



VICTORIAN
PERIODICALS
REVIEW



The Origins and History of "Victorian Periodicals Review", 1954-84

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The Origins and History of *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 1954-84

N. Merrill Distad

With the growth of interest in the Victorian period since the end of the Second World War, it has, indeed, become something of a cliche to describe the nineteenth century as the "age of the periodical". For scholars in many disciplines, familiarity with periodicals and periodical research has become a kind of 'tool discipline' akin to paleography, epigraphy, or numismatics.

Victorian Periodicals Review has played a central role in this research for eighteen years; therefore, it is appropriate that some effort be made to record VPR's origins and history. The recent death of Walter Houghton (1904-83), doyen of Victorian periodical scholars, is a reminder that reminiscences--one of the building blocks of future histories--must be recorded while the sources still flourish.

The journal has always been the product of many hands; nonetheless parentage is indisputably clear. Like so many other projects in the Victorian field, it was fathered by Michael Wolff. His doctoral dissertation, begun in 1954, originally included as part of an "obsessive method-

*This essay was occasioned in part by the editorial transfer of VPR from Toronto to SIUE, and by the concomitant installation of the RSVP-VPN-VPR Archive in The University of Toronto Archives. The author wishes to thank all of those former editors of VPN-VPR and officers of RSVP who so generously responded to his pleas for reminiscences and archival records. Other former officers of RSVP now reading this brief history may perhaps be inspired by it to forward their relevant archival holdings for deposit with the main archive in Toronto.

ology", an attempt to read every contemporary review of the books reviewed by George Eliot in 1851-57. "I became then and there fascinated not just by the quantity of relevant material but by its revealing quality."¹

At Indiana University Wolff collaborated with two other young scholars in the English Department, William Madden and Philip Appleman, to found **Victorian Studies** (1957+). A contribution in the first issue by Oscar Maurer of the University of Texas prompted Wolff to "ask him his opinions of a collaborative project to make periodical materials more available."² Coincidentally, Maurer had already been contacted by Walter Houghton of Wellesley College.

In preparing **The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870** (1957), Houghton had bitten deeply into the resources of Victorian periodicals and coped with the frustrations induced by anonymous authorship. As a result, he dreamed of creating an index to the major Victorian periodicals. Michael Wolff recalled that, "Maurer put us in touch with each other and in the summer, I think, of 1958 I met Walter at the Cape [Cape Cod], and we talked about the funding and scope of such an index."³

I was, it turned out, participating in the evolution of the Wellesley Index, and I learned, in the Houghtons' patient exposition to a young man in a hurry, that enthusiasm was not enough. Steadiness, stamina, and a willingness to settle for what was possible were going to be needed if the reference work we had all been thinking about was to be a reality.⁴

Pragmatism did indeed prevail as it became clear that the highest priority belonged to an author index and to tabular listings of journal contents.⁵ Even so, the project remained monumental. Michael Wolff sought to help, and "there was a brief time when we thought that it might be a Wellesley-Indiana index which would include an index of book reviews.... In the event, of course, neither I nor Indiana was involved, though Victorian Studies did what it could to publicize the project and to help get it funded."⁶

Walter Houghton needed all the help he could get, for although Wellesley College had provided a generous grant of \$16,000 "seed money", applications for further funding had been denied by the Carnegie, Guggenheim, Whitney, Ford, Bollingen, and Rockefeller Foundations, the American Philosophical Society, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Council on Library Resources. So he dipped into retirement savings to continue the project, while Michael Wolff persevered in a letter-writing campaign on the Index's behalf, which led to a strongly worded editorial in **Victorian Studies** in which Wolff heaped shame upon the foundations for their treatment of Houghton and his Index.

At length funding was forthcoming from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Scholarly response to the **Victorian Studies** editorial and Houghton's work on the Index was also most heartening. Professor Beatrice Corrigan of the University of Toronto enlisted the aid of a friend, Frances G. Halpenny, a senior editor at the University of Toronto Press, who recalled that

One could not help being impressed with the magnitude of the scholarly task, or by the importance it would have when completed.... One could also not help being impressed by the publishing challenge the project represented.... Nevertheless, the Index was a project that fitted in with...the Press's list, it received endorsement

from Canadian scholars..., and respect for the research heroism of the Houghtons increased.⁸

The following year the University of Toronto Press entered into a formal publication agreement.

