Emily Dickinson: 19th Century Poet in a 21st Century World

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Emily Dickinson:
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Capstone By:
Stephanie Merrigan
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Introduction

When I was trying to decide on a capstone project, I knew instantly that I wanted to do something with poetry, but there are many famous poets in the world to choose from. I also knew that whichever poet I chose, I would have to look at them and their work through the Applied concentration’s lens and I was uncertain where this would lead me down a path that was already bursting at the seams from literary standpoints and various readings of poems. I knew I needed to look at this poet from a different angle and I needed to find something that would help me with that.

With all of these things in mind, I finally decided on Emily Dickinson, but I struggled to look at her work through that specific lens because so many before me had researched that same work through literary or historical standpoints. I knew I needed a different angle but I had hit a wall. After a conversation with my committee, I began to think: What else could I cover for Emily Dickinson that had not already been done? My committee suggested looking at the editing of her work after her death, as it is well known, so I started down that road. I was still struggling with it, so I made an appointment with the Graduate Research Librarian, and that is when I hit pay dirt.

The search phrase “Posthumous editing” is what opened several doors in my search for a gap. It was later that day that I remember looking at a t-shirt of mine, one of my favorites that I often wear it says “Jane Austen is my home girl.” Every time I wear it in the English Building, I get a few chuckles. This got me thinking: was there apparel for Dickinson and her work just like there was for Jane Austen? I knew I had seen shirts and bumper stickers before for Edgar Allen Poe, but I had never seen anything for Dickinson, so I turned to google and found quite a few
things. Because Dickinson is so famous for her poetry, companies everywhere had taken specific lines and put them on apparel, bumper stickers, mugs, bags, and more—thereby posthumously editing her work. Because Dickinson had well over 1,000 poems, I knew I would need to narrow down the specific pieces I was looking at. But I soon discovered this would not be the only thing covered in my capstone, going down this path had opened up several avenues that would need to be included in order to accurately describe just what was happening.

When I chose to research Dickinson, I knew I would need to discuss the editing that happened after her death, because it was a major event that kept her work alive. I also knew that I would need to discuss how she was very much a recluse and by all accounts had no intention of her work being published after her death. I didn’t want to make the entire capstone about this, however, because that was only one part of a much bigger picture, and it had been researched very thoroughly—there wasn’t a research gap there that needed attention. I can honestly say that before researching, I had no idea just how extensive the editing was or how many people had been involved after Dickinson’s death. I also had no idea what that work would eventually contribute to editorial theory for the publishing of her work and others in the future. The other thing that captured my attention was how her work was now being delivered to her readers both when she was alive and how was it circulated?

Much has changed in the world since Dickinson’s time. Technology has grown exponentially and plays a massive role in our communication, education, and social groups. This is the same for Dickinson’s work—digital technologies have made her poems available to the entire world. Where once only a few would have access to the original manuscripts and letters, now the public can easily access her original work. Technology has played a large part in the circulation of Dickinson’s work, but it is far from the only mode of transport. This capstone will
discuss what channels mediate public access to literary content in the case of Emily Dickinson’s poems and letters. Specifically, I will be discussing how this was a problem for her while she was alive due to her reclusiveness and unorthodox punctuation. The other aspect of this is what role do editors, the merchandise now made with lines from Dickinson’s work, and digital technologies play in that circulation, but also how they have played a role in making Dickinson a pop culture icon in the 21st century. To be accurate about this, we need to start at the beginning.

The Beginning

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born December 10, 1830 to Edward and Emily (Norcross) Dickinson in Amherst, Massachusetts. (Kirk 19). She had an older brother, William Austin Dickinson, who was born in 1829 as well as a younger sister, Lavinia (Vinnie) Norcross Dickinson, born in 1833. (Kirk 18-20) Dickinson was known as a good student in school, her writing was especially mentioned as being original and mature. (Kirk 28.) She was also known to be quite shy and nervous at the age of 12. (Kirk 29.)

As Dickinson grew older, she went to local schools and eventually finished her education at an all-girls seminary called Mount Holy Oak. (Kirk 31.) She wrote poems in school and had them published in the school newspaper. (Kirk 29) As she grew older, her reluctance to publish her work would be one of many aspects that made her famous, but also plays a large role in this capstone.

