conduct of collaborative research, and thereby has the ability to foster it. For example, a colleague in history at Nebraska is editing the correspondence of a nineteenth-century German physicist together with two collaborators, one in Nova Scotia and the other in Italy. They send drafts to each other, in the form of computer files, for comment and correction. What could be an expensive and time-consuming task by conventional means can be done in a matter of hours at no cost.

The electronic discussion group has great potential for promoting scholarly interchange in part because of the ease and rapidity with which one can reach those persons around the world who share common interests. A discussion group is particularly appropriate for the New Chaucer Society because of its international membership. Messages reach Oxford or Austin, Vancouver or Helsinki, Rome or East Lansing, Tokyo or Tel Aviv, in a matter of hours.

Some challenges must be met, however, if a discussion group is to be successful. The first is that for a discussion group to operate effectively there must be a critical mass of subscribers sufficient to generate commentary at relatively frequent intervals, or an active editor who maintains a steady flow of postings, or both. For most of us, logging on to a mainframe computer to read e-mail is not yet part of our regular routine, and if weeks or months go by without anything appearing from the discussion group, fewer and fewer people bother to log on, and a downward spiral is set in motion. Many lists come to ground for just this reason. My guess is that of the approximately 650 members of the New Chaucer Society, relatively few of us at the present time are regular users of electronic mail. And some of our members are independent scholars, or retired, or faculty at small colleges, without access to e-mail. On the other hand, I know that the number of persons in the humanities who use electronic mail is steadily increasing, and it is

quite probable that the existence of discussion groups in the humanities will in turn lead to greater use of e-mail by humanists.

There is also the question of quality. It is relatively easy for anyone to start a discussion group, and ad hoc lists on timely or highly specialized topics serve a very useful purpose. Some lists may be valuable, but they are scholarly only in a marginal way. It is my view that discussion groups have the best chance of realizing their full scholarly potential when they are supervised, somewhat in the manner of a scholarly journal, without stifling the characteristic informality of the best groups. Discussion groups need a Harry Bailly to keep the discourse moving along, within bounds, and with the final objective in mind. It also seems to me that discussion groups work best when they are sponsored by, and serve the stated purposes of, a professional society.

The electronic discussion group belongs to an array of technological advances soon likely to cause major changes in how scholarly discourse is conducted in the humanities. Some analysts foresee the abolition of conventional printed journals, to be replaced by an online electronic forum (see the article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, cited below). To me these proposals seem unlikely under present circumstances, or at least premature. Yet the members of a professional society like the NCS surely should be pondering how the new technology can serve its aims most effectively.

A discussion group is an undertaking that is certainly immediately feasible. Another activity might be planning for the inclusion of journals covering Chaucer in the online research-in-progress database that is now a part of the Research Libraries Information Network. (The RLIIN database is an experimental project containing bibliographical information for articles accepted by journals in the humanities but not yet in print: it is designed to overcome the characteristically long time lag between an article's acceptance by a journal, its appearance in print, and its eventual

notice in a printed bibliography.) Another possibility is to encourage the issuance of one of the standard editions of Chaucer as an electronic text, on computer diskettes, as a compact disc, or in other forms (e.g.: the Riverside Shakespeare became available on compact disc earlier this year). Electronic texts can be rapidly searched for words, phrases, and collocations of words in ways that are virtually impossible with a printed text. A revision of *Sources and Analogues* has been proposed: it might make good sense for that revision to have its primary mode of existence not as a printed book but as an electronic full-text database that could be searched using logical operators, and periodically revised as new information is brought to light by subsequent generations of scholars. A conventional book could still of course be published, and would serve many uses.

None of the ideas just mentioned is utopian or even mildly visionary. All are within the range of existing technology and are economically practicable. All have analogous precedents of proven success. A modest step toward the new age might be to consider the establishment of an electronic discussion group for Chaucer scholars. It could link all of us committed to the study of Chaucer more closely together for our common profit.

Thomas H. Bestul
University of Nebraska, Lincoln

A few references on scholarship and electronic communications follow.

LaQuey, Tracy. "Networks for Academics." *Academic Computing* Nov. 1989: 32+.

Rogers, Sharon J., and Charlene S. Hurt. "How Scholarly Communication Should Work in the 21st Century." *Chronicle of Higher Education*. 18 Oct. 1989.

Weiskel, Timothy. "The Electronic Library and the Challenge of Information Planning." *Academe* 75.4 (July-August 1989): 8-12.

Prof. Bestul will lead a session at the Canterbury congress (Thursday, August 9, 1990) on an electronic discussion group for Chaucer scholars. [Eds.]

The Oxford Computers and Manuscripts Project

The collation of many manuscripts such as those of the *Canterbury Tales* and the compilation of information about their relationships (counts of correspondent readings, etc.) are tasks ideally suited for the computer. Minute accuracy, exact consistency, and stamina in repetitive work are required — just the qualities a computer can provide. Yet there is no readily available and easily usable computer program which permits textual scholars to harness the power of computers to their own ends.