The years of hard work on Volume I were rewarded by the plaudits of reviewers, such as Christopher Ricks, who wrote in **The New Statesman**: **"The Wellesley Index..."** is simply a great work of reference, probably the most important aid to literary research since the **Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature**.... Future scholars will wonder how anybody managed without, rather as people now wonder what it can have been like before there was an **OED**.... Only libraries can afford to buy his book, but it will quietly change the whole nature of Victorian studies.⁹

Even before publication of Volume I, **The Wellesley Index** and its creator exerted their influences upon Michael Wolff, who began to tackle the bibliographic conundrum presented by the sheer mass of Victorian periodicals. His contribution to a centennial volume of essays to celebrate 1859 by reviewers in twenty-five Victorian periodicals.¹⁰ Further research led to a paper named "That Was the Week that Was," which Wolff delivered before the Anglo-American Conference of Historians in London in June 1965. As a result of this work he "realized what an extraordinary untapped wealth of unknown Victorian serials there were...."¹¹

Wolff addressed the topic of the "forgotten" Victorian periodicals in a paper read at the Midwest conference on British Studies in November 1965.¹² He presented a revised form--"Charting the Golden Stream: Thoughts on a Directory of Victorian Periodicals"--to the annual Conference on Editorial Problems at the University of Toronto in November 1966.¹³

He noted that Victorian studies had reached the point where new sources of research material were needed, and that

Victorian periodicals were just what was required.¹⁴ Where **The Wellesley Index** thoroughly covered eight major journals in Volume I and would eventually cover half-a-hundred, Wolff proposed to pursue Victorian periodicals in numbers beyond anyone's ken: "I have so far on my books 12,500 titles for the years 1824-1900....I should think that we are working with the right order of magnitude...and that it can be no exaggeration to say 'millions of articles' as well as 'thousands of journals'."¹⁵

Wolf had already made some of these points in a notice that he ran in **Victorian Studies** the previous winter:

I have no specific suggestions to make at this point for overcoming what seems to me a major obstacle to research. But it is at once apparent that whatever is done must involve the cooperation of many scholars and many institutions. I should be delighted to have the VS office used as a clearinghouse for news of bibliographical projects underway and of acquisitions (in book and microform) unrecorded in the Union catalogues, for offers of moral or substantive support, and for practical suggestions. I hope we can use this column to report progress.¹⁶

Wolff wrote to many of the people who had attended the conference and asked "if they would be interested in participating in such a collaboration."¹⁷ In addition, he applied for a foundation grant to support a feasibility study for a Directory of Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900.¹⁸ Subsequent issues of **Victorian Studies** contained some of the responses as well as the announcement of financial support from the Chapelbrook Foundation of Boston--all under a new heading "Pearls from the Golden Stream".¹⁹ A smaller supplementary grant was also obtained from the Council on Library Resources in Washington, D.C.²⁰

With funding for his directory project secured, Wolff was able to hire Dorothy

Deering, then a Ph.D. student in English at Indiana, to be his research assistant.²¹ Deering remembers that

The early stages of research, checking bibliographies, library holdings, union listings, planning ways of sampling collections, and above all the opportunity to work with the complete runs of periodicals, were tremendously exciting. Michael Wolff's vision of the cooperative scholarship that would be necessary to make Victorian periodicals accessible appealed to me on its own terms as an alternative to the individual research model in the humanities and as a pragmatic approach to the vast and unknown resources.²²

From this beginning the Victorian Studies Periodicals Project progressed from file-cards to computer database and eventually emerged as **The Waterloo Directory of Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900** (Phase I, 1976).²³

It was soon apparent that a specialized forum was needed. In the early stages **Victorian Studies** had served, but its space was too limited to encompass the scope of publication envisioned by Wolff and Deering. Writing to Walter Houghton in the summer of 1967, Wolff signalled his decision to proceed with a new venture: "I really think there's enough interest & activity so that a Victorian Periodicals N&Q or Intelligencer might well work. Anyhow, I don't see why it shouldn't be tried."²⁴

Indeed, a form letter distributed over Dorothy Deering's signature, late in 1967, announced the intention to produce a new journal. The plan was to use some of the Chapelbrook Foundation grant to finance two issues of a newsletter, to be distributed gratis to all individual subscribers to **Victorian Studies**, asking them to send \$2 (or £1) in order to secure numbers three, four, five, and six.

The scale of **Victorian Studies'** mailing list--upwards of 2500 subscribers--pre-

cluded sending free copies to all of VS's institutional subscribers. However, a notice aimed at institutions was inserted at the end of the March 1968 issue of **Victorian Studies**.²⁵ This proved to be a shrewd way to launch a new journal with a negligible amount of seed money.

Issue number one of **Victorian Periodicals Newsletter**, dated January 1968, was duly issued in a letter-sized mimeographed format under the logo and supertitle of its parent journal, **Victorian Studies**. Michael Wolff and Dorothy Deering were credited as Editor and Associate Editor, respectively. The format followed the "Notes and Queries" pattern that Deering's letter had suggested, with brief notices, followed by more substantial communications, interspersed with editorial comments. Many of the names of people who appeared in this first issue became familiar to readers over the years as regular contributors and supporters of the journal.

