

Work/Cited Episode 4 Transcript

Kate Cordes: Welcome, everyone. I am Kate Cordes, the Associate Director of Reference and Outreach at the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building. And this is Work/Cited, a program series that showcases the latest scholarship supported by the rich collections at The New York Public Library with a behind-the-scenes look at how the finished product was inspired, researched, and created. I'm posting in the link -- in the chat, sorry, a link where you can find blog posts to our -- one second, I shouldn't try to do too many things at one time. That link in the chat there is where you can find blog posts for our prior episodes and where we can watch the recordings, read transcript, and explore related resources. In this fourth episode, Meredith Mann, a Librarian at the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division at 42nd Street is joined by Curator Barbara Heller and Anna Pinto, the scribe. Today, they're going to dig into a new edition of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, which Barbara and Anna enriched with recreations of the novel's correspondence. And I'm just dropping a link in here where you can find the book, which apparently is selling out quickly, so get your hands on it if you can. Our guests will speak for about 30 minutes and then we'll open up the conversation. Please use the question and answer function at the bottom of your screen, rather than the chat function to share your questions and comments. Questions can be submitted throughout the talk as they come to you. If you wish to remain anonymous, please click that option before submitting your question. And if you'd like to chat, we encourage that throughout the discussion. You can share your comments with all of our attendees. Just remember to switch over your audience from panelists to panelists and attendees. And right before we jump into it, I'd like to ask you to take a quick poll that will help us shape and improve the series. Thank you so much. And over to you, Meredith.

Meredith Mann: Right. Thanks, Kate. And, Barbara and Anna, thank you so much for being here today to discuss this really creative and exciting book that I can't wait to dig into with you. So, let's look at some photos because I have my copy here, but we have better pictures in the slides. So, this is a new edition that came out last year of *Pride* -- of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. And what you have done to make it extra special is you have recreated the 19th kind of substantive letters that are discussed or quoted in the novel. And you've made them look as they would have if they were actually created by these characters.

Barbara Heller: Yes, so I'm a huge fan, of course, of *Pride and Prejudice*. And I was reading the book for probably the 1,000th time, and taking particular pleasure in Mrs. Gardiner's letter to Elizabeth. And when I read that letter, I experienced the emotions that I imagined Elizabeth felt when she learns that it was Darcy and not her uncle, who brought about the marriage of Wickham and Lydia, and imagining the indignities that Darcy must have suffered in the process.

But also, it turns the plot from his actions, she learns that there's hope, that there's a future with Darcy. And I take real satisfaction in the fact that the Gardiners and Darcy have learned to appreciate each other and have developed a friendship. And I thought, wow, wouldn't it be nice to have that letter to really deepen the experience by holding the actual letter that Mrs. Gardiner sent Elizabeth? So that was what inspired me. And then I went through the novel and realized that there were, you know, 20 complete letters. There's one I didn't -- one small letter I didn't do. And every single letter further the plot, revealed character, really sparkled. So then, I wanted all of them and did a huge Google search to see if anyone had ever done this before, and was excited that no one had. And so that was really the beginning of the journey. And I came to the library because inspiration struck at the end of 2017. And right at that time, I attended an event at the library that was an exhibit or a showcase of items from the special collection, atlases, maps, diaries, and I thought, wow, I wonder if they have any letters from England around 1812. And I sent an email, and Meredith, you responded. Yeah. And I did think that maybe the special collections were reserved for academics, for scholars or people with book deals, but I was always made to feel very welcome, and that the material was there for everyone's use, that everyone was welcome at the inner sanctum.

Meredith: Well, meanwhile, we were so excited to see this project that kind of, you know, the creativity and the artistry behind your project, and this idea that, you know, we were kind of interrogating these archival collections from an angle that is -- that we don't typically get to do. So I think it was exciting for us too to be able to consider these things and look at these objects in a different way. This shot on the screen here is how the letters are included in the book. So, the recreation is in a little envelope next to where it appears in the book. And then I also like this picture with all the examples spread out because you can see just how beautiful they are as art objects and how varied they are. And you can see some of Anna's work here, I believe, because you were brought in at the recreation stage to start developing these individual hands for the characters of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Barbara: That's right.

Meredith: And so, Barbara, you mentioned thinking like, oh, I'm going to go to the library. I'm going to look at these letters from the early 19th century. I was wondering what you were expecting to find when you came in, and if it was different than the letters that you actually looked at when you were here.

