

## Title

Student, Major; Mentor, Department

### **Background:**

The Scottish poet Robert Burns (1759-1796) is important both in literary-historical and cultural-political terms. Largely self-educated, and rooting his poetry in personal experience and rural life, he has a pivotal role in the transition between the Enlightenment and Romantic periods (Crawford, 2009). From their first publication, his poems and songs had an international impact, first in North America, but very quickly (through translation) also in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century European romantic nationalism. Even in his lifetime, Burns was treated as Scotland's national bard, and in the following years his poetry gave rise to an international movement (now the Robert Burns World Federation, with over 750 active member clubs) providing a level of non-academic interest unparalleled for any other British poet. Poems and songs such as "Auld Lang Syne," "My love is like a red, red, rose," and "Scots wha hae," resonate well beyond academic literary studies. In January 2009, a Scottish government website reported more than 3000 Burns Suppers being held worldwide.

Over the past two hundred years there has been a huge amount published about Burns, almost all available in USC's G. Ross Roy Collection in Hollings Library (Sudduth, 2009). Recently, scholarly interest in Burns has been growing rapidly, with the rise of Scottish nationalism and the reopening of a separate Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh in 1999. Much research has been done since the earlier standard editions of the poetry (3 vols., 1968, ed. James Kinsley) and of Burns's own letters (2 vols. 1985, ed. G. Ross Roy). Some newer publications such as the Canongate Burns (Noble and Hogg, 1999), designed to exploit popular interest, are very uneven in quality.

Surprisingly, there has never been an edition of the more than 380 letters other people wrote to Robert Burns. Such an edition was first envisioned by Dr Kenneth Simpson of Glasgow and Dr G. Ross Roy of USC, ca. 1989. Beginning in 2008-2009, a database, source files, and rough (unformatted, unproofed) OCR texts were assembled at USC under Professor Scott's supervision. The USC project has been planned in collaboration with a long-term plan by Glasgow University and Clarendon Press for a new 15-volume scholarly edition of all Burns's writings, ultimately including three volumes which will integrate both sides of the Burns Correspondence; work on the Glasgow correspondence volumes will not start till 2015 at the earliest, with publication unlikely to be scheduled before 2020. The USC-based project to produce the first full collection of letters written to Burns is the essential next step. The USC project is designed to have an independent usefulness over the next six to eight years by providing searchable access and preliminary annotation to documents that have been largely unavailable. Because the USC digital version will be open-access, it is likely to retain usefulness to researchers and lay Burnsians even after the Clarendon edition appears.

### **Research Statement:**

The project involves creating digital text in a standardized format for all known letters addressed to Robert Burns, assessing the provenance and authority of text for letters that have been previously printed, and drafting preliminary annotations (e.g. of references to people, places, contemporary events) that will make the letters understandable by an educated modern reader. In the course of this work, specific letters or relationships or topics will require more detailed research which will be the basis for one or more articles.

### **Project Goals and Objectives:**

- (1) The project's goal is to make the hidden 'other side' of the poet Robert Burns's correspondence available for the first time to scholars and other Burns fans;
- (2) it aims to do this by creating the first full edition of over 380 letters written to him by other people, in open-access searchable form, with annotation to explain references in the letters and Burns's relationship to those writing to him.

### **Project Impact and Significance:**

No complete collection of the letters written to Robert Burns has ever been assembled, so that understanding the context of Burns's own letters has often been difficult (Roy, 1993). Accounts of Burns based only on his letters have been largely one-sided. Gathering the letters from previously printed sources, and including information on unpublished letters known to exist in manuscripts, will open many new doors in the study of Burns and his contemporaries. Recent experience with other open-access/print-on-demand Burns projects at USC indicates that this is an effective means of dissemination and impact.

### Project Design and Methodology:

This project involves both library research and steady production of edited text and annotations. The issues involved in assessing, formatting (from OCR of printed texts, from transcription of manuscripts), and proofreading the digital text of each letter have been well-established. At this stage, because the partner project at Glasgow University has not settled on its final digital format, all files here are being maintained as Word documents (but may in future be transferred into TEI or another format). During the current school year, with additional funding, I have established my pace for formatting and proof-reading the raw OCR text; in this phase, I have been working on the formatting and proofing of the letters from earlier years (there are more letters per year in later years), but not on annotation. In the four months October –January, I completed this basic editing stage for just over 100 letters (1779-June 1788), and I hope to be through to June 1789 by the end of May.

The main focus in June-August will be the creation and correction of editable text for years 1789-1796, so that, following training, I can begin work on researching and drafting annotations. The model and level for annotation has been established, based on annotations in the recent James Hogg edition (Hughes, 2004-2006, and Hughes, 2013; cf. also Sanders *et al.*; Battestin; Barney).