After acknowledging the Chapelbrook Foundation, the Council on Library Resources, and Indiana University for their financial support, the editors indicated that the publication would be continued provided sufficient support and contributions were forthcoming. Response to this maiden effort was favourable, and a second number followed in June 1968. The only unfavourable notice had been for the title of the new periodical. It was feared by some that **VPN** might be confused with (or seen as an intrusion upon) the **Victorian Newsletter**. Therefore, the editors announced

a competition to suggest a name for this thing. No purchase required. Void where prohibited by law. The prize will be that the first number that uses the name selected will be dedicated to the person who suggests the name. The editor's decision is not final, for if enough people dislike the name we choose we will change it again. If we do, it will be a real test of librarianship to keep the catalogues unclogged. Our apologies in advance.²⁶

Response to this competition was both amusing and somewhat prophetic. Walter Houghton and Carol Hawkes urged the editors to retain the existing title, though without the **Victorian Studies** prefix. Arthur Collins suggested **Victorian Periodicals News** as a means of preserving the initials **VPN**. Dick Fredeman provided a long list of possible titles--**Victorian Serials Bulletin**, **Victorian Serials Newsletter**, **Victorian Serials Gazetteer**, **Victorian Serials Intelligencer**, **Victorian Serials Reports**, and the varient **Victorian Intelligencer: Periodicals**--all inspired by a desire to see the scope of coverage expanded by using a more current bibliographic term. Margaret Weedon sent some charming suggestions from Oxford that reflected her interest in C.M. Yonge, including **The Pursuivant: or, Victorian Periodicals Newsletter**, **The Occasional Packet: or, Victorian Periodicals Newsletter**, and **Aunt Dorothy's Journal**, which last she suggested might be thought too personal by Dorothy Deering!

Suggestions from Nicholas Solerno--**Journal of Victorian Periodicals**--and G.B. Tennyson--**Victorian Periodicals Quarterly**--showed considerable foresight. In Tennyson's words:

The name and initials VPQ seem quite independent of any existing publication, and by calling it a quarterly (which I trust it will be) instead of a Newsletter you can anticipate the day when the journal is so well-established and so fat from success that 'newsletter' would be too modest a word to describe it. I tried my name on a wag in another area of English studies and he counterproposed Research Studies in Victorian Periodicals, so that we could have the initials RSVP, but I'll stick with my proposal.²⁷

Had Tennyson's suggestion been adopted, it would have spared the need for an annual debate throughout most of the 1970s regarding the need to change the title. Later in New York City in October 1978, over the somewhat sentimental objections

of Michael Wolff and a few others, the title was at last changed to **Victorian Periodicals Review**. In 1968, however, the prudent policy seemed to lie with the status quo, as the editors explained in the third number:

Despite the fuss we made...about our title...and despite some ingenious suggestions from our readers...we have been forced to decide that VPN (both as a title and as a publication) has become so well established in so many library account books and other such places that any change now would, as the saying goes, "impose undue hardship".²⁸

The "contest" had not been entirely in vain, however, for the suggestion of "RSVP" had struck a sympathetic chord:

Perhaps the richest suggestion was RSVP: Research Studies in Victorian Periodicals (submitted anonymously through Professor G.B. Tennyson of UCLA), with its acronym redolent of the courtesie of scholarship and the nostalgia of engraved invitations. The inspiration might well be salvaged if, as I hope, we decide to establish some sort of organization which could be called Research Society of the Victorian Period, or Researchers in serials of the Victorian Period.²⁹

The journal, its future apparently secured by paid subscriptions, was to be the communications forum for the same hands who would set to work upon Michael Wolff's proposal to make more accessible the vast mass of Victorian periodicals. A formal body in the form of a learned society appeared to be a natural concomitant to this work.

The Research Society for Victorian Periodicals was born at 8:45 a.m., Sunday, 29 December 1968, in Vendome 10, a meeting room in the Americana Hotel in New York City. Partly at the urging of Dick Fredeman, this seminar in research on Victorian periodicals was scheduled as #51 at the convention of the Modern Languages Associ-

ation. **VPN** Number three (November 1968) carried an announcement of the meeting, which was co-chaired by Michael Wolff and Dick Fredeman. The interdisciplinarity of RSVP was assured, as Josef Altholz recalls, through a political accident:

The MLA was meeting at the best hotels in New York, to which the AHA (American Historical Association) hurriedly retreated (to the second-best hotels) in protest against Mayor Daley's Chicago, where it was originally scheduled to meet. This was the only time in several decades that the two bodies met in the same city; only New York could hold them. Michael took advantage of the circumstance to invite historians to come to the session, and he cut through the MLA red tape which controls tickets to sessions.... I remember Michael asking me... whether I could assure him that historians would join in the venture. This put me in the ridiculous position of speaking for the entire historical profession, but I bravely said yes, we would, and so things went ahead. (What if I had said something else?).³⁰

The agenda, largely prepared by Dick Fredeman, included "A Proposal for a Center for Research in Victorian Periodicals", "Projects and Priorities of the Center for...", and "Recommendations for Contents of Future Issues of Victorian Periodicals Newsletter".³¹ This included contributions on research in progress, whether projects of the proposed center, individual projects, or dissertations, as well as news and comments, notes and queries, editorials, occasional book reviews, and two special features, "an annual bibliography of books, articles, dissertations relating to periodicals of the period; and a special number, either in series or as a supplement, which would publish a major piece of research on the periodicals. Such a piece might be bibliographic, historical, or analytical."³² With this one document Fredeman provided an accurate blue-print for the long term future development of **VPN**.