Barbara: Yeah, I had no idea. I thought I had no idea what to expect. So when I came to the library, and I opened the first box, and then I was shocked because I realized I had imagined something probably from seeing too many period movies, I had pictured thick, creamy stationery, covered with beautiful calligraphy, kind of like a wedding invitation, almost like a proclamation. And instead, there were these letters written on very thin paper. They were folded in half like a greeting card. And the letter was written on that top page where the image of the greeting card would be. And if the writer needed more space, then they opened it up and they wrote, you know, on sides two and three. And the back, the fourth side, is for the address

because there were no envelopes. The letter was then folded in on itself and tucked and sealed with wax. And there were all these crazy marks on the -- over the address that it completely baffled me. And there was also a huge variety of handwriting. A lot of the letters that I looked at were really messy, and that was actually a big relief because I worried that had the handwriting all been very similar, that it wouldn't have enough character, that you wouldn't be able to differentiate the different writers. So, I was actually really excited by what I saw.

Meredith: So, this is one of the letters that you took a look at here. This is from a collection called the Stephen Nightingale papers here in the Manuscripts and Archives Division. So we've got the, you know, the folded piece of paper here. And this is the front. And then the -- Then you would open it up and here, like you're saying pages two and three with the sign off here and a little postscripts. And then like you were saying, so we've got the folding lines and the address. And then we've got some of these postal messages that we'll get into the nitty-gritty of later, and then the sealing wax. So, what were you -- When you were looking at these items, what were the -- what were you focusing on? What qualities were you trying to understand in order to create an accurate reproduction?

Barbara: So, there were so many things I looked at. I measured all the letters to figure out what sizes they should be. So, this letter we just looked at was sort of the typical medium size. I looked at how it was folded. I looked at the edge marks. I looked at the way the wax stains. You know, some of the letters were interesting, still have the wax on them. But a lot, it was just sort of a greasy stain and how it appeared generally, you know, more than one place on the letter was really interesting. And I also looked, and Anna can talk about this too, but how the ink, they would dip the pen in the ink so it would start off dark. And then as they wrote, it would get lighter. And then they would dip it again and it would start off darker and get lighter. I definitely studied every postal mark carefully once I learned to understand them. But a lot of what I was looking at was the handwriting. And really, I took tons of photographs of handwriting and I really wanted to -- handwriting that had character but also was legible. And I wanted a really wide range. And I wanted to give very specific references to the scribes of the handwriting that I felt was appropriate for the character that they were writing.

Meredith: To, sort of, to evoke their personality, right, to be able to kind of infer what kind of character they were through the way that they were writing.

Barbara: Exactly. So, for some of it, like I knew for someone like Caroline Bingley, who is very pretentious and sort of puts on airs and went to a fancy school, that, you know, she's insincere, that her handwriting would have a lot of sort of flourishes and curlicues. And I wanted it to be a contrast to Jane because Caroline is corresponding with Jane Bennet. And that Jane's handwriting would be genuine, and authentic, and sweet, and sincere to really provide a contrast. So, I was also looking for distinct references in that sense. I would kind of go into a -- I would stare at the research letter handwriting and sort of go into a trance and picture the different characters and then I would feel a connection. And I also looked at the content because the content helped me find the right characters as well for a lot of --

Meredith: So, you shared these images with Anna, as well as some other -- a few other scribes who were responsible for bringing these characters to life through their words.

Barbara: Yup.

Meredith: And Anna -- I'm, sorry, Barbara, I didn't want to cut you off.

Barbara: I was just going to say the only thing has been said is that Elizabeth Bennet's handwriting was really hard because what is it about in handwriting that evokes wit, humor, and intelligence. And she's the main character, I felt a lot of pressure. So it was a real aha moment when I realized that Elizabeth should have Jane Austen's handwriting. And I have -- Anna can talk about how beautifully she captured it.

Meredith: So, Anna, you did Elizabeth Bennet. And were there other characters in the novel that you did as well, I believe?

Anna Pinto: Yeah, I did the Lydia Bennet and Mr. Bennet's.

Meredith: So let's take a look at -- I think we have -- this is Jane. Yeah. So this is, on the left, we have a letter from -- written by Jane Austen from Chawton House. And then, on the right, we have the letter that you wrote, Anna, for the book. So, could you walk us through what your process was when you were, like, how you tackle this project?

Anna: Sure. Well, I was really thrilled that Barbara had Jane Austen's writing because, indeed, she is Elizabeth. And it struck me as a very intelligent, observant, careful writing, and it's small, it's neat. And there were certain details that I tried to reproduce. You can't really reproduce somebody's handwriting exactly. But so, I looked at the descenders that have like a little bead of ink. You can see it. In my letter, you can see it in the first line, the word you, the way the Y comes around and there's a kind of little puddle of ink there.

Meredith: Yeah.

Anna: And you see that often in her letter as well. And certain capital letters, that's an easy way to kind of create a sort of link to her letters because those are the things that people notice, usually caps. They're more distinctive. So that was -- It was really nice to have that as a reference because it was so distinctive and it was so different from some of the other more loose and free-flowing handwriting samples that we saw. So that was very contained.