The "Computers and Manuscripts" Project at Oxford seeks to remedy this deficiency. In the process, it may also illuminate something of the development of the textual tradition of the Wife of Bath's Prologue. Besides its great intrinsic interest, this text has been chosen as one of the three manuscript traditions with which the project will work because it is of sufficient length and occurs in a sufficient number of manuscripts (fifty-seven) to provide a demanding but not overwhelming testing ground. The Director of this project is Susan Hockey (author of *A Guide to Computer Applications in the Humanities*)¹, and I am the Research Officer. The project is based at the Oxford University Computing Service and is funded for three years from 1 September 1989 by a grant from the Leverhulme Trust, with the assistance of equipment loaned by Apple Computer. The project grew out of my doctoral work, for which I had to deal with forty-five manuscripts of the Old Norse text *Svipdagsmál*. In this work I enlisted the aid of the computer to do the collation and explore the relations between the manuscripts and so found myself writing a series of computer programs. This process, described in two articles published in *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, is the basis of the present project.²

The aim of the project is to develop tools which can help a scholar through some of the stages of the preparation of a critical edition based on many manuscripts: their transcription, comparison, and collation; collection of information about manuscript relations; compilation of tables of spelling variants. We want to make these tools as easy as possible to use so that they will be accessible to scholars who know little of computers. The programs are therefore being written to run on the Apple Macintosh, by common agreement one of the easiest computer interfaces to learn and to use.

The first step is transcription. We recommend the Macintosh for this because it allows one to design a font which mimics distinctive letter forms. However, the transcription can be done on any standard word-processor. The program will then merge all the separate transcription files (one for each manuscript) into a single file in which all the corresponding sections of text appear one under the other. Part of this file for the first line of the Wife of Bath's Prologue might appear thus:

<1> <Hg>	Experience thogh noon auctozitee
<E1>	Experience though noon auctozitee
<Ad ³ >	Experience thogh noon auctozite
<He>	Experyence thogh non autoryte
<Pw>	Expience thouge noon autozite

This merged file can then be collated by the program. This will differ from previous computerised collation programs in that it will be under the complete control of the scholar: it will run interactively, so that the scholar can intervene at any point to adjust the collation to his or her own taste. Thus, using Hengwrt as the base text:

1. Experience] E1,Ad³; Experyence He; Expience Pw. thogh] Ad³,He; though E1; thouge Pw. noon] E1,Ad³,Pw; non He. auctozitee] E1; auctozite Ad³; autoryte He; autozite Pw.

Any other text might be used as the base — Ellesmere, for example, or a composite text — with differing arrangements of the resultant collations. The scholar may adjust the punctuation and format of the output, and so on.

The program is being designed with the problem of variant spellings much in mind. Tools will be provided to deal with the variant spellings so that the scholar may experiment with different regularisations of orthographic variants. One such regularisation could result in the following collation:

1. Experience] E1,Ad³,He,Pw. thogh] E1,Ad³,He; thouge Pw. noon] E1,Ad³,He,Pw. auctoritee] E1,Ad³; autoryte He,Pw.

Another part of the program sorts all the spellings declared as equivalents by the scholar during the collation. For the last example, it would display them thus:

Experience	3 MSS Hg E1 Ad ³
equivalent spellings	Experyence 1 MS He; Expience 1 MS Pw
thogh	3 MSS Hg Ad ³ He
equivalent spelling	though 1 MS E1
noon	4 MSS Hg E1 Ad ³ Pw
equivalent spelling	non 1 MS He
auctoritee	0 MSS
equivalent spellings	auctozitee 2 MSS Hg E1; auctozite 1 MS Ad ³
autoryte	1 MS He
equivalent spelling	autozite 1 MS Pw

Similar tables could be generated for individual manuscripts, or for them all together, and could form the basis of discussion of the spelling practices of the scribes. Furthermore, once the manuscripts have been entered into

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the computer, concordances and indices may be readily compiled through programs such as the Oxford Concordance Program.

The program will also provide a way of collecting basic statistical information concerning the correspondences among manuscripts. For example, it could produce the tables of agreements between collated manuscripts printed in the introductions to the volumes of the *Variorum Chaucer*. If more sophisticated analysis is required, the results of the collation may also be output in a form ready for import into a database or into statistical analysis packages.³ Because of the Macintosh interface, all the scholar has to do to use these facilities is to point the mouse and click. There are no abstruse commands to memorise, no complicated key-sequences to rehearse, no hefty manuals to master. The aim is to allow the textual critic to do what he or she has always done, but to do so more easily, and with greater access to, and control over, all the material.