While Dickinson was very close to her siblings, she also maintained a small group of friends. (Kirk 35.) In 1856, Austin Dickinson married one of Emily’s schoolmates and friends, Susan Huntington Gilbert. (Kirk 40.) Dickinson is said to have sent Susan nearly 300 of her poems, more than she ever sent anyone else. (Brand 14.) Though she had several friends, even at
a young age, Dickinson would become quiet and withdrawn if her friends were more boisterous or the crowd of people too large. (Kirk35)

As Dickinson aged, her introvert personality seems to have grown and she slowly retreated from society. By the age of 34, she stopped leaving Amherst altogether. (Brand, 20.) Eventually, she stopped leaving her home and most of her contact with the outside world happened through letters and visitors with whom she chose to socialize. (Brand 20) Emily Dickinson died May 15, 1886 at the age of 56. (Brand 12.) While Dickinson’s life ended there, her work has lived on through the decades. There were three people in particular that played a massive role in those events, and thus have made it possible for Dickinson’s work to be read even in 2020.
Emily Dickinson is one of the most well-known and beloved American Poets in history. Her work is particularly known for two things: the unique grammar and punctuation with dashes and slashes in the poems and her stance on publishing her work. But, why was Dickinson so against publishing her own work? For that, we need to look back at Dickinson’s childhood and early adulthood.

**Emily Dickinson: Literary Fame**

According to “If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her”: Dickinson and the Poetics of Celebrity by Páraic Finnerty, one of Dickinson’s first observations of celebrity came on July 3, 1851. Finnerty explains that it was her observations of fame that started to form Dickinson’s opinions on publishing her work and the potential fame she may gain through it, but this event in particular was significant. Dickinson, who would have been about 20, attended a concert at Northampton church showcasing Jenny Lind, who was known as “the Swedish Nightingale.” (Finnerty 25) This concert was part of Lind’s tour from 1850-1852. Various advertisers, some by the *Springfield Republican*, increased the public’s interest in Jenny Lind, as well as the gossip. (Finnerty 25) Dickinson wrote a letter dated June 22 to her brother, Austin and was very skeptical about Lind. Finnerty continues saying Austin had just heard Lind in Boston and had invited his sisters to go see her with him.

Dickinson greets her brother, and then immediately jumps into her criticisms of Lind and
how the people around her were reacting. Essentially, Dickinson was amused by the fawning over Lind and amused that her brother was the only other one to state how much he didn’t like her performance, whereas her father was enraptured with the singer and her performance. Dickinson states:

“So soon as he was calm he began to proclaim your opinion - the effect cannot be described - encomium followed encomium - applause deafened applause - the whole town reeled and staggered as it were a drunken man - rocks rent - graves opened -and the seeds which had'nt come up were heard to set up growing - the sun went down in clouds - the moon rose in glory - Alpha Delta, All Hail!”

Dickinson is very tongue in cheek about the responses to Austin’s opinions and seems to take great amusement in relaying them to her older brother. Overall, Dickinson is very critical of the fame Lind had and the fawning over her that it caused from people who had never shown such behavior previously. The letter goes on to discuss all of the things Austin is missing at home while also enquiring about the other things he is doing on his trip. Even at the age of 20, Dickinson is quite aware of the hype surrounding this singer and she is unimpressed by it. She doesn’t seem to understand that level of adoration and cannot comprehend why anyone would sell bonnets or react so adoringly to anyone.

Finnerty points out that through Lind, Dickinson saw how marketing techniques impacted the audience size as well as the almost worshipful nature of fans through commercialism.(27) Finnerty also points out that where Lind performed, shawls, bonnets, gloves and other clothing items were also sold. (27) This is especially intriguing considering Dickinson’s reaction to the merchandise and what modern day companies are selling with her work printed on it now. As the saying goes, the highest form of flattery is imitation—and Lind’s fans wanted to flatter her. It
could be said that Dickinson seems to have been intrigued but also slightly disgusted by the reactions of Lind’s fans. Finnerty also points out that the price of all of this for Lind was she no longer had a private life. For an almost worshipful existence from her fans, she had no private life anymore. (26)

For someone as private as Dickinson, she would abhor no longer having any privacy. Based on her reactions in the letter to Austin, she was also very critical of the reactions around her to Lind and her fame- Dickinson didn’t want to be worshipped because of her work. She wanted her work to speak for itself and leave it at that. Finnerty goes on to point out that fans, as they are in these days, were just beginning this almost worshipful concept in Dickinson’s time. (28) Technology had advanced to the point where regular people were able to access the lives, homes, works, and meet the very celebrities they admired. (Finnerty 28) Now we have reality tv shows and Twitter, whereas they had to have newspaper stories, in-person performances with meet and greets, and fan letters. For Dickinson, coming from a small town that was still growing, this was an entirely new concept but she was well-read enough to understand celebrity and took what appears to be a more cynical viewpoint. Dickinson focused more on the ever-changing public opinion—or what I believe to be how one day someone is massively famous and successful, and the next they’re nothing. Finnerty continues to point out that Dickinson was fascinated with celebrities and used her access to books and newspapers to glean information about them, though she was still very much an introvert. (29) He points out that her self-isolation increased her interest in celebrity’s private lives, appearances, and places associated with them. Dickinson seems to have been fascinated by the stars of her time, but her apparent cynicism was only just starting to form when this performance occurred. So what happened to cause the poet to scorn publishing her work?
Emily Dickinson: Thoughts on Publishing her Work

