December 6, 2010

## Report on Transcribing the Founder's Papers Pilot Project

In November 2008, the Commission recommended a one-year grant of $250,000 to Documents Compass, a part of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, in response to our grant announcement entitled, *Transcribing the Founders Papers for Online Access: Pilot Project*. The Commission's award outlined two main goals for the project:

- The production of acceptable verified and encoded transcriptions of at least 5,000 documents.
- A comprehensive report on what remains to be done by the five Founders Projects in preparing the remaining materials for print and online publication, including early online publication of verified but un-annotated documents.

Documents Compass began work on the project in January 2009 and completed all parts of the project in March 2010 (a short extension was granted because of weather delays).

### *Production of acceptable transcriptions for at least 5,000 documents:*

*Madison Papers*: The staff of Documents Compass obtained about 3,400 unverified transcriptions of documents from the Madison Papers. All of the Madison transcriptions were converted into valid XML documents and put into PubMan, the content management system. With the help of a team of part-time editors and proofreaders, project staff completed proofreading all the transcriptions and entered the related information from the editorial project's paper control file into the content management system. These revised transcriptions of the documents consist of all the documents planned for publication in the Madison Retirement Series. The project editor expressed his appreciation for having these documents available online and in a consistent format.

*Adams Papers*: The Adams Papers have supplied Documents Compass with electronic files for 1,550 documents as well as the related control file cards already converted into an electronic file in an XML format. In addition, Documents Compass staff members transcribed for the first time approximately 48 documents from 1813 for the Adams Papers. In order to complete their proofreading, the project also obtained about 250 copies of documents from the Adams Papers and Massachusetts Historical Society.

### *Presentation of the Revised Transcriptions on Rotunda's Early Access*

Beginning in summer of 2009, Documents Compass and Rotunda, the electronic imprint of the University of Virginia Press, began exploring how to present the transcriptions online. Rotunda developed "Early Access" as a special part of its Founding Era Online resources. On October 26, 2009, the NHPRC issued a press release announcing the availability of nearly 5,000 transcriptions from the Madison and Adams papers projects that could be searched. The website makes clear that more work remains to be done with the documents and distinguishes them from the annotated documents in the completed volumes. For now, users can explore important papers related to James Madison between 1823 and 1836 and to John Adams from 1784-1797, and 1813. This site remains available for free to all users:
http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/FOEA.html

*Comprehensive Report on the Founders Projects*
In March 2010, Documents Compass completed a comprehensive report on each of the Founders projects.  This process involved Documents Compass staff member Susan Severtson collecting information about the scope of each project, visiting each project and interviewing selected project staff, and compiling the data into a structured summary.  In October 2009, these summaries were sent back to each project to confirm and in some cases update the data as of Fall 2009.  The results suggest what editors have consistently emphasized, namely, that each project has unique workflows and costs. After the report was completed, the editors met with David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States, and Kathleen Williams, NHPRC Executive Director, to discuss the findings. Subsequently, they prepared a written response, per Ferriero's request.

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