These tools must be tested and proven. Besides the Wife of Bath's Prologue, we intend to deal with at least two other manuscript traditions: the Old Norse *Sólarljód* (sixty manuscripts) and Dante's *De Monarchia* (twenty-two manuscripts). The work on the Wife of Bath's Prologue will involve the transcription of all fifty-seven manuscripts, processing of them by the collation program, and the import of all the variants found in the manuscripts into a database for analysis. Similar database analysis of the patterns of agreements found in the forty-five *Svipdagsmál* manuscripts enabled me to classify the manuscripts into eight distinct groups, with each group characterised by a set of variants typically found together only in manuscripts of that group. In essence, this is very close to Manly and Rickert's statement of how they identified "genetic" (or "constant") groups: "The test of a genetic group, as distinguished from a mere accidental grouping, is that the same sigils should appear together persistently and consistently."⁴

In the *Svipdagsmál* material, the classification of the manuscripts into groups on the basis of such sets of characteristic variants provided a means of coping with coincident agreement (what Manly and Rickert call "acco") and contamination. Where variants characteristic of a group did appear outside that group it might be by contamination, in which case one could see the "oilslick" of contamination clearly defined, with the spread of variants into alien groups following detectable lines. Or it might be by coincidence, in which case the distribution of the variants was quite random. It was possible to construct a picture of the development of the text of *Svipdagsmál* from the most original surviving manuscripts through 150 years of scribal activity, from c. 1670 to 1820, showing the flow of the text through the manuscripts both vertically (by direct copying) and laterally (by scribes importing readings from outside their direct exemplars).

The database analysis of the *Svipdagsmál* material was made easier by external evidence concerning the relations between the manuscripts which identified ten of the forty-

five manuscripts as direct copies of one another. This information provided a check on the validity of the results obtained by the database analysis. At every point, the conclusions reached by this computer analysis and by traditional deduction from the external evidence confirmed and supplemented one another. We hope that similar analysis of the manuscripts of the Wife of Bath's Prologue, building on Manly and Rickert's discussion of the textual tradition (II 191-217), may show something of how Chaucer's text evolved through the fifteenth century.

The eventual aim of the project is to make the program available to other scholars. There will be no charge for the program or for my assistance with it during the life of the project. Guidelines for transcription of manuscripts into a format convenient for the program are now available. I hope to demonstrate the program at the Canterbury Chaucer congress in August, and a test version should be ready for distribution soon after. If you would like to know more, or would like a copy of the transcription guidelines or of the program itself, please contact me at Oxford University Computing Service (13 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6NN England; phone 0865-273200; international phone 44-865-273200; fax number 0865-272275; electronic mail PETERR@UK.AC.OX.VAX).

Peter M. W. Robinson
Oxford University
Computing Service

Notes

1. S. M. Hockey. *A Guide to Computer Applications in the Humanities*. Oxford University Press: 1980. Pp. 144-56 summarise previous attempts at computer collation programs.
2. P. M. W. Robinson, "The Collation and Textual Criticism of Icelandic Manuscripts. (1): Collation. (2): Textual Criticism." *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 4 (1989). First article pp. 99-105, second article pp. 174-81.
3. For an account of various possible statistical methods of analysing manuscript variants see R. H. Pierce, "Multivariate Numerical Techniques Applied to the Study of Manuscript Traditions." In *Teikst Kritisk Teori og Praksis*. Novus Forlag, Oslo: 1988. Pp. 24-46.
4. J. M. Manly and E. Rickert. *The Text of the Canterbury Tales*. Vols. I-VIII. University of Chicago: 1940. P. II 20.

New NCS Address

A reminder that the Society has moved its address to:

The New Chaucer Society
Center for Medieval
and Renaissance Studies
The Ohio State University
230 West 17th Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1311

You may reach us at the CMRS office (614) 292-7495, or by facsimile at (614) 292-7816. Please mark facsimiles to the attention of Christian Zacher.

Newsletter Submissions

The New Chaucer Society is now able to accept both computerized and traditional printed submissions to the *Chaucer Newsletter*. If computerized submission is made, ASCII text is required: it must be stored on diskettes using IBM-compatible or Macintosh-compatible diskette formats; either 5&1/4-inch or 3&1/2-inch diskettes are accepted. Computerized submissions should be accompanied by a copy of the printed text. Please include address (and e-mail address if available) and telephone number (and fax number

if available) with your submission.

Sue Oakes
Secretary for
Membership and Finance

The Chaucer Newsletter, distributed twice a year to members of the New Chaucer Society, is intended primarily as a vehicle for Society business. Its ephemeral character makes it an unsuitable repository for substantive articles, but we are happy to publish discussions of research in progress and other activities of interest to Chaucerians. The deadline for the Fall issue is 1 September; for the Spring issue, 1 January. Materials should be sent to the editor, Christian Zacher.

The New Chaucer Society



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