

Number Six

Spring 2012

Simms Society News



The Newsletter of the William Gilmore Simms Society

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Welcome

Greetings from the Simms Society Executive Council. Simms scholarship generally and the Simms Society specifically have been making steady progress in the past months.

During our membership drive last year, we enjoyed close to an 80% renewal rate among current members. We also added two new Life members to our ranks. Best of all, we have seen a number of scholars new to Simms studies submitting proposals for the upcoming conference in September.

This year, the Simms Initiatives at the University of South Carolina continues to grow as it expands access to Simms

materials. Over 60 volumes are now available for full-text reading and searching on the website, and the first round of Print-on-Demand Simms reprints is now available from University of South Carolina Press.

This July marks the two-year anniversary and halfway point in this massive project. So, it seemed like a good time to take stock of what has been accomplished thus far, what is still to come, what has been most successful, and what needs further work.

Inside this newsletter, you will find reviews of the Simms Initiatives. They come from scholars in southern studies,

library science, literature, and history. Together, these reviewers offer a candid and insightful picture of the strengths and challenges shaping the next two years of the Simms Initiatives. We hope you will find their opinions an inspiration to write with your own thoughts.

For questions about the Simms Society or the Simms Initiatives, call 803-777-2403 or visit tclsimms@mailbox.sc.edu.



Expanded Volume 6 of Simms's Letters – Now Available!

Alex Moore

Publication by the University of South Carolina Press of a paperback edition of all six volumes of *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms* has afforded an opportunity to expand *Volume VI, Supplement, 1834-1870* by including fifty-seven Simms letters and documents discovered since 1982, when the volume was first published.

These documents, which expand the volume's content by nearly 25%, are eclectic in form and subject. They include

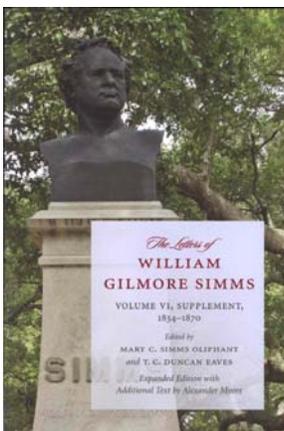
personal correspondence, legal and business forms, and public documents from the author's term of service in the South Carolina General Assembly.

Most of the documents complement previously published Simms materials, especially with respect to domestic and literary topics. In a few cases, however, these documents cast light on heretofore unknown or little-studied aspects of Simms's life and career. In several instances these additions complicate readers' understanding of the public and private life of the

South's foremost man of letters.

Even as most reinforce long-held perceptions of his character as a southern patriot, a dutiful breadwinner and parent, and a professional writer, some have the power to surprise readers and Simms scholars alike.

This newly expanded edition of volume six of Simms's *Letters* is a crucial addition to any Simms scholar's library. Visit the USC Press website at www.sc.edu/uscpres/ to order a copy today.



Simms Society Membership News

Dr. Jeffery J. Rogers, Associate Professor of History at Gordon College in Barnesville, Georgia, is the 2012 Simms Summer Scholar at The South Caroliniana Library at The University of South Carolina. He is concentrating his efforts on two projects. The first is preparing an introduction for a future edition of Simms's 1847 biography *The Life of the Chevalier Bayard* to be published by The University of South Carolina Press in cooperation with the Simms Initiatives at the University of South Carolina Libraries. The second is to collect editorials written by Simms as editor of four different newspapers; the *Charleston City Gazette* and *Commercial Daily Advertiser*, *The Columbia Phoenix*, the *Charleston Rural Carolinian* and the *Charleston Daily South Carolinian*. The aim of this project is to prepare a volume of selected editorials by Simms for publication by The University of South Carolina Press.

Jim West lectured at a conference called "Precarious Alliances," the subject of which was the posthumous reputations of authors, held at the Hanse Wissenschaftskolleg, an institute for advanced study in Delmenhorst, Germany, on 14-16 June 2012. Among the authors Jim discussed was William Gilmore Simms — particularly with regard to the importance of the first biography in establishing the posthumous view of Simms's career.

Todd Hagstette was recently named Director of the Simms Initiatives, the massive digital humanities project out of the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina. Dr. Hagstette will continue the excellent work launched by retiring project head **David Moltke-Hansen**.

In June, Story Line Press published **Matt Brennan's** *Dana Gioia: A Critical Introduction* as part of its monograph series on contemporary poets.

Simms Society Life Member **Marina Ershtein**, who is an associate professor of foreign literature and art culture at Bashkir State University in Ufa, Russia, is completing a monograph titled "The Frontier in W.G. Simms's Tales and the Problems of the 'Southern' Romantic Novella." Another recent example of the interesting work being produced by our Russian colleagues in Simms studies, Dr. Ershtein's book has been accepted for publication by Dmitrii Bulanin, LLC in St. Petersburg.

The University of South Carolina Press has several texts now available or coming soon in its Print-on-Demand edition of Simms's selected works, a project being produced in collaboration with the Simms Initiatives. The earliest works to appear include: *Woodcraft*; *Vasconcelos*; *The Yemassee*; *Confession*; *Poems: Descriptive, Dramatic, Legendary, and Contemplative*; *Castle Dismal*; and *Simms's Poems: Areytos or Songs and Ballads of the South with Other Poems*. All volumes are published in affordable paperback editions and feature new critical introductions, most written by Simms Society members.

Two recent contributors to *The Simms Review* are both entering doctoral programs this Fall. **Sam Lackey**, who published an essay in volume 18 of the *Review*, will be studying English at the University of South Carolina, and **Brian Fennessy**, whose work appeared in volume 19, will be entering the History program at the University of North Carolina — Chapel Hill.

Despite breaking her right hand and left foot last summer, **Beverley Simms** recovered in time to perform with the Indiana State University Wind Orchestra at Symphony Hall in Chicago in February, and in March performed at a National Saxophone Conference at Arizona State University. During the fall, she also gave a lecture-recital at Indiana University for the Indiana Music Teachers Association state conference.

