But the microfilm availability of this material has not been a satisfactory solution to the problem of access. When the microfilming of historical documents first came into general use in the 1930s, the historian Julian P. Boyd published an essay declaring that the need for printed editions of such material was henceforth at an end, that the availability of the document itself on microfilm would remove all future need for printed editions. But, as he admitted later, he had badly miscalculated the situation, and within a few years of making this prediction, he himself became the principal editor of the most ambitious of all documentary editions, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*.

The Herndon-Weik Collection at the Library of Congress shows the value of documentary editions. For one thing, these handwritten documents are sometimes very hard to locate on the microfilm, the effort often necessitating the scanning of hundreds of documents to locate one. And once located, the documents are frequently very hard to read. The omnipresent hand of Herndon himself, especially when employed in taking down a statement at white heat, can be stubbornly illegible, so that someone unfamiliar with Herndon's hand might spend hours deciphering a single document and still not be sure that the text thus retrieved is accurate. A further difficulty is the uneven visual quality of the microfilm, for not all of the images are sufficiently in focus to be read with confidence.

As countless Lincoln researchers have discovered, there are other problems. The card index prepared by the Library of Congress, for example, is limited to names of letter writers or interviewees and is neither entirely accurate nor complete. The chronological arrangement is unreliable and subject to strange, unaccountable lapses. The individual leaves of letters and interviews are sometimes maddeningly out of order, while leaves of other documents have become widely separated and appear as fugitives or fragments. Some letters and interviews that were collected by Herndon have ended up in the part of the collection given over to the personal papers of Weik. All these difficulties plague the use of a collection that sprawls over several long reels of microfilm. And to crown the confusion, the collection itself has been reorganized, so that the researcher who needs to examine the originals soon discovers that they are currently arranged in a somewhat different order from that on the microfilm. Readers of the present edition are therefore warned that the foliation numbers assigned to the documents by the Library of Congress and duly recorded here do not appear in the microfilm currently available, as they were added to the documents after the film was made.

Another barrier to full and effective use of these documents has been the pall of suspicion that was cast over Herndon and his informant testimony even before the material became generally available. Disturbed by the uncertainties that attend reminiscence as historical evidence and by the way such things as the Ann Rutledge story had taken on too much importance and “usurped the spotlight,” the leading Lincoln scholars of the second quarter of the twentieth century, led by Paul