According to “Introduction to a Special Issue of the Emily Dickinson Journal: Dickinson and Celebrity” by Paul Crumbley, Dickinson never wanted to publish her work as she saw the price of literary fame in such a light that she avoided it.(1) That is to say, Dickinson found that while you could reap the benefits of being a celebrity- esteem, and fortune, you also bore intense scrutiny from the media, the pressures of pleasing fans, and never having a private life anymore. Crumbley states that Dickinson, though interested in the author’s lives that she read, valued their contributions to literature as the most important aspects.(1)

As she was a tremendous literary fan, Crumbley states that Dickinson was drawn to and wanted literary fame herself(1). However, she saw how celebrity culture was growing and watched the public’s views change toward her favorite authors which was distorting what she considered the most important aspect: their literary works.(1) Dickinson even wrote about her opinion on publishing in one of her poems. This piece, “Publication – is the Auction (788)” was edited by Ralph W. Franklin and appeared in “THE POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON: READING EDITION”. It was found on poetryfoundation.org.

Publication – is the Auction (788)

Publication – is the Auction

Of the Mind of Man –

Poverty – be justifying
For so foul a thing

Possibly – but We – would rather

From Our Garret go

White – unto the White Creator –

Than invest – Our Snow –

Thought belong to Him who gave it –

Then – to Him Who bear

It’s Corporeal illustration – sell

The Royal Air –

In the Parcel – Be the Merchant

Of the Heavenly Grace –

But reduce no Human Spirit

To Disgrace of Price –

Examining this poem, there is a lot that can be deduced. The speaker is referring to publishing writing, and appears to think that it is essentially selling one’s mind to the public and would
rather be poor than to sell their private musings to others. The second stanza starts by discussing a garret- a small shabby attic room where artists lived. The speaker seems to equate writing with other art forms, like painting and is saying “we would rather go from our poor shabby rooms in death than to sell such fleeting things as thoughts.” Here the comparison to snow, which never lasts because the sun always comes out eventually to melt it. These thoughts are just as fleeting and the creativity behind them is the same—much like other artists. In the third stanza, the speaker says “Thought belong to Him who gave it” referring to how God created man and gave them the ability to think. Then they say “Then – to Him Who bear It’s Corporeal illustration – sell” the speaker seems to think that the thoughts are God’s alone. They don’t belong to the living on earth, therefore they cannot be sold for monetary gain. The last line “The Royal Air” could be a reference to the Kingdom of God and humans are literally breathing the air He created. In the last stanza the speaker says “In the Parcel – Be the Merchant Of the Heavenly Grace” meaning that human beings could be the speakers of God, therefore the thoughts they write down would be the “parcel” and the author the “merchant.” The last line of the poem “But reduce no Human Spirit To Disgrace of Price” seems to be referring to the price of a human soul for the publishing of the parcel. Overall, the speaker in the poem indicates that publishing is akin to selling your soul for wealth and fame. And the price of your soul is worth more than any earthly fame and wealth. Through fame comes celebrity, where the entire world now has access to your mind directly. This leaves the author with no privacy and under immense pressure and scrutiny to continue with their “literary genius”. The speaker seems to think it would be better to be unknown and poor than to be rich and famous but have no soul. They seem to think it would be better to remain unknown and fade into nothing than to find momentary fame because it would never last.
Another aspect that plays a part in Dickinson’s view on publishing is brought up by Connie Anne Kirk in “Emily Dickinson: A Biography.” Dickinson had 11 poems published while she was alive. (87). It should be noted that while Dickinson only published a small number of poems during her life, she did have a small number of people who saw her work- both friends and family, that she wrote well over 1,000 still surviving letters to. (Kirk, 88), Kirk states that there were over 90 people Dickinson wrote to in her lifetime, and dozens of them received verses or prose poems as part of those letters. (88). They then showed those poems to others, which is how Dickinson’s work was circulated to her readers in her day. Kirk states that Dickinson referred to her status of being a poet as her “Barefoot-Rank.” (88) Kirk’s next point is that Dickinson’s choice to forgo traditional publication shouldn’t surprise 21st Century poets. Many of them choose to do something similar when their work doesn’t prove profitable for big publishing companies, they choose an alternative route to share their work.(88) Many choose to circulate their work via self-publishing or through free websites like Wattpad. If Dickinson were alive today, she may very well have gone a similar route with her work. But fame wasn’t the only reason Dickinson chose to avoid traditional publishing. It was her experience with the editing of her work that seemed to shape her opinion into a firm decision.