Advance copies of the new collection of essays, *William Gilmore Simms's Unfinished Civil War: Consequences for a Southern Man of Letters*, will be available in early 2013. Most of the contributors to this work are Society members.

Society member **John Miller** had a busy conference season this year. He presented his paper "A View from the Peripheries: Teaching La Florida in an Undergraduate Survey" at the *American Literature Association Conference* in May in San Francisco, and he presented a paper titled "Notes on the State of Virginia, Notes on the United States: Interpreting National Life through One Text's Historical and Literary Dimensions" in Milwaukee last March for the *Association for Core Texts and Courses Conference*.

The Simms Initiatives welcomes three USC-based research assistants. Jessica Hemphill is a student in the MLIS degree program; Michael Odom and W. Matthew J. Simmons are PhD candidates in English.

Thank you to all of the members who contributed news—your efforts make the Society the convivial and collegial group that it is. If you have any membership news to include in our next issue, please send it to **Todd Hagstette** at tclsimms@mailbox.sc.edu.

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Gina Caison (Georgia State University): a Simms Initiatives Review

The Simms Initiatives sponsored by the University of South Carolina represent a significant moment in the emergence of the digital humanities. Undoubtedly, this online space for the distribution and study of William Gilmore Simms's works deserves increased attention for its impressive undertaking and rich possibilities. On the occasion of the two-year anniversary and mid-point of the development of the Simms Initiative, I would like to offer some comments on what I see as the enormous potential for the project's future.

Currently, we are engaged in an important discussion about what something called "southern literature" might mean in its past and future iterations. With the recent publication of studies such as Coleman Hutchison's *Apples & Ashes: Literature, Nationalism, and the Confederate States of America*, scholars in the field of southern literature are grappling increasingly with the complex issues of how to discuss, teach, and write about the literary traditions that we might say invented southerners and coalesced into a misled national project in the Confederacy. As many of the readers of this newsletter know, perhaps no author more so than Simms allows us to see these literary formations. Thus, the increased availability of materials through the Simms Initiatives offers researchers and teachers new and exciting ways to engage this scholarly moment.

This project, however, does more than make texts available. It challenges us to think about issues of literary periodization, region, public conversation, and classroom use. As Lisa Brooks notes in the most recent *Publications of the Modern*

Language Association, "while chronological periodization can dis-embed events from their places, our process of reading rhizomically in the digital world may move us to reconsider the primacy of place" (308). The Simms Initiatives have the potential to work in this way. Through the rereading, regrouping, and remapping of Simms's oeuvre, we have the chance to re-engage our understanding of the South's textual genealogy through one of its most significant literary figures.

This possibility of rethinking historical linearity is one among many that makes the Simms Initiatives so exciting. From the layout of the webspace, it becomes clear that this potential is one that the editors and curators of this digital collection take seriously. The exhaustive timelines covering Simms's life and his subject matter allow the user to see the complex intersections of historical narrative making at the heart of the author's works. Furthermore, the user can group texts based upon either the publication date or the time-period of the subject matter, allowing scholars and students to conceive of periodization in new ways. Along with the reconception of period, the Initiatives offer other ways to reconsider textual relationships. The potential grouping of meta-data by other categories such as "Characters," "Publishers," and even "Dedicatee," help to refine and recreate even more vectors by which to analyze Simms's works. Even more thought-provoking is the Google Maps feature that accompanies several of the works, allowing users to view features of the text including setting, place of publication, and current holding institutions. Taken together, these elements of the project

create the infrastructure for an enormous reconfiguration of the ways that Simms's work can be read and experienced.

As with any project attempting such a large undertaking, there is room for improvement both in terms of functionality and conception. However, what I would like to propose below is that the onus is now largely on scholars and teachers – myself included – to help the Simms Initiatives reach its potential. In terms of what would help continue the successful groundwork of the project, I offer the following suggestions. First, the potential of a digital archive is that it does not have to stay entirely beholden to what we thought we knew about literary scholarship. With new platforms, we have the potential to see the world in ways that are perhaps yet unimagined. In other words, a digital archive can do more than recreate the material archive. Although the site is rich in its background and bibliographic material, as a user, it would also be helpful to see more intertextuality and hyperlinked material within the occasionally large blocks of text. Some of these links might lead users away from the site, but if the site created itself as a rhizomatic web portal, then I imagine that many users would come back for more. In terms of internal links, in the subject matter timeline, it would be compelling to have the texts that address particular historical events listed and linked to those listings. Second, the mapping feature could come forward as an exciting place for the site. As recent work by scholars such as Elizabeth Maddock Dillon has shown, the potential for mapping a literary work's word usage and geography opens up

"Through the rereading, regrouping, and remapping of Simms's oeuvre, we have the chance to re-engage our understanding of the South's textual genealogy through one of its most significant literary figures."

ways to imagine the circulation of ideas within a text. As a scholar, I would find it particularly compelling to be able to map the events of a Simms novel and then be able to link these mapped points into the timeline of historical events. If combined with information from a text such as Simms's own *The Geography of South Carolina*, I imagine that we might be able to see entirely new layers to the authors' palimpsest of southern history. Lastly, while the Initiatives do an amazingly complete job of recording the exact dates of the editions in the holdings, it would be compelling to see the dates of first and subsequent editions not available in the collections. Indeed, the website lists this information in the alphabetic Bibliography, but it would also be productive for the user to be able to regroup this list by edition and publication date in order to conceptualize the many ways to re-periodize the popularity, availability, and influence of Simms work through time.

As I state earlier, the most important piece of development for the Simms Initiatives seems to be with us, the users and potential users. I am intrigued by the possibilities available in the Comments section for each text. This feature offers new avenues for collaboration on specific

works and larger groupings of Simms materials. However, this feature seems woefully underused. Admittedly, I have not jumped into the conversation myself. This is something I hope to correct in the coming months.