As a result of the MLA meeting it was resolved that: (1) Dick Fredeman would chair a committee for the formal organization of a Research Society for Victorian Periodicals, to state its aims, nominate officers and advisory board members, and devise procedures for enlisting members; (2) James O'Neill would chair a committee to organize a conference of RSVP for the fall of 1969; (3) Frances Halpenny would plan a committee to elicit support for **The Wellesley Index**; and (4) **VPN** would "serve as an organ for the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals, working closely with all those engaged in Society projects."³³

The first annual conference of RSVP was held at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York on the weekend of 17-19 October 1969. The opening session, appropriately, consisted of a presentation by Michael Barnett of Columbia University's Library School on "The Use of Computers in Periodicals Research". The nominating committee, chaired by Rosemary Van Arsdel, presented a slate of candidates, who were acclaimed. Hence, the Society's first officers were Walter Houghton (Honorary President), Michael Wolff (President), Dick Fredeman (Vice-President), Joel Wiener (Secretary), Helene Roberts (Treasurer), J. Don Vann (Bibliographer), and Dorothy Deering (Interim Editor of **VPN**).³⁴ A written constitution and by-laws were later provided for RSVP by Josef Altholz, who described himself as "the only ward-heeler available".³⁵

We may now take leave of the Society, which, though connected both spiritually and administratively with the journal it sponsors, is no longer an inextricable part of the journal's editorial history.³⁶ Indeed, for a time Michael Wolff himself bowed out. As early as January 1969 he complained of his chronic "pile up of administrative, editorial, and faculty duties".³⁷ He spent the academic year 1969-70 at Wesleyan University and left Dorothy Deering in charge of issues seven, eight, and nine as sole editor. At the

organizing conference during that period, it was resolved that "The editorship of **VPN** properly should be an appointive post and ...Miss Dorothy Deering is willing to assume interim leadership".³⁸

Deering recalled those days in Bloomington: "The editorial voice in those early numbers was of course the voice of Michael Wolff, but in the guise of the Victorian periodical editor who is seeking both the identity and response from readers as the measure of a shared community of interests". Deering also identified Wolff's strategy: "Michael Wolff's informal image of the newsletter was planned to create a shared sense of the community of periodicals researchers by means of editorial responses, reader responses, and of course the editor's appeals to the reader". Their working relationship was a cordial one:

In tribute to Michael Wolff, his model of scholarship was more than egalitarian; he treated me as a participating member of a research team.

...I had no experience as an editor. Working with Michael Wolff...taught me a great deal about editing a journal, small or large, but perhaps more about the benefits of academic cooperation for goals larger than those of a single scholar or career.³⁹

Deering's year as interim editor, 1969-70, was a very busy one, which indicated, as she wrote in her annual report, the extent of the scholarly role that **VPN** could be called upon to play. Twenty doctoral students representing five disciplines in four countries sought information; publishers wrote requesting new books and referrals to authors; and a 'waiting list' developed of people exploring the possibility of publishing full-length monographs in parts in **VPN** or separately under the auspices of RSVP. Noting that a full-time researcher could have been kept busy answering all of the queries received, Deering concluded:

I don't know if **VPN** can be all things to all people, but its in-

formal nature should allow it to serve not only those who are beginning their research with periodicals but also the declared masters such as the Wellesley Index staff. For tentative and exploratory hypotheses or the fruits of years of work, VPN can function as an appropriate medium of exchange, providing an audience, a forum for debate, a context for professional criticism, and orthodox and unorthodox formats for publication.⁴⁰

Michael Wolff, in 1970, moved to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst taking **Victorian Periodicals Newsletter** with him. Coincidentally, Dorothy Deering also left Bloomington at that time, for Purdue University and its generous budget for computing in the humanities she took the Victorian periodicals directory project.⁴¹

At Amherst Michael Wolff recruited new editorial colleagues. James Ellis of Mount Holyoke College recently recalled that Wolff "was looking for help with VPN and I seemed to be, quite by accident, the one most willing to step in and help him out. My own scholarship had included a good deal of massive, quantitative work, so the various undertakings of RSVP didn't look particularly strange or daunting."⁴²