Meredith: And I think that's interesting, too, because since you're, you know, when you're mentioning the way that the ink collected in the descenders, you're not only recreating her words and their shape, but you're actually -- your like method, your process, you're writing the letters in the same way as she did in order to get that appearance.

Anna: Right, right. Yeah, so putting a little pressure on the pen leaves a little blob of ink at the end of the stroke, so little tricks.

Meredith: Do you use modern tools when you're doing this or do you use -- what kind of equipment are you using?

Anna: I was using a metal pen because that's what I'm used to using. Some people use quills. I don't think they did at that point, probably for day to day writing. I'm not really sure. I'm not that strong on technique history. But I have a variety of pen nibs that can produce different types of strokes. And since that's what I'm comfortable with, that's what I use. But some people still do use quills.

Meredith: How often or how much do you practice in order to kind of get the hang of a hand before you think that you're ready for the final letter?

Anna: I think it depends. This one, I actually traced the My Dear Cassandra letter and that gave me an idea of the rhythm and the, you know, what I had to pay attention to. And then I think I just did it until I was comfortable, basically, and I didn't have to check each time. Because the more smoothly and quickly you can write, the more natural it looks.

Meredith: Yeah. I was also wondering, Barbara was talking about what Caroline Bingley's handwriting would look like versus what Jane Bennet's handwriting would look like. And it kind of made me think, sometimes the bad guy characters are almost maybe more fun because they're so -- they have such a distinct impression that you're trying to make. And, you know, obviously, I'm thinking of Mr. Collins here, too. And -- But so you had Lydia, who I think is kind of, you know, she's not a bad guy but she's a ball of personality.

Anna: Yes.

Meredith: So, I wonder what was it like, is that true in the -- from the perspective of reproducing these hands, is it more fun?

Anna: I would say it was different. You know, I tried to convey that she was a sort of flighty, frivolous teenager. So I thought a lot of curlicues and exuberance and sort of the 18th century equivalent of dotting her I's with hearts or something. So that was fun. It was fun, but I enjoyed both. And I also enjoyed doing Mr. Bennet because it was such a different, different type of writing as well, so.

Meredith: When I think too -- So, Barbara, I know that you would have had -- you had a hand in this as well. But one of the Lydia letters was written on the back of a, like, a dress catalog advertisement. So I think that the idea is also that she was just -- she needed a letter, she's impulsive, she grabs like maybe her friend's, you know, she snatches her friend's dress advert

out of her hands and just scrawls a note on the back of it, too. So it's kind of the whole materiality of the letter is all being harnessed into creating this impression of her, which I think is great.

Barbara: Yeah, it was fun to try and come up with ways because it's sort of a limited palette of what can you do to reveal the character and get as much individuality in there as possible. You know, they only had brown ink, and the paper was only white and cream. So, it was fun to put Lydia's letter on the back of the fashion ad. People saved those fashion plates and brought them to their dressmaker to have the image copied. So yeah, so the idea was that Lydia took what her friend was saving and wrote on the back because that's very, very Lydia. It was a nice way to get some, some color and something period from the time into the volume as well.

Meredith: So let's take a look at some of the other, you know, we're mentioning some of these other characters, and we have some examples of their hands. So, we have Elizabeth Bennet here. Next, this is Mr. Darcy. So on the left, we have your reference image and this is from the collections of our neighbors down the road, the Morgan Library and Museum. And then on the right here, we have the Darcy -- a portion of the Darcy letter. And then, let's see. Oh, I have the chat in the way. So here's Mr. Collins. And so this is one of ours, so maybe we'll linger on this one a little bit. But this is from our Burgess family papers collection. So we have an up close here. And then the version that you used in your book. And so, what were you kind of -- what characteristics were you -- appeal to you about the Burgess family papers that evoked Mr. Collins for you?

Barbara: Mr. Collins, I really looked at him as, you know, he's described in the book as being pompous and he's a little kind of passive/aggressive, and very cramped in his personality. So, I really wanted his writing to convey all about his obsequiousness. And I thought that in the sample, which is a letter of introduction, very similar to this first letter that he writes, I love the way, you know, the D's. You can see how the D's curl. And so this was really the jumping-off point for Mr. Collins. And then I asked the scribe to bring in something that would make it seem a little more cramped, which I think he did. I think he sort of jumped off from there. And by sort of tightening up the text, I think that it conveys a little more of Mr. Collins's narrow-minded outlook, but also with his flourishes that he has -- that he is pompous.

Meredith: Yeah, it comes with these -- especially the lowercase E's and the long bars across the T's, really, you can just picture him --

Barbara: Yeah.

Meredith: -- really affected kind of gesture to it.

Barbara: Absolutely.

