

Special Meeting of the Board of the Richard III Society – American Branch January 29, 2023 1pm.

Topic: Q&A Discussion With by Ms Laura Blanchard and Ms Dot Porter regarding the Proposal to the American Branch for Project Funding

Overview:

Ms Laura Blanchard has submitted a Proposal to the American Branch asking the branch to provide \$3,000 in funding for a Phase One project to transcribe the Edward IV Roll MS E 201 held in the Free Library of Philadelphia. Subsequent phases (not included in their Proposal) would be required to complete the work: the translated text along with the Roll's digital images would be mapped and loaded onto the OPenn web site using the Digital Mappa toolset for scholarly study. Their Proposal asks the Branch to financially support the Initial Phase by paying two U of PA students directly for their hourly labor to do some (or all) of this transcription work.

Concerns:

Prior to the start of this Q&A session the Board met for a discussion of our thoughts and questions. There seemed to be a number of concerns. First, there was a consensus that it was unclear what the 'deliverable' would be: what exactly would we get for our money. Next, it is understood that additional funding would be needed to complete the project. We wondered if Ms Blanchard had identified where that future funding might come from, so that the work the American Branch would have paid for would not simply stop? Also, what kind of qualifications would be required of the students hired to do this work, and who would provide oversight of their work? Finally, is there a way for us to avoid having to pay the students individually? Couldn't we make a lump sum donation and have the funds distribution handled by someone else?

Discussion:

During the course of the meeting Ms Blanchard suggested that the goal of this project would be to fund the development of a 'Proof of Concept' of the digital mapping of the E4 Roll. 'Proof of Concept' would of necessity include transcription, translation and mapping of the Roll. However, their Proposal called only for student labor to do just the transcription. This discrepancy was brought to light and, after further discussion, it was seen that the Board's desire for a 'deliverable' would be met if the Proposal was changed to request funding for a project that was defined as transcribing, translating and mapping a small portion of the E4 Roll. It was further discussed that issuing payment to the students upon their completion of assigned work would be a better way to proceed than paying for the number of hours they may spend. This addressed the Board's concern about time sheets and oversight. Not resolved is the Board's concern about paying students directly, nor the concern of how the quality of the students work would be monitored and assured.

Next Steps:

The Board asked Ms Blanchard to revise her Proposal to reflect the changes discussed, and address the concerns raised. Should the American Branch decide to fund this effort, it was agreed that no assistance in funding for this first step would be asked from the UK. It was agreed that we would hold this project 'close to the chest' for the time being.

The Board agreed with Susan Troxell's suggestion that she reach out to PW Hammond and Dr Heather Falvey in the UK to see if they could give a rough approximation of the number of hours required to transcribe, then translate, the top section of the roll. Also, the American Branch would pursue permission from PW Hammond to use his contributions to deciphering all the heraldry and imagery on the roll, which had been used for the Free Library's digital resources site.

The Board is looking forward to the revised Proposal before making any decision on the request for funding. While generally in favor of this Project, it was voiced that there is a fair amount of 'loosy goosy' thinking that needs to be firmed up.