The Abbotsford Library Annotations Project Report

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The Glasgow University Chancellor's Fund and the Carnegie Trust jointly funded this project, the primary output of which has been connecting digital images of Sir Walter Scott's annotations on his books at Abbotsford to the Advocate's Library online catalogue.

At the beginning of the Annotations Project, I was provided with two Excel spreadsheets, generated from the current Abbotsford Library Catalogue, according to tagged key word searches. The first spreadsheet contained texts, which were tagged as having 'substantial notes' or 'substantial annotations'. The second spreadsheet contained all texts, which were tagged as containing 'notes' or 'annotations'. These lists contained texts with notes and annotations by persons other than Scott, so the first task was to distinguish these texts. To do so, I color-coded all texts containing notes not by Scott with red typescript. Most of these were ultimately removed from the spreadsheet, as outwith the remit of the project.

In photographing the texts, I began with the 'substantial' spreadsheet, which contained 50 books and worked through them in order of shelf mark. Each text was initially examined and the location of each manuscript annotation recorded. I then photographed the binding, the title page, and any annotations in the order that they appeared in the text. Care was taken to capture the full-page, such that the relevance of Scott's annotation to the printed text might be seen. To these ends, occasionally images of pages not containing Scott's annotations, but in close proximately to substantial or numerous minor annotations, were taken. I also imaged several texts with annotations not by Scott, but which appeared to be of particular interest, and if a text contained additional manuscript material, beyond Scott's annotations, I also photographed this material. If this material was particularly extensive (and in some cases the contents of an entire volume), I photographed a selection, such that users can get an idea of the material available. In a few cases, I also photographed particularly striking frontispieces and plates.

All images were transferred to the project PC and opened with *ViewNX* software. Images were then saved in individual folders, labeled according to shelf mark, author, and title. Within each folder, the images were labeled with the same information, but with the addition of an image number label. As such, one can see the images in the order that they appear in the original text. All images were initially saved in 'Raw' form and labeled as such. Edited images were saved in a separate 'Edited Images' folder, and the label 'Edited' appears within each such image label. The editing process generally involved cropping and straightening the image, and, occasionally, colour or clarity enhancement. The image labels thus appear as such: Author_Title_Shelf-mark_Image # (Raw or Edited).

After finishing the first spreadsheet, I moved onto the second spreadsheet, using the same method. For ease, I assimilated the two spreadsheets, creating the current single spreadsheet format. Upon photographing all texts on the spreadsheet, I checked my list of annotated texts against the Cochran (1838) printed catalogue. I identified several texts with annotations that were not caught by the initial keyword search, and I photographed these texts using the same methods. Also, as the new Abbotsford Online catalogue is a work in progress, a portion of the library was not yet included in the initial keyword search (this was particularly the case for a substantial portion of the

study). I used the Cochran catalogue to identify texts with annotations in this portion of the library and photographed these texts using the same methods. Inevitably, some annotated texts will have been missed, and it is hoped that future researchers will further expand the spreadsheet as more annotations are discovered.

One substantial issue was identifying which annotations were indeed by Scott. In some cases, Scott initials and dates his notes, such that one is able to definitively identity the note. For example, in *Lay of the Reedwater Minstrel* (1809), in his note on the endpapers, Scott indicates that his notes will be distinguished from those of another annotator with his initials. He writes, 'The notes are copied from the pencil marks of X John Davidson Esq Clerk of the Peace for Northumberland X by whom the book was given to W Scott whose additional observations are marked with the initials W.S.'. Similarly, his note on the 'Manuscript copy of poems by Dean Swift' [17??], in which he discusses the possible identity of the handwriting in the manuscript, is signed 'W.S'. Perhaps, Scott became more conscious of future scholars' possible difficulties in identifying hands definitively when he was himself involved in similar scholarship. However, initialing his notes was not a regular practice. In most cases, probable identification of Scott's hand was based upon the original assessment by Lindsay Levy and very basic paleography, which became easier as the project progressed. For example, Scott only very rarely crosses his 't's, favours long 's's, and slants to the right. In some cases, the content or voice of the annotation indicates Scott's hand. This is particularly the case when he is providing information about his family history or discussing legal cases or individuals with whom he was known to be associated. On the spreadsheet, I have clearly marked when I am uncertain whether an annotation is by Scott by using red font. However, in preparing the images to be connected to the Advocates Library online catalogue, it was decided to include all images taken, regardless of attribution of annotations to Scott, as information regarding attribution is available on the online catalogue.

In order to prepare the images for connection, I used a PDF creator to merge all images for each given text into a single PDF file. These files were labeled according to BIB_ID number, author, and first word of title. The original shelf-mark label was removed from the file name and replaced with the BIB_ID, as the general public will view these labels. I sorted these PDFs into three separate folders: 'Catalogued', 'Catalogued but without BIB_ID', and 'Uncatalogued'. Files in the latter two folders are still named accorded to shelf-mark, as I did not have BIB_IDs for those texts which I added to the spreadsheet myself via the Cochran catalogue.

Upon completing the imaging stage, I next further developed the Excel spreadsheet. In addition to the basic bibliographical information and the working information regarding number of images taken and the date on which the images were taken, I began recording notes on the types of annotations in the text. However, in doing so, I realized the advantages of having a separate row for each image of a Scott annotation, rather than a row for each text with Scott annotations. This enabled me to classify each individual annotation on the spreadsheet according to the current critical literature on 'Romantic marginalia'.

All images taken, in both their original and their merged and re-labeled forms, and both Excel spreadsheets are on two external hard drives, and the images are backed up on the project PC.