I can see a vast number of ways to use this space including, but not limited to: generating discussions that lead to collaborative scholarship and articles; an avenue to explore pre-conference conversations on topics of proposed interest; a place where conference goers can add comments about a work under discussion during a panel; a space to add in user-generated bibliographic materials for the given text; and even a location to share assignments for use of these texts in the classroom. As will be clear to any user, this digital project makes an enormous number of texts and materials available for classroom use. If the mapping feature was opened up to user-generated content, I can see creating class projects where students work together to "map" a Simms novel. These custom maps could then be uploaded to the site for user comments and additions. Students could also work with instructors to add their own comments to the available texts and potentially engage in critical conversations with

scholars in the field. However, these potential uses will not happen unless we begin these conversations with one another and our students.

I think we have just begun to imagine the potential in the Simms Initiatives. This significant undertaking equips students, teachers, and scholars to re-see the place of the southern literary landscape. It allows those of us from wildly different geographic places to engage one another in conversation, and, most excitingly, it allows people from different places in their careers as readers (from the undergraduate to the Professor Emeritus) to bring their thoughts to bear on a singularly understudied author. I propose that the place to start these conversations is in our classrooms. Therefore, I suggest that this coming academic year, classroom instructors assign a text from Simms, let their students lead the way into this digital world, and see what new ways to imagine various places emerge. I know I will.

Works Cited

Brooks, Lisa. "The Primacy of the Present, the Primacy of Place: Navigating the Spiral of History in the Digital World." *PMLA* 127.2 (2012): 308-316.

Hutchison, Coleman. *Apples & Ashes: Literature, Nationalism, and the Confederate States of*

Timothy Williams (Appalachian State University): a Simms Initiatives Review

The University of South Carolina Libraries' *Simms Initiatives* site is a welcome contribution to a still small world of digital repositories, which make scholarly research incredibly easy. The interface allows researchers (or Simms enthusiasts more generally) to browse Simms's writings by genre, time period, and publication date. This feature is particularly useful for general audiences as well as teachers and professors who wish to find appropriate readings for courses. Students, in turn, will benefit from the concise background information on the author and each major publication. Of greatest benefit to scholars in the fields of southern arts and letters are the many opportunities to conduct both basic and extensive searches within thousands of pages of Simms's writing. The greatest value is that the digital interface scans at the text level for individual words and phrases. For example, because my work

deals with manhood and intellectual life in the antebellum South, I conducted a quick search for the term "manhood," and found 218 results within the data contained in the *Simms Initiatives*, including poems, fiction, correspondence, and speeches. Thus, Simms's thinking about manhood, as a powerful force in civilization, appears to a reader like me, who has not previously read so broadly in Simms's work.

Overall, the presentation of the results is neat and clear, providing a thumbnail image of the original source, its citation, and text in html format. Seeing the original document close-up is a helpful option, though the "zoom" feature is a bit awkward at present, as users must try to navigate the text with a hand cursor in a small window. A second feature that might require improvement in future years is giving researchers more flexibility in refining their searches. For instance, at present, it is not clear how one can

eliminate repetition of search terms in second-edition publications. This would be one way to make results more manageable. A model might be USC's library catalog search engines, or Google Books. These are minor critiques, however, of an already state-of-the-art digital repository, which, as it develops, promises to bring greater exposure to one of the nineteenth-century's greatest and most prolific writers. I look forward to using this resource in future research projects and classroom settings.



Book preservation is one of the Initiatives' major efforts.

David McKnight (University of Pennsylvania): a Simms Initiatives Review

In his preface to his 1992 scholarly biography of William Gilmore Simms, author John Caldwell Guilds observes:

The appearance in three years of three books focused on the oeuvre of William Gilmore Simms suggests that a gifted and compelling author is perhaps gradually reclaiming some of the distinction he held in the late 1850s during the peak of his literary production. At any rate, a reevaluation of Simms's literary significance is definitely in process. (xi)

Twenty years later the process of "reclaiming" Simms's *distinction* continues at the University of South Carolina, which is home to the *Simms Initiatives* (<http://simms.library.sc.edu/>). In addition, the University is home to the William Gilmore Simms Society, which was founded in 1992 at the same time as the publication of Guild's definitive Simms biography. As described on the Simms Initiatives site, the primary purpose of this endeavor is to provide access to Simms's published works in electronic and print on demand formats. In addition another major goal of the Initiatives is to build a community of interest focused on the writings of Simms. However to this reviewer, I'm not clear on why the plural "initiatives" is adopted rather than the singular "initiative". The use of the plural might be explained in more detail.

In an era of collaboration, the Simms Initiatives reflects recent trends in the academic publishing world. This project aligns the University of South Carolina Library's William Gilmore Simms collection and University's Press. A central component of the site is the opportunity to purchase print on demand copies of Simms works. Within the academic library and publishing world this is a potential revenue source which can be reinvested in the long term maintenance and future enhancements to the site. It makes business sense.

Indeed, if you perform a Google search you are as likely to find a link to the Simms Wikipedia article, the Simms Initiatives page, the Simms Society website or the Online Books page; or you may land on the University of South Carolina Press Print on

Demand website. With the exception of the Online Book Page, all web links lead back, or should, to the Simms Initiatives website.

Implicit within the rationale justifying the long term investment in creating the Simms Initiatives are two core beliefs: that Simms was the victim of scholarly neglect for almost a century after his death in 1870 and that the Initiatives will rightfully restore his reputation as the definitive and most prolific writer of the Old South, apart from Edgar Allan Poe, to whom he is often compared. As the project editor's note "Simms did more than any other writer to frame white southern self-identity, nationalism, and historical consciousness. He also did more to foster the South's literary life and place in America's imagination." This is a noble cause -- a cause that might be followed in the case of other long neglected 19th-century North American writers whose prolific output gathers dust in off-site book storage facilities; or are the subject of PhD dissertations, or worse, long forgotten.