Meredith: And then, oh, and here's the end. I also enjoy that you maintained the et cetera, et

cetera, as the ampersand C, ampersand C. And then we have -- So here's Mr. Bennet. So this is another one of Anna's and this is also from our collections, the Edward Raleigh Moran correspondence. So we have the original letter here with some other post marks and things. And --

Barbara: Yeah, the size of the reference letter is very much what I copied for the size of this letter. And how it was folded, the way the letter is laid out on the page, I mean, it really -- that was -- Anna can talk about how it influenced her, but it was very related.

Meredith: Yeah, and that is typical too where we might think that if you have a piece of paper, you would have it open and start at the top and work your way, you know, have it in like a portrait orientation and start at the top and work your way down. But you see it folded, even if they're only writing on the front leaf of the letter, so. And then here is Anna's version. And so what was this like for you, Anna? What was --

Anna: I think I wanted to use a different pen, something that was a little more -- not a little rougher, not so many thicks and thins, and something that looked like it was dashed off a bit, and not too careful. So it had some immediacy and urgency in a way. So, again, Barbara's reference was really helpful in that respect to see how, you know, sort of careless that one was.

Barbara: I also had to come up with Mr. Bennet's initial because in the novel, Jane Austen never gives him a first name. He's always Mr. Bennet. So I went with R for Robert because that's the name Austen uses a lot. And anyway, that was one of the things I had to add. And also, I learned from -- that he would be addressed as the Reverend William Collins, even though he's never ever referred to as a reverend in the entire novel. The word doesn't appear. But that is the proper address at him, would be the Reverend William Collins.

Meredith: I guess maybe Mr. Collins is, you know, because of his relation to the family, maybe they sort of assume a more familiar form of address than society would dictate at that time, perhaps.

Barbara: Perhaps.

Meredith: And so, on the topic of inferring things and adding things to the letters, you had some other kind of creative additions where you had to work around gaps in the text, is that right?

Barbara: Yes. And that was very nerve-wracking because, obviously, I hold the text, you know, I reverse it, so it felt like heresy. But, for example, in the letter that Jane writes to Elizabeth to tell her that Lydia has eloped, Austen says, the first part of the letter was all about their activities and what they'd been doing in the country. And then comes the important stuff about Lydia. So I had to create some news of what had been going on at home. And I thought I could use snippets from Jane Austen's letters. But it just really highlighted how polished the prose is in the novel and how every sentence counts. And when you try and add just fluffy things about, you

know, "so-and-so doesn't feel well" or "we ate out," it really stuck out like a sore thumb. But my sisters, two of my sisters who are Austen lovers helped and a friend of mine, who's an English teacher. And I'm sure we spent more time coming up with these four lines, I mean, than Austen spent writing the whole letter. But, so it was a combination of massaging some of Jane Austen's lines. And my sister Karen came up with a line about the Gardiner children, and we kept it brief. And we also had to turn some paraphrasing at the top of Mr. Collins' letter about congratulating Mr. Bennet on Jane's engagement. And getting that syntax right and the supercilious tone of Mr. Collins, it was fascinating, horrifying, but in the end, I do feel like we got it. So it was sort of satisfying too.

Meredith: Well, so switching gears a little bit. But I want to, in our remaining time, we have a few minutes before we get into Q&A and I want to talk about the postal codes. And I think that there's been some interest in the chat about it as well because you did quite a bit of secondary research in order to make sure that these kind of stray marks on the letters were authentic to the time and actually had meaning to them and were accurate.

Barbara: Yes, it was real -- It took me a really, really long time to understand. And I had the help of a wonderful postal historian in England named Alan Godfrey. So, how it worked is that in Jane Austen's time, the recipient paid the postage. And the rate was based on the number of sheets of the letter, whether it was one page or two, and how many miles it traveled. So, this letter originated in Meryton, and the postal clerk would have doubled as the innkeeper. So it was stamped with where it originated, which is Meryton. And then he would have marked it only with rate to London because almost every piece of mail, no matter where it started or where it was going, went through the General Post Office in London. So, at the time in 1812, a letter travelling between 15 and 25 miles cost six pence. So, the clerk wrote six on it. When the letter arrived in London, which only would have been two days later, it was only 24 miles. And we know that it was 24 miles because when Jane is going to visit Charlotte Lucas, they decide to stop in Gracechurch Street. And it was a distance of 24 miles, they'd be there by noon. So that's how I knew it was 24 miles. So when the letter gets to London, it gets the London receiving stamp and that's October, I think, that's 12 or something, 1812. And because it has two rims around it, we know it arrived in the evening. The clerk in London would have seen that the letter was going on to Kent to Westerham. And we know that that's an additional 24 miles around because Elizabeth and Darcy have a conversation, where Darcy says Charlotte is settled near her home. It's under 50 miles. So a distance of 39 to 49 miles at the time for a single sheet letter costs seven pence. So the London clerk scratched out the six and wrote that new rate, seven. And so seven pence is what Mr. Collins would have paid when he received the letter. Had it been two sheets, it would have doubled the price. So --

Meredith: And people took some pretty extensive steps not to make it go to two sheets, which I'll go to our next image, which looks like real decoding. It looks like it's in a foreign language almost.