After experiencing complete freedom from the journal during his sabbatical, Wolff was somewhat reluctant to become bogged down in the details of its production again. With this in mind, he recruited another colleague, this time from his own department. In James Ellis' words: "Richard Haven was brought into the work to enable Michael to ease himself out of editorial responsibilities while at the same time keeping some member of the University faculty at least nominally at the helm."⁴³ Haven remembered,

I was associate editor of VPN (with Jim Ellis) for, I think, three years, and during one of those, when Jim was on sabbatical, I was officially the editor in charge. But while we met regularly to discuss

various aspects of editorial policy, that policy really derived almost entirely from Michael and Jim. I handled a certain amount of correspondence, ...edited manuscripts, and worked on layout.⁴⁴

In the mastheads of the **VPN** issues produced in Amherst, numbers ten through fourteen (1970-71) cite Ellis, Haven, and Wolff as co-editors. However, from number fifteen (March 1972) through number twenty (June 1973), the last Amherst issue, Ellis and Haven appeared as co-editors, while Wolff was cited as "Advisory Editor" (see appendix).

Richard Haven was given a vivid picture of the production of the journal in its Amherst phase:

we operated VPN with a minimal budget at one part-time secretary/assistant. Manuscripts were typed, snipped, pasted into a mock-up, rushed over to the University copy-center to be Xeroxed, stapled, and mailed out. It's a wonder that they came out looking as well as they did (and I think they really were pretty good). And they contained a lot of good material. VPN provided, when no other really existed, an opportunity for a number of scholars to share their work with each other. It served, I think, a seminal purpose. And behind it was a seminal mind: Michael's. VPN was his creation.⁴⁵

However, as long as it remained at Amherst, it also continued to be Wolff's burden, for he did not succeed in committing his colleagues Ellis and Haven to the project for the long term. Consequently, in July 1972 Wolff sent a circular letter to the officers and directors of RSVP soliciting suggestions for the "decentralization" of the Society and its functions.⁴⁶ This elicited interesting letters full of concern and suggestions, the most fruitful of which was from Walter Houghton.

He envisioned a near-complete separation of the functions of the society and the journal, but still within the confines of one university campus. That option soon proved to be impossible at Amherst. Therefore, with the September 1972 issue Michael Wolff was forced to announce: "The Newsletter has had a gracious host in the University of Massachusetts. However, neither James Ellis nor Richard Haven can continue as editor beyond the summer of 1973 and I think I should not resume that responsibility. No successor to them appears on our horizon here at Amherst. The upshot of this is that VPN needs a new editor or editors and a new home for September 1973."⁴⁷

In response to this Hans de Groot and Peter Morgan of the English Department of University College, University of Toronto, offered to publish **VPN** under their co-editorship. Both had substantive and long-standing interest in the field. University College and the Department of English displayed extreme generosity toward the prospective arrival; an office, a half-time editorial assistant, and the postage and supplies for editorial correspondence were offered.⁴⁸ Presented with this attractive possibility, at the fourth annual conference, October 1972, the officers and executive board of RSVP voted to accept.⁴⁹

Geographical and functional division of RSVP/**VPN** business and activities had been tried and found wanting in the separation of the treasurer from the center of activity at Amherst. Helene Roberts of Harvard University served as Treasurer of RSVP from 1970-73, and largely at her urging, a new post was created to combine in one person the Treasurer of RSVP with the Business Manager of **VPN**.⁵⁰ For this dual function de Groot and Morgan recruited Stuart Niermeier, a junior colleague in the English Department. In 1974, when Niermeier left, de Groot recruited Merrill Distad to take over the job.

Decisions on the Toronto incarnation of the journal were swiftly taken in hand by the new editors. After abortive attempts

to solicit a small cash subsidy from the Canada Council and the University of Toronto, the editors decided that the journal must pay for itself.⁵¹ To help increase circulation and stabilize finances, a regular quarterly publication schedule was adopted. As part of this new scheme the consecutive numbering of single issues was suspended after number twenty (June 1973); a double-issue, somewhat inaccurately labelled "Volume VI, Numbers 3 and 4", was issued to complete the year 1973.⁵²

The format for the journal became offset lithography from IBM electric typescript on 11" x 17" folio sheets, folded into a single gathering, and stapled into coloured wrappers. By the end of 1979, after a number of experiments with different headings and graphics, paste-up and strip-in headings of thirty-point Bembo Roman, hand-set and produced at the Massey College Press, became standard.⁵³ The new Toronto format completed the evolution of the journal into a scholarly quarterly with formal articles (often illustrated), book reviews, notes and queries, announcements, including those concerning RSVP, and--as Dick Fredeman had recommended at the 1968 MLA meeting--both an annual bibliography of publications in the field, and the occasional issue of larger works of scholarship as supplements to the journal.⁵⁴

Though this transition from a somewhat breathless, proselytizing newsletter full of "bits and pieces" into a more conventional, indeed staid, learned journal was not accomplished without criticism and regret by some,⁵⁵ **Victorian Periodicals Review**, as it was renamed in 1978 to reflect its new status, has nonetheless established itself as the standard scholarly journal in its (admittedly limited) field.

