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To: RSVP Board of Directors
From: Kathryn Ledbetter
Date: 27 August 2018

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals and the Curran committee for generously awarding me a Curran Fellowship in 2018 for my project, “Edmund Yates, Gossip, and Personal Journalism in Victorian Print Culture.” The funds supported three weeks of travel and research at the Charles E. Young Research Library at UCLA and the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. I was able to study collections of Yates’s letters, manuscripts, diaries, and ephemera at these two locations and photograph a total of 1076 documents for closer examination upon returning home.

On my way to Australia, I stopped at Los Angeles for two days of research in the Edmund Yates Papers at UCLA. Many of the 125 letters in this collection are dated early in his career (1850s-1860s), and personal letters to friends such as Shirley Brooks. Letters from these years also include professional correspondence from Yates as editor of *Tinsley’s*, *the Train*, and *Temple Bar*, and another group of letters respond to authors or arrange unidentified publication details. He also writes to editors and assorted correspondents about his own contributions and other works, such as plays or his “entertainments.” From 1874 the letters frequently focus on business of the *World*. The UCLA collection also includes five diaries, including two (1884 and 1885) written when Yates was convicted and imprisoned for libel. I also found several interesting Yates letters in UCLA collections of William Henry Wills, Annie Thomas, William Hepworth Dixon, and Richard Bentley.

I was well prepared for the Queensland collection in Brisbane, Australia because of extensive preliminary work by P. D. Edwards, who acquired the family papers for his university and wrote the only substantial study of Yates in 1997, *Dickens’s ‘Young Men’: George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism*. As Edwards noted in his *Victorian Research Guide*, many of the letters are notes of praise and congratulations sent to Yates after publication of his *Recollections and Experiences* in 1884. Another large group of letters express sympathy during his trial for libel and imprisonment in Holloway Gaol, or happiness for his early release in March, 1885. While unremarkable individually, these two groups of letters map a geography of Yates’s friends, indicate his status among London cultural elites, and document the sentiments of many people who felt that Yates was harshly treated. My assessment of these letters will help in articulating a response to his controversies. Many other letters were short responses to invitations or dinners indicating Yates’s busy social life, with many notes that reveal illnesses he and his wife experienced in the last decade of his life.

I did not read or photograph the Sala letters in the collection because they have been published, but I did look at them because I was curious about the handwriting (and ink), drawings, paper quality, and condition of the letters. As to the rest of the archive, I did not focus on letters

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pertaining to theatre interests, although I did review correspondence from *World* drama critic William Archer about his contributions to the paper. I also reviewed letters from actors and actresses; the latter group of letters indicate their respect for Yates as a journalist and theatrical expert.

Letters to *World* staff members and longtime friends, such as Edward F. S. Piggott, Joe Parkinson, Henry Lucy, Louis Jennings, William Thomas Moy, and Henry Vizetelly enlighten my understanding of his personal and professional relationships, including those with women such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Lillie Langtry, Violet Greville, Ada Cavendish, Annie Edwardes, Eliza Lynn Linton, and Anne Proctor.

Most interesting in the Queensland collection was Yates's scrapbooks, which supplanted the body of primary sources in my own collection, and his diaries from 1878 and 1881. Fortunately, I was able to scan the entire 1881 diary, but ran out of time at the end of my trip to scan the 1878 volume. I did, however, photograph important selections.

The Curran Fellowship allowed me to begin planning a book proposal that I intend to submit this fall while I continue with more research at archives in Princeton and the British Library during the next year, thanks to a Texas State University Research Enhancement Grant. I appreciate the support provided by RSVP in this project, and I look forward to the work ahead. Thank you very much for honoring me with a Curran Fellowship to pursue my interest in Edmund Yates.

Sincerely,
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