Barbara: Isn't that crazy? So yes, because seven pence was a lot of money at the time. So

because people didn't want to pay for that second sheet, they would write the letter in one direction and then turn the paper 90 degrees and write perpendicular to the original lines. And there's a wonderful reference to it in Emma. Jane Fairfax sends a letter to the Bates's. And Miss Bates comments that she only crossed half. Normally, she crosses more, because Jane Fairfax would have known that the Bates's were very poor, never could have afforded a second sheet, so.

Meredith: So not only -- Yep, so it's a courtesy to the recipient, really?

Barbara: Yes, yes. And that's why Mrs. Gardiner's letter was really long. It would have cost a lot of money. So I had that when you could send letters prepaid. And so that postal mark is red, and there's a P on that one that shows that it was on Mrs. Gardiner's that it was paid.

Meredith: Oh.

Barbara: Yeah. But, yeah, so that was -- it was -- it took me a long time to understand the marks. And I got all obsessed and was up at 4 in the morning and worried that when the book came out, someone was going to call me out on having it wrong. And -- But luckily, Alan Godfrey sorted me out.

Meredith: So you didn't get any feedback from intense postal historians criticizing your posts reproductions?

Barbara: No, no. Listen, I mentioned, like, for example, Mr. Gardiner's letter that was sent by express. There was no express by the Royal Mail. You know, he's the one who told me it would have gone by private courier. He sent me an image of a letter from the time, said that written on it was: sent by express from Birmingham. So that was the model that I used. I was going to use a missent to Taunton stamp. And he said that Taunton didn't have a stamp until 1833, and sent me a reference for it handwritten. So he really -- he kept me honest, it was good.

Meredith: And I just think that's great because you're not only -- so you're using the text, you're also inferring things from other places in the text, like the distances between these locations. And then you're using secondary scholarship in order to contextualize the primary source research that you're doing and the textual interpretation that you're doing. I think that we're getting ready to go into Q&A. But all this, if you'll forgive me for reading your own words back at you, there's a section in your introduction, which I think is just so great for this project. And also, I feel like it just describes the research process that you're doing and that a lot of our scholars undertake for their archival research. So I'm going to read it if you'll indulge me. You say, Elizabeth's transformation and thus the plot hinges on her ability to reread letters in different states of mind. The words of a letter stay fixed, their definitions do not change. The mood of its reader, however, may change. With each reading, Elizabeth's perceptions become more acute and her understanding deepens. He brings this new knowledge to bear on her next reading until she experiences the epiphany that lays her flaws before her. And I don't know if this is how you

felt when you were putting this book together, but I know just the kind of the iteration of it all, I think, is a familiar feeling and experience to a lot of the people that come through the library.

Barbara: Well, this is wonderful for me because after I got the idea and went to the library and these, you know, the letters there were the first ones I saw. So, Meredith, this feels like a wonderful bookend to the whole experience.

Meredith: Well, with that excellent segue, let's bring Kate in. And we have some questions from our attendees.

Kate: Yes, quite a few questions. I'll start with combining a few questions that people have about just how neat these letters look, both the ones in the archives and the recreations, and how few mistakes and cross outs people have. Did people make drafts of letters, do you know? Did they, or did they just get it right the first time on the letter where they wrote perpendicular? It looks like almost someone used a ruler, in a sense. Do you have -- Have you come across examples of someone's just or, like, crossing things out?

Barbara: Yes, I definitely. And there are cross outs in the letters. There are words left out and there are carets. And so there are mistakes in the letters. And there were definitely mistakes in the letters in the research. But I do, I saw -- I've seen an instrument from the time almost like a rolling pin that was used to help the writer keep their lines even. But there were certainly letters where the writing kind of slanted off the page. I did gravitate towards the neater letters because I felt like I didn't want to make people struggle to have to read the handwriting even more. But there were -- There are mistakes. And yes, there definitely are in the research letters and in the ones I executed for the project. But maybe mine are a little too clean. There was some of everything.

Meredith: I think you're right, you are prioritizing legibility because we certainly have folks that come into the reading room and, you know, we get called over and it's, what do you think this says? Sometimes we can figure it out. Sometimes it's only through reading tons of letters in that person's hand that you get a feel for it. But that's not necessarily -- well, in authentic research experience, that's not necessarily like the reader experience that you're necessarily going for.

Barbara: But, you know, I just did a lot of research because I'm doing *Little Women* now and it's 50 years later. And the writing, it's America or I don't know what accounts for it, but the writing overall is so much more legible. I don't know why but --

Kate: There is a question. Let me see if I can find it. This is a testament to help out the literature recreated. Someone says, I have the book, it's beautiful, and I treasure it. Please clarify, was each letter completely handwritten? I had a disagreement with others on a forum where many people thought the book was too perfect to be handwritten originally. They think it was just a fancy font.