Upgrading and maintaining the new format through a decade ravaged by inflation was a constant concern. Massive increases in the cost of paper and postage, to name only the two worst offenders, have necessitated regular price increases for both individual and institutional subscrip-

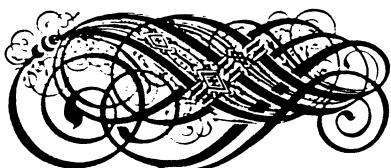
tions. Although still a bargain, this upward spiral has depressed circulation. In 1973 between 900 and 1000 copies of each issue were sent out, with individual subscribers outnumbering libraries by almost four to one. Circulation eroded steadily throughout the following decade until in 1983 it stood at just over 600, with a two-to-one preponderance of libraries over individual subscribers. These relative figures do not signal the decline of the journal. Instead, they lead one to marvel at its continued survival and good health as it nears the end of its second decade.

At the end of 1977 Peter Morgan decided to devote his time to other work and was succeeded by Merrill Distad as co-editor. He, in turn relied so heavily upon the editorial skills and judgement (not to mention unpaid labour) of his wife, Linda, that by 1979 a sense of decent shame prompted her inclusion upon mastheads and letterheads as "Assistant Editor". Following Hans de Groot's return from a sabbatical year in 1978, other interests competed for his time. Early in 1981 he assumed the title of "Associate Editor".

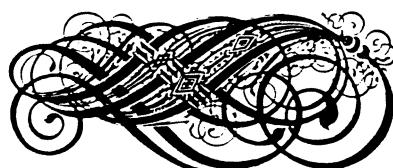
At last in 1984 the Distads felt it was time to pass the torch to fresh hands, and so relinquished the editorship to Barbara Quinn Schmidt of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

Victorian Periodicals Review took shape only after a full decade of scholarly interchange and intellectual cross-fertilization between Walter Houghton and Michael Wolff. By subsequently taking on a life of its own, as it passed through other editorial hands, the journal amply confirmed Wolff's initial faith that there was sufficient interest and activity in Victorian periodical research to sustain such a publication. Indeed, **Victorian Periodicals Review** has been the most successful and enduring of all of the related Victorian periodical projects begun so hopefully in the late 1960s in the shadow of Walter Houghton's *Wellesley Index*.⁵⁶ Although **Victorian Periodicals Review** has changed over the years, it goes on serving a world-wide community of scholarly enquirers in the endlessly fascinating field of Victorian periodicals.

University of Toronto



VICTORIAN STUDIES



THE VICTORIAN PERIODICALS NEWSLETTER

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Number 1, January 1968

Office / Ballantine Hall, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47401

Editor: Michael Wolff / Associate Editor: Dorothy Deering

Appendix: Personnel

		Hans de Groot	Co-Editor, 1973-80 Assoc. Editor, 1981-84
Bloomington, Indiana			
Michael Wolff	Editor, 1968-69	Ann Robson	Guest Editor, 1978
Dorothy Deering	Associate Editor, 1968-69; Editor, 1969-70	Stuart Niermeier	Business Mgr. and Treasurer of RSVP, 1973-74
David Vaprin	Editorial Asst., 1960-70 (in corre- spondence files, but uncredited in mastheads)	Merrill Distad	Business Mgr. and Treasurer of RSVP, 1974-84; Co-Editor, 1979-80; Editor, 1981-84
Amherst, Massachusetts			
James Ellis	Co-Editor, 1970-73	Linda Distad	Asst. Editor, 1979-84
Richard Haven	Co-Editor, 1970-73	Kenneth Mews	Editorial Asst., 1973-75; Advisory Editor, 1976-79
Michael Wolff	Co-Editor, 1970-71 Advisory Editor, 1972-73	Deborah Hicks	Editorial Asst., 1974-75
Jeannette Sargent	Editorial Asst., 1971 (in correspon- dence files, but uncredited in mast- heads)	David Ellis	Editorial Asst., 1975-77
Janice Nyman	Editorial Asst., 1971-72	Carolellen Norskey	Editorial Asst., 1978-79
Diana Diamond	Editorial Asst., 1972	Michael Wolff	Advisory Editor, 1973+
Giuliana Mutti	Editorial Asst., 1972	Richard Helmstadter	Advisory Editor, 1973+
David Aronson	Editorial Asst., 1972-73	Helene Roberts	Advisory Editor, 1974+
Toronto, Canada			
Peter Morgan	Co-Editor, 1973-78 Advisory Editor, 1979+	Josef Altholz	Advisory Editor, 1974+
		William Brock	Advisory Editor, 1975+
		John Robson	Advisory Editor, 1976+

