

## Crafting a Transcription Directive

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Transcription is more than simply rendering words in type as they appear in a manuscript. Many decisions must be made before transcription begins. Creating a set of written guidelines in advance will save your project time and money by ensuring that documents are in good shape for project editors when initial transcription is finished and proofreading begins.

#### **In transcriptions published by my project...**

##### 1. Capital and lower case letters...

- will be standardized to proper English throughout.
- will be rendered as they appear.
- will be rendered as they appear, with the exception of capitals in the middle of words.

##### 2. Spelling...

- will be corrected to proper English.
- will be rendered as it appears without comment.
- will be rendered as it appears with footnotes explaining especially opaque words.

##### 3. Abbreviations...

- will be silently expanded in all cases.
- will be silently expanded on a selective basis.
- will be rendered as they appear without comment.
- will be expanded in footnotes on a selective basis.

##### 4. Small amounts of missing text...

- will be silently supplied if one character is missing and the context is clear.

- will be silently supplied if two characters are missing.
- will appear in brackets without exception.
- will not be supplied and a bracketed ellipsis will represent the gap.

#### 5. Terminal punctuation...

- will be rendered as a period no matter what mark appears in the manuscript.
- will be rendered as a period, dash, comma, slash, etc. as it appears.
- will be left blank if no mark is present.

#### 6. Two or more punctuation marks inexplicably in a row...

- will be included.
- will not be included and one mark will be chosen based on context.
- will not be included and the mark the writer placed last will be used.

#### 7. Paragraph indents...

- will be standardized.
- will be retained as appear by using variable indents.
- will be made variable with a range of three—short, standard, deep.

8. "Slips of the pen" ...

- will be rendered as they appear.
- will be ignored.

9. Readings that remain in question after review by the editors...

- will be included in the text without notation.
- will be placed in brackets.
- will be placed in brackets with a question mark.
- will be included in the text and noted as questionable in footnotes.
- will be included in the text and on occasion include alternative readings in footnotes.

10. Cancelled text...

- will be rendered as struck-through.
- will be rendered within angle brackets.
- will be silently omitted in all cases.
- will be included if legible but otherwise silently omitted.
- will be included if legible and if the editors deem it significant.
- will be included in every case, with the presence of illegible text noted in footnotes.

#### 11. Interlineations...

- will be silently included in the text.
- will be silently included if above the line, with footnotes indicating marginal insertions.
- will be included, with footnotes indicating all interlineations.
- will be included, with up and down arrows indicating interlined text.

#### 12. Editorial insertions...

- will not be used within transcriptions.
- will be rarely used within transcriptions.
- will be liberally used within transcriptions.

#### 13. Ampersands, per signs, thorns, and "&c."...

- will be rendered as they appear.
- will be rendered as "and," "per," "th," and "etc."

#### 14. Accents over letters...

- will be rendered as they appear.
- will be ignored.

#### 15. Tildes and macrons...

- will be rendered as they appear.
- will be ignored.

#### 16. Obscure monetary symbols

- will be rendered as they appear within the limits of available software symbols.

- will be rendered as they appear even if a special symbol must be designed.
- will be described in footnotes only.

#### 17. Virgules (slashes)...

- will be not be used and line breaks will be ignored in all cases.
- will be used at line breaks in letter closings, ancillary elements, and poetry in footnotes.

#### 18. Material underlined in the manuscript...

- will be rendered as underlined.
- will be rendered in italic.
- will be rendered in roman with footnotes noting the underline.
- will be silently rendered in roman.

#### 19. Blanks in the manuscript...

- will be represented by blanks of a standard length in the transcribed text.
- will be represented by blanks of variable length.
- will be represented by a bracketed ellipsis.
- will be ignored, with footnotes indicating their presence.

20. Small drawings on the manuscript...

- will be ignored.
- will be reproduced and dropped into the text.
- will be reproduced and dropped into the text only if deemed significant.
- will not be reproduced but will be described in footnotes.

21. Drafts of letters...

- will be printed in addition to the version that was sent.
- will be provided full-text in footnotes.
- will be excerpted at the editors' discretion in footnotes.
- will be ignored if the version that was sent is available.
- will be transcribed and printed if no other version exists.

22. Duplicate or triplicate versions of letters at variance with the original...

- will be excerpted at the editors' discretion in footnotes.
- will be ignored if the version that was sent is available.
- will be transcribed and printed if no other version exists.

23. Published versions of letters at variance with the written text...

- will be sought out and discussed in footnotes in every case.
- will be sought out and discussed in footnotes only if deemed significant.
- will be ignored.

24. Foreign language documents...

- will be translated but only the foreign-language version will be printed.

- will be translated but only the English version will be printed.
- will be translated and both versions will be printed.
- will not be translated and only the foreign-language version will be printed.
- will be printed only in foreign language with some passages translated in footnotes.
- will be printed in translation in all languages but French.
- contemporary translations will replace editorial translations when available.

25. Foreign language passages within letters...

- will not be translated.
- will be translated in footnotes only if the “average” reader could not figure them out.
- will be translated in footnotes without exception.
- will include the naming of the language in footnotes.

26. Elements such as dateline and internal address...

- will be moved to the standard location no matter where they appear on the page.
- will be moved to the standard location and element order will be standardized.
- will be rendered in the locations in which they appear.
- will include bracketed “old style / new style” references.

27. Ancillary text to be included in descriptive note will include...

- internal addresses.
- addresses.
- endorsements.
- docketings.
- postal stamps.
- archivists' marks.

28. Accounts...

- will be rendered with rules and brackets but not with more unusual marks.
- will be rendered with numbers in straight columns for clarity.
- will be rendered as they appear even if columns of numbers are irregular.

29. Complete letters in shorthand...

- will be rendered as they appear without comment.
- will be rendered as they appear followed by an expanded form of the letter.
- will be rendered in expanded form with the shorthand version in footnotes.
- will be rendered as they appear with an expanded form in footnotes.
- will be rendered in expanded form with original form noted in descriptive note.
- will be rendered in expanded form without comment.



30. Complete letters in cipher (strings of numbers)...

- will be rendered as they appear without comment.
- will be rendered as they appear followed by a decoded version of the letter.
- will be rendered in decoded form with the cipher version in footnotes.
- will be rendered as they appear with the decoded form in footnotes.
- will be rendered in decoded form with original form noted in descriptive note.
- will be rendered in decoded form without comment.

31. Passages in shorthand or cipher...

- will be rendered as they appear without comment.
- will be rendered in expanded or decoded form without comment.
- will be rendered in expanded or decoded form within braces.

32. At the close of the descriptive note...

- the period will be placed inside final quotation marks.
- the period will be placed outside final quotation marks.