Barbara: Oh, my God, I'm going to weep! No, believe you me, every single ink stroke is done by hand. And those poor calligraphers had to fight their instincts not to make it too perfect. But I thought they really conquered themselves because they are all trained to make everything beautiful. And I would browbeat them into making it a little less perfect. I know they are all -- every -- there's nothing -- it would have been so easy to have used a font. But no, it's absolutely and I can attest to that. And then also there's the poor scribes. I really didn't quite understand about the long S and the double S word. The first S has to look like an F. And so, they all had to go back and rewrite the words with the two S's, like put them back in. And yeah, no, it was -- believe me, it was painstaking.

Kate: OK. This is from Eleanor Rust. Are there any details of historical letters that you uncovered in the archives that you wish you could include but didn't make it into the final book?

Barbara: Oh, yeah. You know what, I kind of wish I had done because I kind of realized too late that sometimes a writer would leave a square in the center of the letter near the centerfold absolutely empty. They would write a round it, because when the letter was sealed with wax, that circle was often ripped. The paper stayed attached to the wax and so that section was then completely illegible. You couldn't read it, it was so ripped up. So people started writing around that area. And I thought, oh, what a great detail. I wish I had sort of recognized that sooner because that would have been fun to add. And I will say that there was a wonderful blog that helped me with learning a lot about how letters were written, and paper was made, and ink was done called "Her Reputation for Accomplishment," that I highly recommend. It's very entertaining, informative, and you can learn a ton about every, you know, how the quill was made and --

Kate: I drop that into the chat --

Barbara: -- how the letters are folded. So, that's a fun one.

Meredith: Right. Yeah. And so Kate just put the link to that blog in the chat for those who are interested in exploring further.

Kate: Yeah, that looks like a fun site. All right. From Nicole, could you show the Mr. Darcy example again and discuss what aspects of penmanship spoke to about being the right fit for his character in light of his character growth throughout the novel?

Barbara: Yeah. So, that reference was written by Prince Edward Augustus of Kent, who later became the father of Queen Victoria. And I just loved the fact that it was even, it was consistent. It felt elegant without being showy. I didn't want Darcy's hand to be in any way ostentatious. And so, I felt like these long, you can look at the instead and the reference that long D, the way it crosses over with an elegant swoop, the consistency of the letters within the words, just the slant and the flow. I love the way the Y's were crossed. The long T crossings I thought were elegant. And yeah, I thought it was sort of -- it felt masculine to me, it felt resolute, elegant,

everything that I in good taste, well-educated. And Barry Morentz was the scribe who did it. And I think he did a very -- he really captured that. That was a, you know, felt like the centerpiece letter, so it was important to really get that right.

Kate: Did -- For the postal markings, were those special stamps you had created or were they based on real stamps?

Barbara: Yes, those were absolutely based on the research that I did at the library. Yeah, that's -- And then I had a couple of books, one of which I'd found at the New York Public Library on 18th and 19th century postal marks of England, Scotland and Wales. And it had hundreds of postal marks in it. It was created for collectors. So I was able to order it on eBay because I couldn't check it out of the library. It was non-circulating. So that -- The pictures I had from the library and then the pictures in that book, I then -- my niece turned them into Photoshop, or Illustrator or whatever, and I sent them to a rubber stamp manufacturer.

Kate: Oh.

Barbara: And then I stamped and then I stamped them. So yeah, they're all very much based, and the stamp that says Hunsford 25, that's very typical that the origin stamp would have the mileage to London already included in it since that was the first rate that was marked, in this case, the six. So, I did it for the Hunsford. I didn't do it for the Meryton because not every stamp had it. So I wanted to have one of each.

Kate: Someone -- I mean, just the amount of contextualizing research that went into this is pretty amazing. And someone asks, I don't see too many dates on the letters. Is there a reason? I noticed one that I thought had like said 8 in the morning or something, so.

Barbara: Yeah. OK, that's -- I really wrestled with that. That's an interesting question. There are -- The dates that appear on the letters are the dates that are in the book in the letter itself. If it says Rosings, at 8 o'clock in the morning, that's because it was in the book. I think there's a letter from Mr. Collins that says October 22nd. So I kept all of those. But then I needed to have dates on the postal stamps. So I looked at a lot of different timelines and came up with dates, but I didn't add the dates to the text of the letter. And then in one letter, Mr. Gardiner has a letter where Elizabeth -- ever Jane Austen does give it a date, but it makes absolutely no sense. It just can't work out that way in the narrative. It's off by a couple of like six weeks. So in that case, I left the date off of that letter.