NOTES

- 1 Michael Wolff in a letter to the author, 12 March 1984.
- 2 Ibid. Maurer's essay was entitled "PUNCH on Slavery and Civil War in America, 1841-65", **VS** I:1 (Sept. 1957): 5-28.
- 3 Wolff to the author, 12 March 1984.
- 4 Wolff, "Homage to the Houghtons", **VPN** X:3 (Sept. 1977): 86.
- 5 Walter Houghton, "Reflections on Indexing Victorian Periodicals", **VS** VII:2 (Dec. 1963): 194-5 et passim.
- 6 Wolff to the author, 12 March 1984. See esp. the editorial deplored Houghton's failure to obtain any foundation grants. **VS** VI:1 (Sept. 1962): 4; and V:2 (Dec. 1961): 183.
- 7 Houghton to Wolff, 4 July 1962 and "Editorial", **VS** VI:1 (Sept. 1962): 4
- 8 Frances G. Halpenny, "Personal Tribute to the Houghtons", **VPN** X:3 (Sept. 1977): 97-98.
- 9 "M. Moggridge?" by Christopher Ricks, **New Statesman** 73:1873 (3 Feb. 1967): 158-9.
- 10 Wolff, "Victorian Reviewers and Cultural Responsibility" in **1859: Entering an Age of Crisis**, ed. Appleman, Madden, and Wolff (Bloomington, IN, 1959), pp. 269-89.
- 11 Wolff to the author, 12 March 1984.
- 12 Ibid. The paper was entitled "Pearls from the Golden Stream: Cultural History and Victorian Periodicals".
- 13 Wolff, "Charting the Golden Stream: Thoughts on a Directory of Victorian Periodicals" in **Editing Nineteenth-Century Texts...**, ed. John M. Robson (Toronto, 1967), pp. 37-59.
- 14 Wolff, "Charting the Golden Stream...", p. 43.
- 15 Ibid., pp. 47-8.
- 16 "Announcements", **VS** IX:3 (March 1966): 316. "....an announcement which both in its program and its indecisiveness seems to anticipate the next almost twenty years." Wolff to the author, 12 March 1984.
- 17 Wolff to the author, 12 March 1984.
- 18 Wolff to Mrs. Mina Curtis, President, Chapelbrook Foundation, 18 May 1966.
- 19 **VS** IX:4 (June 1966): 490; X:1 (Sept. 1966): 111. The grant was for \$8,600, as requested. Wolff's referees included Houghton. Wolff to H.K. Mansfield, Clerk, Chapelbrook Foundation, 27 June 1966; ...to Walter Houghton, 27 June 1966; Walter Houghton to Wolff, n.d. <rec'd 15 July 1966>; H.K. Mansfield to Wolff, 1 August 1966.
- 20 The C.L.R. grant was for \$2,000. Verner Clapp, President, Council on Library Resources, to Wolff, 21 Oct. 1966; Wolff to Verner Clapp, 27 Oct. 1966.
- 21 At that time Wolff was vying for deanships at New Hampshire and York in Toronto. Indiana's counteroffer for refusing the latter included a fund out of which Dorothy Deering's initial wages were paid. Wolff to the author, 12 March 1984.
- 22 Deering to the author, 12 March 1984.
- 23 Edited by Wolff, John North, and Deering, it lists some 30,000 titles! See extensive reviews by Sheila Rosenberg in **VPN** X:2 (June 1977): 71-6, and Hans de Groot in **VS** XXI:2 (Winter 1978): 291-4.
- 24 Wolff to Houghton, 15 August 1967.