Weekly meetings with [mentor] will monitor progress and quality. In the second half of the project, time will be allocated for supervised writing of one or more scholarly papers or articles on which I will be either sole or first-named author. If progress is good, and time allows, I will get training in mounting edited letters into the Scholar Commons database with Chris Hare of USC Libraries.

### Project Timeline

Months	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Review of Background Literature							
Creation of editable text							
Training in drafting annotation							
Writing annotations							
Research/writing on specific letters or topics							
If time allows: training in mounting to Web							

### Final Products and Dissemination:

The largest product that will come from this project is the edition itself, a collection of some 380 letters, to be made available in an open-access online database (through the University Libraries' Scholar Commons site), as well as in hard copy as a print-on-demand book. As the project progresses, I will research further on interesting questions (either on a specific exchange of letters, a particular correspondent, or a significant relationship that can be better understood by seeing both sides of the correspondence), and will write up one or more of the findings for submission to relevant journals such as *Scottish Literary Review*, *Studies in Scottish Literature* or *Burns Chronicle*. I will present findings from this research also at Discover USC, and probably also at the Robert Burns Association of North America meeting in May. Depending on outcomes, I will also explore presenting a paper about the project at the first International World Congress on Scottish Literature, to be held in Glasgow later that summer.

### Personal Statement:

As an English major, this project has been and will be a very informative and valuable experience for preparing myself for graduate work in literature or another field. I have been working on the first stages of this project since October under the mentorship of [mentor], with funding from the SC Honors College Exploration grant program, and I have learned much about scholarly methods, relevant sources, and the sheer complexity of planning and carrying forward a large-scale research project. Robert Burns has been one of my favorite pre-twentieth century poets, and learning more about his life through these letters has already proved interesting. These past months, I have been getting an initial orientation into academic research work, and with this funding I am looking forward to continuing my study more intensively, getting more training, and working at an increased level of responsibility. The experience of working on a large project in addition to creating independent scholarly work for publication makes this project especially valuable preparation, not only for future academic work, but for any career path that I may choose.

## SELECTED REFERENCES: Dear Burns Project

### Part A: On Robert Burns and the Burns Correspondence

- Note: this selective list does not cover every source consulted (e.g. Cunningham, Chambers, Henley-Henderson).
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- Currie, James. "Inventory of letters addressed to Robert Burns and in the poet's possession at the time of his death." MS, Burns Birthplace Museum, Alloway; orig. MS at <http://burnsscotland.com/items/m/ms-inventory-of-letters-addressed-to-robert-burns-and-in-the-poet%E2%80%99s-possession-at-the-time-of-his-death.aspx>
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- Thornton, Robert D. *James Currie's Works of Robert Burns: A Publication History of the First edition, 1797-1800*. Ed. Mark Taylor and Patrick Scott. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Libraries, forthcoming. Print.
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- Westwood, Peter J., comp. *The Definitive Illustrated Companion to Robert Burns*. 8 vols. Distributed National Burns Collections Project, 2004. Print.

### Part B: On Editing Correspondence (including editing projects used as models)

- Barney, Stephen A., ed. *Annotation and its Texts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. Print.
- Battestin, Martin C. "A Rationale of Literary Annotation." *Studies in Bibliography* 34 (1981): 1-22. Print.
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## Magellan Scholar BUDGET FORM

Student's Name

**Double-click on table to enter data**

Student salary	Hours <small>Estimated number of hours student will work</small>	Rate <small>Enter the hourly wage</small>	Subtotal
Research hours during semesters when enrolled in classes			\$0.00
Research hours during semesters when NOT enrolled in classes			\$0.00
<b>Fringe:</b> Student salary * student fringe rate (What is fringe? See budget instructions or guidebook)			
<b>Enrolled in classes</b>	\$0.00	0.55%	\$0.00
<b>NOT enrolled in classes</b>	\$0.00	8.30%	\$0.00
<b>Materials/Supplies</b>	Enter sub-total from below:		
<b>Travel</b>	Enter sub-total from below:		
<b>TOTAL:</b>			<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Amount requested for MGS award:</b>			

### Budget Justification

**Student Salary:** Indicate estimated number of student research hours per week and hourly rate separated by semesters when student is enrolled in classes or not enrolled in classes (generally fall or spring vs summer semesters).

20 hours a week for 10 weeks over the summer (not enrolled in classes) at \$10.00 an hour.

5-6 hours a week for 15 weeks during the Fall school term at \$10.00 an hour.

**Materials/Supplies:** Indicate items, quantity, and estimated price. *Be sure to include taxes on all purchases.*

Supplies will be provided by the Irvin Department, USC Libraries, as necessary.

**Travel:** Indicate location, purpose of travel, estimate itemized costs (transportation, lodging, registration, etc).

None