Kate: Another question from Eleanor. I noticed some letters in the edition that showed the marks of being sealed with wafers, one of my favorite tiny details that so often get forgotten. Can you comment on which letters got wafers and which got seals? Can you first say what is a wafer?

Barbara: Yeah. If I have to give an example, so you can seal a letter with wax, which was what I was familiar with. But then there was another type of seal called the wafer seal, and it was a

circle of gum paste. And it was a perfect circle. And you would dampen it, usually, you lift it, and you put it between the top flap and what you were sealing to. So in between those two layers of paper and then you pressed it with a wafer seal, which was like a metal seal with pointy teeth, almost like a little waffle iron grid. And you press that, and the wafer seal was adhesive and it sticks the top flap to the paper below. So, I really wanted to use some of those and so I used it for Lydia, and I think one Mr. Collins. Gee, I can't remember who, one Mr. Gardiner. And I didn't -- I was never going to use it for Darcy. But I thought that the family writing to each other that they would use wafer seals. I think it was maybe, and maybe Eleanor knows this answer, if it was considered a little bit less classy than using wax, I've seen different opinions on that. But yeah, that was -- the wafer seal is a fun little detail.

Kate: No way for Darcy then, it's all --

Barbara: No way. Darcy, you know, he probably had some monogram sealer or something for his letter.

Kate: OK, I have a question from Deborah about handwriting. Did you study handwriting analysis at all to learn about personality types, or just use letters at the library that seemed to fit your perceptions of the characters' personality? Mr. Collins being pompous and Jane being simple.

Barbara: Yeah. I did not use graphology, you know, whether or not how the I was dotted or the loop on a E. For me, it was more of an organic overall feel. And it was so hard to articulate what is it about handwriting that gives a certain sense of character. And I wondered at times if it was based on, you know, my grandmother's handwriting is my idea of warm, benevolence, intelligence, and maybe that affected what I liked for Mrs. Gardiner. And my cousin Nancy, always sweet and smart and nice. Her handwriting maybe was what I thought was right for Jane. It's -- I have -- I'm happy to say, and I don't want to open up -- I don't want to invite any -- open myself up here, but I haven't had any pushback on the handwriting choices, so I feel like my interpretation of the characters and their handwriting hopefully spoke to a lot of people about their sense of character. I mean, it is a lot like casting, you know. When I see an adaptation of "Pride and Prejudice," sometimes I agree with who they cast and sometimes I'm furious, so.

Kate: I have a question for Anna. Someone asks, did hurried emotions show through the handwriting? And that made me think, if you were doing letters for the same person over time, given the circumstances in which they were writing letters, did you change the type of writing you were using for them?

Anna: I think I only did -- I'm just trying to think. I think I only did one or two of Lydia's letters and one for Mr. Bennet and a couple for Elizabeth. And Lydia is all over the place anyway, so I just kind of went with that. And Elizabeth's handwriting, she's so much more of a contained person. I kept that fairly regular. So I didn't really make many changes there.

Kate: OK.

Barbara: I think so, Anna, I seem to remember that we really discussed for the third letter when she's writing to Mrs. Gardiner, that, you know, she's engaged, that that letter, to me, is looser. Just the way it's laid out on the page, the space between the lines, that you must all come to Pemberley, you know, we wanted that larger, that the joy in that one was really apparent.

Kate: I have, you know, rolled up a couple of questions that are on same lines about, I know you mentioned *Little Women*. But are you thinking of doing -- Like, will *Little Women* be easier now that you've done this one? Are you thinking of tackling other Austen novels or 18th, 19th century authors?

Barbara: I have to say *Little Women* has been so much easier because of all the hard-won lessons from *Pride and Prejudice*. So yeah, it has been easier. And I think that just working with the scribes and sort of knowing how to structure those conversations better, I think their ability to see the *Pride and Prejudice* book and visualize what the next one would be. And there are, like, so many more visual elements. They had Civil War stationery with wonderful images of propaganda, you know, with soldiers and Lady Columbia that I can use, and blue paper letterhead, so -- and they're kids, so it is a little -- so it's messier. And so yeah, it has been a lot, and they're not folded in crazy ways and there are no postmarks. So yes, it has been easier.

Meredith: Just the additional options and just the visuals of it, you know, having letterhead, the ability to create letterhead and the ability to use different colors, I would imagine makes a huge difference. And then you're, maybe -- I mean, you are creatively working around it with like the dress advertisements and these things. But you have more options in your palette to kind of differentiate these characters.

Barbara: Exactly. And not having the postal marks, that's huge because that was -- and not having to figure out how all the letters were folded, those were -- that was all very time-consuming and hard to get all the orientations right and the measurements, and where it all folded, and making sure the address was going to be within the right square. All the wax lined up when it was folded. Alexandra Morrill, the graphic artist, did an incredible job with all of that. It was hard to make all that work.