Although the editors of the Simms Initiatives are dedicated to producing electronic editions of all of Simms's separately published work, at the present sixty Simms titles appear online. Over the course of the project, approximately one hundred and thirty Simms volumes will be digitized. While digital facsimiles of Simms work do appear elsewhere online they generally do so singly and out of context. As already noted, the Online Books page (a gateway to the source materials) takes the researcher to various titles; search Google Books and Simms titles appear; Hathi Trust provides access to numerous digitized copies of Simms works. What these sites lack, in contrast to the Simms Initiatives site, are the following: a context, a collection, and a community. The Simms site editors have knitted these elements together through the use of web-based technologies into a scholarly web presence which is attractively designed, easy to use, uncluttered, and intuitive.

Over the past several years there has been a debate within the digital collections community concerning the authority, lasting value and sustainability of projects like

the Simms Initiatives. College and University reference librarians have developed sophisticated criteria to evaluate and judge digital collections. Granting agencies like the National Endowment for the Humanities require applicants to include a digital curation plan with their application if digitization is an element of the project. More recently, NINES, the definitive website focused on 19th century literature selects relevant collections for inclusion in the site based on the long standing academic convention of peer review. Where once a scholarly website creator hoped that the site would be combed by web crawlers and indexed by Google, Yahoo, or Bing; or that a dedicated subject specialist would discover the site and add it to a list of e-resources, the NINES approach raises the bar. What might have been dismissed as a "boutique" or merely an exhibition of digitized materials is no longer adequate. We are witnessing the emergence of new forms of scholarly editions predicated on criteria which include originality, comprehensiveness, scholarly rigor; and, most of all, web technologies which enable users to search, discover and download content on the users' terms, not necessarily those of the publisher of the content. In my view, the Simms Initiatives is a credible candidate for inclusion in NINES, and I would encourage the editors to pursue this opportunity.

Context

Among the purposes of the Simms Initiatives website is to provide the rationale and contextual framework for understanding Simms's historical importance and contemporary relevance. A brief, but thorough biographical entry, a bibliography of Simms's published writings in book and serial formats, and a selected bibliography of selected works on Simms and his writings. At this juncture, there are no links from the primary source bibliography to digitized works, although titles intended to be digitized appear in bold.

While the primary and secondary source bibliographies are useful, one item

that is missing from the secondary works is Butterworth and Kibler's 1980 bibliographical study: *William Gilmore Simms: a Reference Guide*. I would recommend that the project editors consider using this reference guide as the basis for creating a comprehensive guide to works by and about Simms. Although the timeline is under development, it merges three elements: world events, Simms's life and, Simms's publication. Presenting chronologies online can prove challenging, I would suggest that this would be one section that might be reviewed and redesigned in the effort to allow the user to identify, easily, events in Simms's life and his publications. I would make one suggestion that the project editors consider making Guilds's 1992 biography available online.

Collections

An explicit goal of the Simms Initiatives is to resuscitate an interest in Simms's printed works. Based on the list of primary sources located on the Background page listed under "separately published titles" the project editors plan to digitize approximately eighty-five Simms titles, in addition to the six volumes of correspondence.

Access to the works in the collection is possible in two ways. The first is through a full text search, which will generate item and page level results. For example I performed a search using the character family name: "Hurdis". The search returned 263 results. The top ranked item was Simms's novel *Richard Hurdis*. A typical result displays a thumbnail color scan; in a parallel box a short title, page number and transcription with the term highlighted. The term does not appear highlighted on the scanned image. Clicking on the image, it opens a new window which takes the user to the page within the work. The second method of viewing Simms's works is from the "Browse" button on the main menu. Browse enables the user to generate a list of works by the following categories: genre, publication date, and subject time period.

Each mode of browsing launches a sub menu from which the user can, for example, in the case of genres, choose from thirteen categories which are more descriptive than Library of Congress subject headings which one would find in the University of South Carolina's online cataloging record. In certain

cases, certain fields are not yet populated and a message pops up informing the user that "no results were found" and "new titles are being added systematically." In the case of browsing titles by date of publication, if this option is selected the default setting is a chronological listing of Simms's works. Time Period is another example of how the project editors have used non-standard metadata to organize access to Simms works, which in chronological scope range from topics dealing with ancient and medieval history up to the Civil War and Early Reconstruction.

Having selected a browse category, the user sees an inset menu and on the left side of the page a series of facets which enable the users to refine their search more precisely. Thus, if I select antebellum, I can refine my search by genre, publication date, or subject heading. I can further refine the user's choice by people and location. Dynamically driven by the metadata, the facet approach illustrates the sophisticated level of detail that has been captured in the form of metadata, which compels the user to search, discover and select materials for use. The combination of search, browse, and facets provides the user with a powerful array of tools to manipulate the Simms data.

While the focuses of the Simms Initiatives is texts, appearing on the welcome page is an animated strip of contemporary portraits of Simms. At this point it is not possible to control or pause the animation and zoom in on a photo. Under "background" I would suggest adding a category for portraits or images of Simms and his contemporaries.

As one "drills" down to a specific work, the user views a page which includes a thumb nail image of the work, in this case, I selected *The Sense of the Beautiful*, a speech delivered by Simms to the Agricultural Society of South Carolina in 1870. An arrow entices the reader to search inside; the project editors provide a lengthy annotation placing the work in context, including footnotes and tags linked to related works. In addition to the annotation, there is a transcription of the title page, which is useful; however, I would suggest that there is room for additional information as part of the description, which

has been recorded and represented in the clever and informative side bar menu, which reveals through the categories: "contents" the table of contents for each work (generated from the TEI encoding of the text) and "detailed view," which includes the following fields, which "parse out" for the user the bibliographical and material history of the volume.

The detailed view includes "item information" with a link back to the item level record in the Library's online catalog. Each entry includes additional copy specific access points that include "time periods," "people," "sources/reviews," "bibliographic citation," and "bibliographic description". (Without being over critical, I would recommend that the project editors review the bibliographic descriptions for completeness.) I would also add that copy specific information is lacking in descriptions. Clearly the University Library's Simms collection has many interesting copies, for example, the copy of *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction*, bears a book plate with the printed name James W. Hammond with an inscription "From the Author -- 1849". On the flyleaf there appears additional ownership information. Capturing this kind of information will provide the data for researchers who are interested in studying provenance, ownership, and reading practices. At the same time, in the detailed view for the work under discussion, Simms's dedication is recorded.

