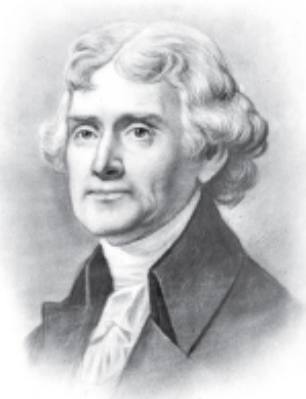
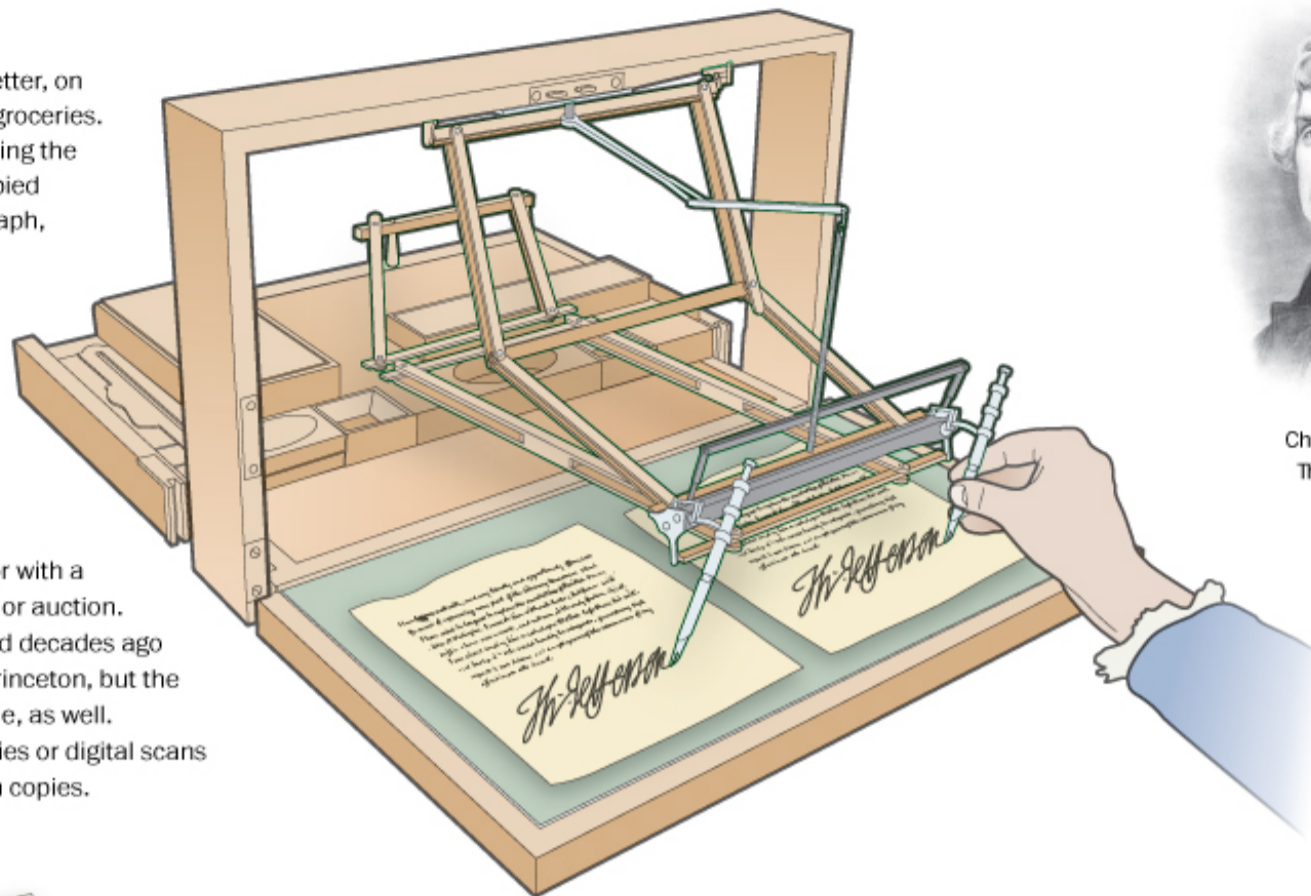


From the president's hand to the Internet

Here's how a document goes from Thomas Jefferson's pen to historian J. Jefferson Looney's hands and eventually into a book and exhaustive online database:

1. WRITING

The retired Jefferson writes a letter, on any topic from government to groceries. Nearly everything he wrote during the last 20 years of his life was copied with a machine called a polygraph, which held a second pen that created a copy as he wrote.