- 25 **VS XI:3** (March 1968): 430. The following endorsement appeared soon afterward: "The most fascinating lot of information and queries we have seen about the Victorian era appears in the first issue of VS' new publication, the **VPN**.... The issue is packed with news about current researches, problems, and bits and pieces of work in progress." **American Notes and Queries VI** (April 1968): 121.
- 26 **VPN** No. 2 (June 1968): 1.
- 27 G. B. Tennyson to Wolff, 8 July 1968. Cf. Houghton to Wolff, 21 June 1968; Dick Fredeman to Wolff, 10 July 1968; Margaret Weedon to Wolff, 8 July 1968; and typed list of suggested titles and rationales, prepared by Wolff. The "Wag" who suggested "RSVP" to Tennyson was Wayne Phelps, an English Renaissance drama specialist then at the University of Pennsylvania. Tennyson to the author, 15 April 1985.
- 28 **VPN** No. 3 (Nov. 1968): 2.
- 29 Ibid. The dual threat of libraries cancelling ephemeral-sounding "Newsletters" and publishers refusing to send review copies overcame sentimental arguments against change.
- 30 Josef Altholz to the author, 5 March 1984; Fredeman to the author, 23 Feb. 1984; **VPN** No. 3 (Nov. 1968): 1-2.
- 31 Fredeman to Wolff, 18 Dec. 1968, plus three pages of proposals.
- 32 Ibid., last proposal.
- 33 Wolff to Fredeman, James O'Neill, and Frances Halpenny, 20 Jan. 1969.
- 34 Minutes in **VPN** No. 7 (January 1970): 3-4. Cf. Rosemary Van Arsdel to Deering, 13 Sept. 1969. Cf. Deering to Fredeman, 3 Dec. 1969. Regarding the role of a "President-Elect" cf. Wolff to Van Arsdel, 22 Sept. <two letters> and 3 Oct. 1969, and Van Arsdel to Wolff, 26 Sept. 1969.
- 35 Altholz to the author, 5 March 1984. See also **VPN** No. 10 (Nov. 1970): 14-16.
- 36 The history of RSVP remains to be written, perhaps by some eager twenty-first-century PhD. student in search of a dissertation topic. There are rich source materials in the files of the RSVP-VPN-VPR archive, recently installed in the Archives of the University of Toronto, including a longer and fuller version of this paper than could conveniently be published here.
- 37 Wolff to Fredeman, O'Neill, and Halpenny, 20 Jan. 1969.
- 38 **VPN** No. 7 (Jan. 1970): 4.
- 39 Deering to the author, 12 March 1984.
- 40 Deering, "Report of the Editor", 3 pp., mimeo, n.d., reprinted in **VPN** No. 10 (Nov. 1970): 10-12. This was prepared for the second annual RSVP conference, held in New York City 23-25 Oct. 1970.
- 41 Wolff also took his penchant for academic entrepreneurship with him to Amherst, for he had not been there long before he revitalized the "Five-College Seminar" and laid the foundations of the Northeast Victorian Studies Association--NVSA.
- 42 James Ellis to the author, 24 Jan. 1984.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Richard Haven to the author, 3 Feb. 1984.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 "As the Society has developed, it has outgrown my capacity to manage its

affairs. I have been aware of this for some time, but I had thought that greater effort by myself and my colleagues here was the remedy. That has really not worked and I realize that the remedy lies not in more work from the same few people, but in a better distribution of the work and, more importantly, in a fresh assessment of the Society's needs and capacities." Wolff to the Officers and Directors of RSVP, 12 July 1972. A much revised version addressed to "Members of RSVP and other Readers of VPN" was distributed with VP No. 17 (Sept. 1972).

47 Revised version, ibid.

48 In the succeeding decade the journal had to wean itself of all these perquisites save for that of free office space.

49 Maurianne Adams "Secretary's Report on the 1972 Conference", VPN No. 19 (March 1973): 3.

50 Helene Roberts in an interview with the author, 25 Feb. 1984; Helene Roberts to S.F.C. Niermeier, 10 and 25 July 1973, etc.; Altholz to Niermeier, 7 Nov. 1973.

51 Peter Morgan to L. Lynch, University of Toronto Office of Research Administration, 23 Nov. 1973.

52 From 1973-78 quarterly issues were designated March, June, September, and December. Since 1979 Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter labels have been used to reflect more accurately the actual schedule.

53 The first Toronto issue was produced in a nearby "Instant Copy" shop. Subsequent issues were printed by Esquire Printing Ltd of Mississauga, Ontario. Through the influence and valuable counsel of the late Mr. Harold Spence, production was moved in June 1976 (with Volume IX, Number 2) to Dart Printing Ltd, also of

Mississauga, which continued to print VPR through its last Toronto issue. The heading proofs were made by me on a mid-nineteenth-century flat-bed Columbian hand press.

54 Lionel Madden and Diana Dixon, *The Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press in Britain: A Bibliography of Modern Studies, 1901-1976* (76 pp.) was issued as a supplement to VPN VIII:3 (Sept. 1975), while E.M. Palmegiano, "Women and British Periodicals, 1832-1867: A Bibliography" (36 pp.) was the sole contents of VPN IX:1 (March 1976). Both were reprinted as hard-cover volumes by Garland Publishing Company of New York City.

55 Opposition to the change from VPN to VPR reflected some regret at letting go of the past. Still more articulate was Lionel Madden, who wrote to deplore the journal's transformation from "a very useful newsletter" into "a more conventional ...but in some ways less valuable magazine printing scholarly articles." J.D. Vann and R. Van Arsdel, eds., *Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to Research* (NY: MLA, 1978) and quoted by Altholz VPR XII:1 (Spring 1979): 37.

56 Though some projects, of which much was expected, withered on the vine, the example set by VPR and RSVP gave hope and promise to new ones, such as Richard Fulton and Michael Colee's recently published *Union List of Victorian Serials: A Union List of Selected Nineteenth-Century British Serials available in United States and Canadian Libraries* (NY: Garland Reference Library of the Humanities Volume 530, 1985). A surprising number of the society's early projects either bore fruit or anticipated other, similar projects. An example of the latter is the "Journalists in the DNB" project, the need for which has been fulfilled by the new *Chronological and Occupational Index to the Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 1985).