In addition to the "detailed view" of each bibliographic item in the collection, a field labeled "publication history" appears on the sidebar. Many of the items I perused on the site did not include these data. This section will be invaluable for historians of the books (indeed, I laud the project editors for investing the resources required to identify, organize and publish the detailed studies of each volume -- notwithstanding -- the production of the scanned volumes and the creation of full text editions).

In some respects the capture of the enormous quantity of metadata will not only support the discovery of the rich content on the site (I would suggest that a "site" search be implemented to enable users to discover non-structured site data). Geographical information has been

plugged into Google maps which provides, yet another visualization of the metadata.

One area for future development might be the addition of an advanced search, which would translate the facets into an order set of results. For example, while there is a facet for place of publication, which is useful, to generate a database search for “all” London imprints would be helpful to the researcher.

Technology

Central to the Simms Initiatives are the works themselves. As noted in the previous section, after the user has selected a work he or she is prompted to “explore inside” the work. Clicking on the thumbnail opens a new window and the page turner appears. The quality of the digital facsimile is impressive. Access to the encoded transcription is not available, but should be considered for future development. As text analysis tools become more commonly available (see TAPOR), what high powered

users will want is access to the “raw data.” The page turner is simple and effective, but it might be improved. I would suggest adding a “jump to” a specific page feature and the ability to view the machine readable version for each page.

What I could not find on the site was a description of the technology employed to develop the project. There is a link to a page providing information giving programmers access to the API, which is invaluable as the Simms community expands. But information related to the site architecture, metadata standards, and encoding principles would be helpful to better understand the site and would aid the wider digital library community as a whole.

Community

One of the compelling reasons to create the Simms Initiatives is to build a community focused on the writings of William Gilmore Simms. Once an account is created, the user has access to a blog tool for shar-

ing comments. There is a non-active link on the menu labeled “data management” which hints at future added value features, but is not currently defined. The “help” page links to posted comments. A help page for the use of the website would be welcome for non-community members.

Conclusion

The project team deserves enormous credit for creating the Simms Initiatives. Although I was unfamiliar with the author prior to undertaking this review – I have become sufficiently intrigued with Simms as an author of note, though, neglected, to better understand his place in the literary and intellectual history of the Old South and there is no better tool for advancing my understanding than to become a user of the Simms Initiatives website.

David S. Shields (University of South Carolina): a Simms Initiatives Review

The following is a selection from the speech Dr. Shields gave at the celebratory public launch of the Simms Initiatives website, which took place at the University of South Carolina on 14 November 2011.

This is a spectacular resource, something which is almost unparalleled. I am trying to think of the great digital humanities sites that are available for scholarship right now. There is the Walt Whitman site, there is also the site for Charles Brockden Brown, and there are sites for the Founders. But when you think of the nineteenth-century canonical writers: there is no Emerson site. There is no Thoreau site. The attempt to make a Melville site has not come to pass. Henry James? No. The Simms Initiatives, then, represents a pioneering attempt to supply the complete oeuvre of a major person of letters from the nineteenth century. William Gilmore Simms: a writer obsessed with cultural memory. Thoroughly conversant with the most innovative media of his day, he would have been delighted that his creations are now digitally archived and open to the wid-

est sort of public access. This is the kind of project that would have warmed his soul.

The Simms Initiatives of the University Libraries at USC, through the Watson-Brown Foundation, is accomplishing what a very few digital literary resources have managed: the presentation of an entire published and much of a manuscript corpus of a major literary figure in a way that permits full-text searching, geographical mapping, and the categorization of time in terms of subject and time of publication. As more texts are scanned into the database, the more the distinctive patterns of Simms’s imagination become visible. Simms wrote a great deal on a vast array of topics, over a substantial length of time. There is no comparable body of writing existing from other significant nineteenth-century southerners. So this archive, in an instant, becomes *the* tool for the topical analysis of a host of cultural subjects related to the South.

Simms, over his career, viewed himself as the voice of the planter class – not so much a representative planter, but a public oracle – articulating precisely what may be

impressionistic, vague, and inchoate in others of his race, gender, and class. Scholars have long mined Simms’s essays, speeches, and letters for assessments of slavery, race, southern nationalism, and secession. Now, with the immense convenience of the Simms Initiatives site, we can look beyond these enduring historiographical fixations. We can really engage in an exploration of the terms of his imagination.

When asked to play with this site, I embraced that whole-heartedly. And the first two terms I sought out were “pleasure” and “pain.” It interests me that a man who saw more than a fair-share of misfortunes in his life – the burning of his house, the destruction and dispossession of his property at the end of the war, the deaths of the people he loved most in his family – it interests me that he uses the word “pleasure” twice as often as the word “pain,” both in his letters and in his *belle lettres*.

One of the truisms of Simms scholarship is that Simms was a literary nationalist, first promoting the United States, then the South. He was perhaps the most vocal

advocate of white southern ethnogenesis. Yet, not all champions of slavery and its political culture were nationalists. Certain of the filibusters — those who thought to set up separate slave nation-states in Central and South America — unencumbered by the unending political bother of dealing with northern sectional interests, certain of these people in the 1840s began to embrace the word “civilization” rather than “nation,” hereby creating slave civilizations in Central America. Some also envisioned a southern empire extending through Central America.

Well, it turns out that “civilization” is an important term for Simms, appearing sixty-three times and, very significantly, in his 1843 oration *The Social Principle*. At this juncture, you can do some comparative work. Taking a look at a Google Ngram Viewer that graphs the incidence of words in American print over time, we can see if there is a surge of usage in print culture generally at this juncture of the words “nation,” “empire,” or “civilization.” The line indicating use of the word “civilization” does indeed begin to rise in the 1840s, and “empire” seems to be holding its own. But, what is interesting is the word “nation,” which begins to decline. Simms is a man who makes his reputation both as an American literary nationalist and as the foremost southern nationalist at precisely the time when the word “nation” is taking a dive. So, we have this very interesting phenomenon about the rhetorical potency that Simms has to exercise in propounding a southern nationalist view at precisely a cultural juncture when “nation” is losing its traction.