Charcoal drawing of Thomas Jefferson

2. ACQUIRING

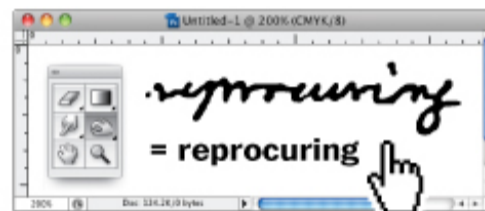
The letter ends up in a library or with a descendant, autograph dealer or auction. Most documents were gathered decades ago by Looney's predecessors at Princeton, but the Monticello group acquires some, as well. The team tries to get photocopies or digital scans of both originals and polygraph copies.

3. TRANSCRIBING



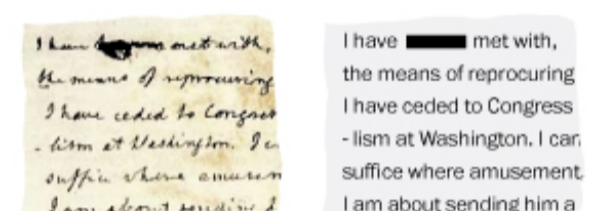
A copy is sent to keyboarders in India for transcribing and basic Internet formatting. (Looney considered using grad students, but they would've taken longer and cost more.)

4. TIDYING



Digital technicians take the first shot at deciphering parts that the transcribers mark as illegible. They also clean up the files and improve the formatting.

5. EDITING



If we included a separate step for every bout of painstaking editing, this graphic would be twice as long. But the most arduous part occurs when editors compare the transcription against the original, character by character, three times.

6. CORRECTING



Jefferson's spelling was quirky. He dropped letters on purpose and ignored the "I before E" rule. The team does not correct intentional misspellings but fixes and notes obviously unintentional errors.

7. ANNOTATING



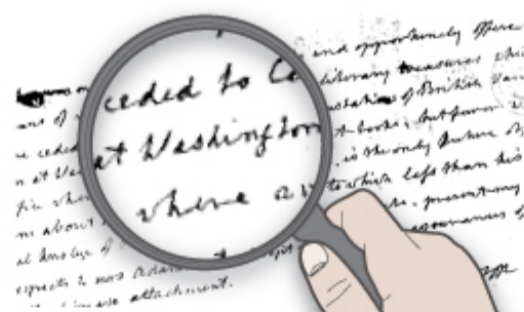
Editors add notes, biographies of people mentioned and other information to flesh out the letter's context. Fact-checkers scour everything not written by Jefferson to make sure it is accurate.

8. "SENSE READING"



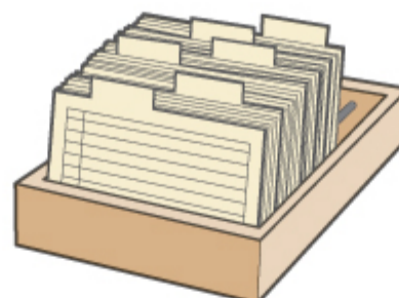
A fresh team reads the text for the first time, looking for big-picture errors, contradictions, or things that just don't sound like Jefferson. They talk it out with the original team, and Looney referees any disagreements.

9. "PARANOIA CHECKS"



That's Looney's term for the final step before sending a compilation of letters to Princeton University Press for printing. He makes sure titles are correct, no documents have been dropped or duplicated, etc.

10. INDEXING



After galley proofs come back, the team starts the index. All people in the book are indexed, as are book titles and authors, organizations, broad themes and just about anything else someone might want to search for.

11. PUBLISHING



One final file goes to the printer and another will be used on a public Web site. Jefferson's 70,000 or so papers will span 75 to 80 volumes, including pre-retirement correspondence that is edited at Princeton.