The edits to the poems Dickinson was live to see are mentioned in Gerhard Brand’s, “Emily Dickinson Biography”. One piece in particular stands out because of Dickinson’s reaction to the published piece. Brand states that one of Dickinson’s poems was published in 1866, and submitted by Dickinson’s sister-in-law, Susan.(14) The poem was “A Narrow Fellow in the Grass” and was published by the Springfield Republican.(Brand 14) The paper’s editors essentially took an ax to the piece, making significant changes to the punctuation. Dickinson’s
reaction was very telling in the letter she wrote to her friend, Thomas Wentworth Higginson stating:

“Lest you meet my Snake and suppose I deceive it was robbed of me - defeated too of the third line by the punctuation. The third and fourth were one - I had told you I did not print - I feared you might think me ostensible. If I still entreat you to teach me, are you much displeased?

Dickinson points out specific places in her poem that have been changed by the editors and she has to reassure Higginson that she did not submit it for fear he would be angry she didn’t send it to him instead. She states that she was robbed of it—seeming to indicate she was not the one to publish it and is incredibly upset by this betrayal. She goes on to point out specific areas that were changed, referring to the third and fourth lines and hurrying to reassure Higginson that she didn’t submit this for publication. She seems to worry he won’t help her with her poems anymore, the very thing that started their friendship. The letter is concluded with another poem.

Brand states that Dickinson sent the original poem to her sister-in-law, Susan, which can be proved through the letters sent back and forth between them. (Brand, 14).

Interestingly, Higginson would often and consistently tell Dickinson that she shouldn’t publish her poems after sending them to him as they were “not strong enough” for Higginson. (Brand19.) Dickinson sought out his advice on publishing, but Brand states that she ignored “his strictures concerning her poems' construction.” (19) Brand states that Dickinson was beyond Higginson’s understanding as “His critical judgments were invariably fatuous, showing deaf ears and blind eyes to her original language, sjmtax, meter, and rhyme.” (19). It is not surprising that Higginson was so critical—Dickinson was showing creative genius beyond her time and few others seemed to recognize that talent. Considering what poetry was like in the 1860s, this
shouldn’t surprise anyone. Dickinson was breaking all of the rules that had governed English and poetry in the past. Higginson didn’t have the ability to grasp writing that was so radical for the time period. This was reflected in not only Higginson’s reaction, but also the reactions of the editors of Dickinson’s work both while she was alive and after her death.

It seems that between editors who changed her work and the insights she gained from seeing what her favorite authors gained and lost through fame, Dickinson’s opinions on publishing were justified. Though she did not gain world renowned fame while she was alive, Dickinson achieved a small piece of fame via her friends and family and that appears to have made her happy enough. But this leaves the question: How did we get from a woman whose stance on publishing was well known and very firm to the 21st Century pop culture icon Dickinson is today? For that, we need to look at the events that occurred after Dickinson’s death and the posthumous editing of her work.
Chapter 2:

Emily Dickinson and Editing

One of the biggest events that impacted Dickinson’s work was the editing. Specifically the editing that occurred not long after her death. It is in part, thanks to those editors that Dickinson’s work survives today. In order to understand the scope of exactly what they did, we need to look at the events that followed Dickinson’s death.

**Emily Dickinson: The Early Editors**

Though Dickinson was well known to those she chose to share her work with, it was not until after her death that she became famous. The first editors to have access to her work were the catalysts that brought Dickinson and her work to the attention of the entire world. Without them, Dickinson may very well have stayed unknown, as the poet wished while she was alive. Whether rightly or wrongly, Dickinson’s pop culture icon status is due in large part to the posthumous editing done, an event that contributed greatly to the circulation of Dickinson’s work.