I throw this out because the usual take on this question is: how interesting it is to be a southern nationalist when southerners, being states' rights people, really don't believe in nations. Well, what is interesting here is that it is not just states' rights proponents who are beginning to hold nation less close to their hearts. It is something that exists in society in general. This is the kind of work that you can undertake now with the various tools and features with the Simms Initiatives.

Simms, for the final decades of his life, was a planter as well as a man of letters. Since I am currently concerned with the repatriation of traditional southern vegetables and land-race grains in order to resuscitate southern cuisine, I am particularly interested in Simms's attention to fields and gardens, and the consumption of food.

Grains are particularly dear to me, and when I started going through the various writings, I found that “barley” is the least interesting grain for Simms. The word only appears six times. And “oats,” which you would think, because of the horse-flesh that is cherished in the South, would have a fatter incidence than the ten citations that we receive. “Rye,” a good grain to make beverages out of, twelve times; “wheat,” thirty-five times; “maize” appears fifteen times, but much of it surrounding his attempts to promote a sketch called “Maize in Milk” that was published in *Godey's* magazine. But, when we turn to “corn,” it is mentioned two hundred and one times, and is often the subject of his correspondence.

As we read through these letters, we can reconstruct Simms's garden crops and even his rotations. He grows cotton, sweet potatoes, corn, cow peas, Irish potatoes, rice, peanuts, and even sugar-cane on an experimental basis in his fields. His letters reveal that the kitchen gardens grew artichokes, cabbages, beets, parsnips, snap beans, potatoes, squashes, pumpkins, Jerusalem artichokes, tomatoes (which only become generally popular in the 1840s), strawberries, and melons. He sought out seed for tomatoes and guinea squash (eggplants), particularly. He had peach trees, apple trees, quince trees, and fig trees.

In my brief excursion through Simms's oeuvre in search of crop references, I was particularly struck by the different inflections given subjects in different genres. Having the practically-minded letters cheek-by-jowl with the romances gives us some wonderfully double-faced views of things. Sugar appears associated with pleasure in the poems and fictions, but in the letters it is only associated with aggravation and expense. Corn has Native American and pastoral associations in Simms's *belle lettres*; it is a commodity in his letters. The peach is splendid in both fanciful and practical writings. Certain vegetables never appear in poetry and fictions, beets and parsnips, while collards *only* appear in fiction and never in the practical writings. Perhaps one can chart the exact boundary between Simms the planter and Simms the literary spokesman for the plantocracy.

I wanted to close with the most interesting thing I discovered while doing this exploration in the Simms archive. I am the chair of the Carolina Gold Rice Foundation, which brought back into commercial pro-

duction the staple rice that Carolina grew for centuries, but had ceased growing in 1911. There has been a great deal of debate about when Carolina Gold Rice first shows up. It is not the rice that is first brought from Madagascar at the end of the seventeenth century. The agricultural historian R.F.W. Allston, in the 1840s, said that the first person who is known to have planted it in the Pee Dee is a man named Hezekiah Maham, at Pineville Plantation in Berkeley County.

Now, I did not know very much about Hezekiah Maham, but as I was reading through Simms's novel *The Sword and the Distaff or Woodcraft*, suddenly I realized that Captain Porgy, the Falstaffian hero of this tale, a person of immense girth who rode a huge horse and was always accompanied through the war, fighting under Marion in the swamps of South Carolina, with his two black cooks and forming Lucullan feasts under the live oaks in the swamps, that this person was modeled on Hezekiah Maham.

Maham was a lieutenant under Marion and invented the Maham towers that shot down over the barricades of the Loyalist forts. At the end of the war, he contracted malaria, and the debt collector came to foreclose on his plantation. He seized the debt collector and forced this deputy sheriff to eat the papers that he had come to serve, and then threw him physically off the plantation. As I read through Simms's novel about this desperate 40-year-old epicurean man's attempts to marry a widow with sufficient wealth and good nature to establish (or, rather, reestablish) his plantation, I realized that here was the sort of person who would somehow secure from somewhere — we do not know where — a stock of seed rice, when the Revolution had destroyed all the seed stocks for almost all the rice plantations. It was this seed stock that was Carolina Gold.

So there, in a work of fiction, the missing links that connect up something about the history of the most important crop that this state ever knew. Just a sample of the sort of thing that can come bubbling to the surface once you get your hands on the Simms Initiatives website.

Lorri Glover (St. Louis University): a Simms Initiatives Review

The Simms Initiatives website, a wonderful addition to digital history, makes it possible for scholars and students to efficiently conduct in-depth research into the life and literature of one of the South's greatest (and most controversial) writers. The project makes Simms's body of work widely accessible and is a wonderful resource for historians, literary critics, university students, and curious readers. The digitized pages are of high resolution and the entire site easy to navigate because it is very intuitive. And the word search function seemed, in my exploration, quick and reliable. First-time visitors might expect the "refine" categories to appear on the first page of the search engine, but you only need to sample the function a time or two to realize how to conduct a more specialized search. Rather than simply narrowing searches by date or publication (commonplace on similar sites), visitors to the Simms digital collection can also refine searches according to "audience" and

"character" among other distinctive and helpful categories. If I had one suggestion it would be to consider altering the "tabs" or initial digitized images designating the books. Many appear similar as they are mostly unmarked jackets. For example, the tab for *The Wigwam and the Cabin* is a nondescript, brown cover. But the front matter has an extremely evocative image that might be clarifying and engaging to site visitors. This is a small suggestion to tweak an otherwise fluid, inviting, and wonderful addition to digital humanities. It should not be forgotten how very fortunate scholars are to have open access to the Simms Initiatives. Use of Rotunda, which now includes not only digital collections of the leading founders' papers projects but also a "Nineteenth Century Literature and Culture" collection, must be purchased.