Meredith: OK. So --

Barbara: But fortunately, the other Austen novels don't have enough material to do it, to really justify doing special editions than you have only a few letters. So it's -- It would be harder to pull off.

Meredith: Yeah, and I just thought I had the hold up. So this is the Mr. Collins letter as it appears in the book. So it doesn't come flat like in our slideshow, but it's actually folded the way that it would be when it was sent and received. So there's that, you know, what Barbara is talking

about, that that's actually reflected in the letters as they appear in the book.

Barbara: Yeah, they all come folded and tucked as they would have to the recipient.

Meredith: And as I told you, it really stressed me out when I was looking at these letters because I felt as, you know, the archivist to me was like I have to have these folded up exactly the way they came to maintain the integrity of the letters.

Barbara: Oh, I think the more you handle them, the better, you know right, that they'll get softer and more aged, and that's even more real.

Meredith: And you certainly see that in the -- if we go back to the Nightingale letter, certainly like a well -- these creases are so well-loved, a well-read letter.

Kate: Actually, there's a question that came in about. Is the paper type that you use in the book thicker or different, I mean, it's a little different, but is it thicker than the type that was used at the time or? I mean, I'm assuming different characters had different access to different quality paper.

Barbara: Yeah, you know, the paper, this is a mass-market book, so the paper that's used is, it's commercially-produced paper. When you're handling the original letters, the paper was, you know, every sheet, it was made at a papermaking business, but it was all made by hand. And you can -- it has more texture to it. The thin and thicknesses is accurate enough. But there was just more -- there's definitely more truth to the original letters. And you can see the real laid paper texture in some of them as well in the originals.

Meredith: Yeah, almost like it felt like a nap to it, in them.

Barbara: Yeah.

Kate: Yeah. So we noted this in the beginning, the book is sold out in many places. Will there be a second printing?

Barbara: Yes, it's already in the works. It just takes time because all the letters have to be hand folded and tucked into those glassine envelopes. But early March, it should be --

Kate: Early March.

Barbara: -- likely available again.

Kate: Very good. And, Meredith, perhaps a question for you, not related to "Pride and Prejudice." But how does -- How should a person preserve their own family letters, would you say?

Meredith: Oh, boy. Well, I don't think I'm the authority on this. But I am speaking from my experience, you know, the important thing would be storage, mostly. You know, make sure that you're keeping them in if you can have envelopes that are acid-free so that -- because otherwise we see a lot over time that, you know, they become discolored, or if you're avoiding paper clips that might rust and damage the paper that way. And then if you can keep them in a place that is cool and dry so that there aren't fluctuations in temperature or the chance of them getting moldy. But, so storage conditions are probably the most important thing. And if you have photographs in with your letters, you can enclose them in some sort of protective sleeve, then that is also helpful because photographs are more fragile and prone to damage than paper. You know, depending on the type of paper, it can be -- people are often really shocked when they come into the reading room and they see something from the 1700's, 1800's that it's a lot of times in better shape than paper that's from the 1920's. So paper is a hardy material that is built to last. And so, if you take care of it and store it carefully, then usually that'll do the trick.

Kate: Thanks, Meredith. And we have a nice link in the chat here to [Archive.gov](https://www.archive.gov).

Meredith: Yes. Yeah, there are lots of like really great, you know, our own Milstein Division here has a lot of resources for folks interested in their family genealogies and preserving their family's papers. And then there are other such resources online that are really useful tools.

Kate: All right. Well, you know, and there's been a lot of activity in the chat, which I haven't had a chance to go over, but I'm sure some of the questions and comments stuff in there will help inform our blog post, which is going to follow up from this event. So stay tuned for that. Recording of today's talk and links, related resources will be published shortly. And everyone who registered for this event will be sent a link to that. As I mentioned at the very beginning of this event, all of our previous episodes and related resources can be found on our website. We also encourage all of you to stay in touch with us for news of republic programs and researcher services, collection news and things like that via our social media accounts and our monthly newsletter. And I'm just going to -- So the copies of information in here you go. And our next Work/Cited program will be on March 10th when the Library's Assistant Curator of Photography, Elizabeth Cronin, will speak with Dr. Katherine Manthorne about her book "Restless Enterprise: The Art and Life of Eliza Pratt Greathouse," which tells the story of the most famous woman American artists you have probably never heard of. Maybe you have. I will -- Let me put that in the link as well. You should go ahead and register for that. And with that, I just want to thank our guests, Barbara and Anna. That was a really great conversation, really engaging. So thank you so much for joining us, and to Meredith as well. Thank you, everyone.

Meredith: Yeah, come back here for your next project.

Barbara: Oh, I would love to. Thank you.

Meredith: Let's do it again.

Barbara: I really enjoyed it. Thank you very much.

Anna: Thank you.

Meredith: Thank you so much.