

Making Archives Matter

The origins of this journal lie in the Centre for Editing Lives and Letters (CELL) at Queen Mary, which was the brainchild of Lisa Jardine and Alan Stewart. The initial idea for a centre arose partly from their experience of working collaboratively on *Hostage to Fortune*, their 1998 biography of Francis Bacon. They realised that there was a community of scholars working on projects, whose needs and interests did not sit comfortably within the confines of a single Humanities discipline and who would benefit from the type of collaborative working that was more generally associated with the Sciences. They envisaged the provision of a facility for large- and small-scale editing projects in historical biography, diaries, correspondence that relied on archival materials. They applied for funding through the Research Centres scheme set up by the then Arts and Humanities Research Board and were successful in securing £897,700 over five years, supplemented by generous support from their respective institutions. CELL opened for business in April 2002, in the newly refurbished Arts Research Centre at Queen Mary. Lisa Jardine became, and remains, CELL's Director, supported by Alan Stewart as Associate Director. In 2003 Alan left his post at Birkbeck and moved to New York, becoming Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, but remains actively involved in CELL as International Director. By the time AHRC funding came to an end in 2007, CELL was an integral part of the Humanities research culture at Queen Mary and is now supported by the college and its own fund-raising activities.

In naming CELL, the directors hoped to evoke the nineteenth-century tradition of Lives and Letters within a twenty-first century context. From its conception CELL has had a mission to marry traditional scholarly practices and standards with the use of cutting-edge technology. CELL provided the services of in-house paleographers, classicists, textual bibliographers, alongside technical experts who could provide advice on database and web design and electronic publishing. Over the past six years a fascinating juxtaposition has developed between CELL's physical premises on the Mile End Road and its virtual manifestation www.livesandletters.ac.uk, both of which provide a vibrant environment for intellectual exchange.

The essential core of all research in which CELL is involved is an engagement with archival material and our mission is summed up in the phrase *Making Archives Matter*. The establishment of this journal is intended to provide a place for scholars who share our emphasis on the importance of archives to publish their work. By publishing online we hope to be able to publish submitted articles more quickly, since the size of our issues can be flexible. We also hope that contributors will take advantage of the range of resources that can be incorporated into an online

publication and exploit the possibilities of the medium to the full. At the same time all submitted articles will be subjected to the rigorous peer review and editorial programme that is expected of a respectable academic journal.

I hope you enjoy this first issue of *Lives and Letters*, in which all the articles have been contributed by people directly associated with CELL, and I look forward to interacting with many of you as readers and contributors in the future.

Jan Broadway