If you do happen to want your own copy of a Simms book, the project, happily, offers print on demand. Most of Simms's works are, doubtless connected to the pro-

slavery tenor of many of his famous works, out of print. But they remain profoundly important to understanding the mentality, politics, and culture of the antebellum South. Given the current fiscal state of many university presses, it is entirely understandable that a print run of Simms's signature works is not possible; any such effort would, necessarily, only scratch the surface of Simms's vast writings. Thankfully technology and a partnership with the University of South Carolina Press afford another option. Print on demand allows researchers, teachers, and readers to buy their own copies of the books—which should only encourage more research into Simms's writings and the culture he both inhabited and shaped during his long and varied career.

Nicholas G. Meriwether (University of California—Santa Cruz): a Simms Initiatives Review

Literary scholars and historians have long bemoaned the difficulties in studying the work of William Gilmore Simms. In 2010, the announcement that the Watson-Brown Foundation, in conjunction with the South Caroliniana Library and the Thomas Cooper Library at the University of South Carolina, was funding a mammoth effort to create a comprehensive online bibliography of the great nineteenth century American writer generated great excitement among Simms scholars. As the principal author of the grant, I have been pleased to see the remarkable progress made in the last two years as the Simms Initiatives turned the ideas in that initial grant into what is one of the most exciting and compelling scholarly websites online today. Working with Simms Curator Todd Hagstette and a team of librarians, programmers, and experts, Director David Moltke-Hansen has combined his deep knowledge of Simms and his world with careful, exemplary project management to create a website that not only does justice to Simms, but is a model for cutting-edge scholarly

websites. Indeed, it is difficult to think of a comparable effort.

Good grants allow for latitude in the way they address their goals. One important change in the way this grant approached the task of making available Simms's voluminous corpus was to shift the initial focus of the work from the bibliographic representation of Simms's works to making available complete digital facsimiles of those works. This was sensible: as match for the grant the University Libraries acquired a state-of-the-art Zeuchel scanner. With that kind of firepower, the representation of Simms's texts implied in a bibliography could take an enormous leap forward, allowing the website to present full-length, high-quality digital facsimiles of the texts. For scholars who need to navigate the complexities of printing and publishing in Simms's times, this is a powerful tool indeed.

The digital facsimiles will inform the creation of the core of the bibliography, which was always designed to present at least the title page, half title, and copyright

pages of each book; as the technical demands of handling a project of this magnitude have become more affordable, there was no reason not to present the entirety of each work on the site, a dramatic increase in the scope, ambition, and utility of the project. Given that the underlying goal of the Initiatives was to raise awareness of Simms, and to allow his work to speak for itself, this was an organic and significant expansion of the grant's original vision, and Moltke-Hansen and Hagstette are to be commended for making that decision. The bibliography will still happen, but now it will build on a comprehensive and powerful textual base.

One of the greatest achievements of the site is the caliber of the scholarship informing it. The introduction to Simms is the single best critical encapsulation of his life and work available, presenting a nuanced, thoughtful and balanced assessment of the complexity of his changing critical reception. That kind of rigor and scholarship also informs the individual introductions to the works

presented, so that readers gain an immediate sense of confidence in what they are reading. For an author who has been so buffeted by the vagaries and tides of the academic and critical landscapes, this is one the greatest achievements of the site and of the Initiatives.

The clarity of the site's design is one of its strengths. Users can browse each title, read well-written and thoughtful scholarly introductions that situate each title in the contexts of Simms's life and writings, and comment. Given the site's scholarly orientation, users who wish to comment must register, which ensures accountability and maintains the scholarly caliber of the discourse that the Initiatives builds on and seeks to foster. This socially constructed component of the site deserves particular praise, for it allows registered users to upload scans of Simms works, making their own contributions to the site's bibliography. This was the guiding idea behind the original grant: that creating a truly comprehensive bibliography for Simms was possible only through what has been dubbed Web 2.0 technology, enabling scholars, collectors, and bibliophiles from around the world to participate in the bibliography's construction. Simms was translated and published most frequently before international copyright was established; ferreting out his foreign publications has been a significant challenge in assessing his stature. Now, with the rising attention paid to American authorship's transnational nature, the Simms Initiatives represent a groundbreaking effort to trace some of those connections and contribute to that burgeoning critical discourse.

"...not only can scholars and students cite materials with absolute assurance that what they are viewing—and citing—is an accurate representation of the text, they can engage in analysis that far exceeds what their own eyes could reveal were the physical object in hand."

The interface for the site is a model of thoughtful presentation, maintaining the textual integrity of the materials. Without becoming bogged down in metadata issues, the designers developed a simple, elegant interface that presents each page clearly, along with associated materials—scholars will be delighted to see dust jackets, jacket flaps, and jacket text presented with the *Letters*, for example. The scans are particularly noteworthy and impressive: the resolution is high enough to support magnification of each page image to a level that allows for precise textual analysis, far beyond that possible with a light table and a magnifying glass. While some kinds of textual analysis will always demand access to physical originals, the quality of the scans and the metadata collected mean that not only can scholars and students cite materials with absolute assurance that what they are viewing—and citing—is an accurate representation of the text, they can engage in analysis that far exceeds what their own eyes could reveal were the physical object in hand. This accomplishes a fundamental goal of the grant as first written: using the digital platform to dramatically enhance the accessibility of Simms's works, while maintaining the textual integrity of the works so scholars can consult the digital surrogates with complete confidence.

As with any complex work in progress, there are gaps and the occasional flaw: works often lack publication histories, for example, and only 50 titles are available at the time of this writing—although that is impressive, given the grueling timeline of the grant. Some

readers may find the timeline a bit difficult to follow: the color coding of events in Simms's life, world events, and Simms's publications can be difficult to discern. And knowledgeable readers will lift an eyebrow at the inclusion of some entries in the Selected Contextual and Documentary Works; two recent articles listed there would appear to have very limited relevance for Simms, unless one were quite familiar with very recent Simms criticism. But these are quibbles, and indeed, the site is built around the idea of leveraging a broader community of scholars to continue the able work substantially underway.

One of the site's aims is to reach a broad audience, including teachers and students at all levels, and the writing, while scholarly, accomplishes that end admirably. The assessments of the works provide accessible but first-rate introductions and overviews that situate the works in Simms's corpus and provide thoughtful critical interpretations. In many cases, these usefully extend the analysis presented in the biographical introduction, no mean feat, given the range and sweep of Simms's pen—and mind. Simms has long been a lightning rod attracting polemical and uncomprehending criticism, both pro and con; that aspect is handled especially well, neither glossing over the reasons for his marginalization nor advancing spurious claims of some impending renaissance of relevance. Ultimately, the site frames the argument for studying Simms in terms that ensure that he can be heard for who he was, and for what he wrote. And that is reason enough to study Simms, as the Simms Initiatives amply demonstrate.

Randal L. Hall (Rice University): a Simms Initiatives Review

I have no specialized knowledge of William Gilmore Simms, but I was pleased to try out this new resource. Congratulations on its impressive development thus far. I found the site to be user-friendly and easy to navigate. The digital images are

crisp and load quickly. The transcriptions are presented in an easy to read format. The background material and timelines seems adequate and clear. My only suggestions revolve around minor details. It annoyed my editorial instincts that some sections of the site use footnotes while other sections use parenthetical documentation. In some spots, the footnote number did not link me to the note itself, as appeared to be the intention. In using the search function, I would have liked to have a warning at the beginning of the results to tell me how many hits the search produced. That way, I would know immediately

whether to narrow the search. I would also have expected the tags to be more extensive and detailed than they are at this point. I would also suggest that the site's main page provide a more prominent link to your long essay introducing Simms's life and work. For those users not well acquainted with Simms, that essay will be their first destination; making them look for it under the "background" subsection seems a step too distant.



Farewell and Welcome from David Moltke-Hansen

Having gotten the Simms Initiatives up and running, I am returning to my writing and editing full time. I have two books to finish in the next 18 months. One actually was due already some time ago, but I deferred the contract to work on the Initiatives' start-up.

Todd Hagstette will direct the Initiatives going forward. Having begun with the Initiatives as a finishing graduate student, Todd joined the staff full time 18 months ago. Already as a graduate assistant, he was framing many of the important decisions about the database's structure and content and about the order of digital publication. He did so as a Simms scholar and scholar of southern literature and history. His master's thesis was on Simms and the roots of southern gothic, and his dissertation on the literature of dueling and honor. His fine essay

on Simms and honor in the forthcoming *William Gilmore Simms's Unfinished Civil War: Consequences for a Southern Man of Letters* continues his pioneering research and analysis of the culture shaping the mid-nineteenth-century South's most influential man of letters.

Many of the appreciative remarks in this issue of the newsletter, from reviewers of the Initiatives' website, reflect Todd's good input and hard work. The questions, suggestions, and frustrations raised will help improve the Initiatives over the next two years. Under Todd's sure guidance, the digital edition and the database will continue to grow in value and user friendliness. That is why I am grateful to welcome Todd in his new role and, as I say farewell, to thank all those who have helped make the

Initiatives the remarkable resource it already is. As Todd knows, thanks to extraordinary investments by the Watson-Brown foundation, the University Libraries, and members of the Simms family, the number of people involved in the site's initial development and progressive refinement continues to grow—witness this issue's thoughtful appraisals. Yet honesty requires me to say that no one has contributed as much as Todd. So, it is a very good thing that he is only half way home.

Like you, I look forward to seeing what is to come. What a wonderful thing it is to be able to draw via the Initiatives on Simms, his work, and his world in study of the nineteenth century!



The Newsletter of the William Gilmore Simms Society

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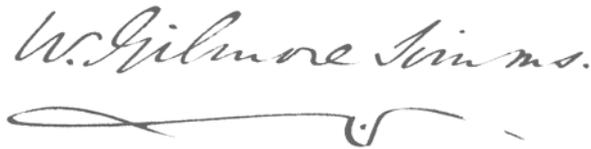
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<http://www.westga.edu/~simms/>



*Devoted to advancing the study of William Gilmore Simms
and restoring his role in the mainstream of American letters.*



Biennial Simms Society Conference Scheduled for 27-29 September 2012

The William Gilmore Simms Society and the University Libraries of the University of South Carolina invite scholars and Simms enthusiasts to a conference exploring the life and works of William Gilmore Simms, the antebellum South's most prolific writer and one of its best-known public intellectuals as novelist, poet, critic, and historian. Please join us at the historic campus of the University of South Carolina for this gala, three-day event, Sept. 27-Sept. 29, 2012.

This year's conference theme is an important one: **William Gilmore Simms's Place in the Development of American Letters.** To explore this topic, we will welcome academics from all disciplines, especially history, literature, philosophy, and political science, to contribute papers for this major

national conference. Presenters will examine topics such as Simms's role in the Young America movement, the development of American cultural and literary nationalism, Simms as an originator of literary styles and forms, Simms's involvement in the world of publishing and the early literary marketplace, the author's aesthetic theories, and Simms's career and writings in relation to his contemporaries. Though the initial deadline has passed, paper proposals will still be accepted.

The conference will include a banquet on its last night, a presentation on the Simms Initiatives website, round-table discussions of intriguing elements of Simms's life and career, and other entertaining engagements. The conference is also the time we hold the

annual Simms Society business meeting, to which all members are invited.

Registration information, including costs, will be posted on the Simms Society website as it becomes available. In the meantime, though, we have a block of rooms reserved at the charming **Inn at USC**, under a special conference rate of \$120/night. The Inn is right in the heart of Columbia and a very short walk across the beautiful USC campus to most of the conference activities. Reservations can be made by calling 866-455-4753. Be sure to mention the Simms Society conference when you call.

This promises to be a fantastic Simms Society gathering. Make plans to join us in Columbia this September!



**WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS'S
PLACE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
AMERICAN LETTERS**