The story of how Dickinson’s work was discovered is well known. According to Caroline C. Maun, who wrote “Editorial Policy in The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Third Series, Lavinia, came upon her writing when she was cleaning Emily’s room after her death (Maun,58). Upon seeing her sister’s work, Lavinia asked her sister-in-law, Susan Dickinson, to edit the poems. Maun states that for reasons that are not known Susan didn’t, so Lavinia went to Emily’s friend, Thomas Wentworth Higginson for advice in 1888 (58). He was an editor for *The Atlantic*
Monthly, according to Kirk, and wrote an article giving advice to young writers in April of 1862 (Kirk 80). Emily immediately wrote to him asking his opinion on four of her poems after reading the article. (Kirk 80). They corresponded through letters over the next 23 years, meeting for the first time in 1870. (Kirk 88). As could be seen in the letter in Chapter 1, Dickinson considered him a good friend and wanted his opinions on her work, so it is not surprising that Lavinia would reach out to him upon finding her sister’s work. Maun goes on to state that when Lavinia wrote to him about Emily’s work, Higginson requested Lavinia find someone to copy and sort the poems before he would work on them. (58) It should be noted that, according to Wendy Martin who wrote “The Cambridge Introduction to Emily Dickinson” Dickinson had asked her sister to destroy all of the poems and letters that were left in her room after her death. (110). However, after Lavinia saw and read her sister’s work, she apparently changed her mind. The moral implications for not following her sister’s wishes are not expanded upon in the research found for this capstone, so what made Lavinia decide to go against her sister’s wishes can only be guessed upon at this time. After her correspondence with Higginson, Lavinia then went to Mable Loomis Todd for help. (Maun 58).

From the evidence that has been researched, Todd was already known by the Dickinson family, as her husband was a professor at Amherst College. (Kirk 106) However, it is also known that Todd and Austin Dickinson began an affair 1882 after the death of Austin’s son. (Kirk 107). It is also mentioned that Emily never met Todd in person, so Todd’s main connection to the family was though Austria. (Kirk 108). This affair is intertwined with Dickinson’s work as Todd eventually became one of the poet’s posthumous editors. Kirk mentions that when Lavinia took a portion of the poems that she had given Sue to edit, to Todd instead this may have exacerbated the negative feelings. (109). At this point, Emily Dickinson’s poems were now spread between
Susan Dickinson, Mable Loomis Todd, and Lavinia Dickinson.

Maun continues the conversation around the editing of Dickinson’s work by recounting the steps Todd came up with during the first edits. (58). The first stage of editing became copying the poems, as many were still in draft stage and were on any scrap of paper the poet could find. (Maun 58) Maun continues stating that once that was complete, they were revised and shown to Higginson. (58). Higginson then had Todd sort them into categories based on literary merit. (58). This part in particular was difficult because Dickinson wrote about many subjects. Maun goes on to say that Arlo Bates, who was part of the firm that eventually published Dickinson’s work, thought there were “colossal faults” in Dickinson’s work, and they needed to be corrected. (58) So, Todd and Higginson collaborated on what would eventually become the second step: “regularizing” Dickinson’s verses, or taking out any marks they deemed odd or confusing that Dickinson had added. (Maun 58). The volumes were edited on similar principles. Maun says:

“The editors anticipated the reviewers’ critical resistance to the poems and sought ways to circumvent it. They did this by the regularization of punctuation, capitalization, and rhyme (for nearly every one of the 283 poems published in the First and Second Series) and by the promotion of the poems through advance articles and public speaking.” (Maun 58)

All of these edits completely changed the way Dickinson’s poetry was read, and it should be pointed out that unlike other authors, Dickinson had no say in the editing of her work. It could be argued that this was no longer Dickinson’s work, but Todd’s and Higginson’s. The pieces were unrecognizable when compared to the original manuscripts. Kirk points out that many of Dickinson’s poems were in the draft stages—there are words crossed out, synonyms and other variants of words are at the bottom of the pages, and line breaks are not consistent from one draft
to another. (115) The other problem were the genres of her poems- she didn’t organize them or give them titles so there was no way to indicate how they should be grouped in order to publish them. (Kirk 115). Kirk further states that Todd and Higginson decided to group the poems by themes- nature, death, love, immortality etc. (116) Because of the heavy editing done by Higginson and Todd, the first volumes of poetry by Emily Dickinson are nearly unrecognizable compared to the manuscripts they were copied from (Kirk 116). An example of this can be seen in the poem “I heard a Fly buzz - when I died - (591)”.

```
I heard a fly buzz - when I died:
The stillness in the room
Was like the stillness in the air
Between the heaves of storm.

The winged insect had winged thee away,
And Death, once he gathering grace
For that last sweet while the King
Reintroduced, in the room

I knew my sleeper slumbered away
What portion of me he
Then interposed a Fly
With the uncertain, stumbling legs
Between the light and me,
And then the windows fell and then
I could not all to see.
```
I heard a Fly buzz - when I died - (591)

BY EMILY DICKINSON

I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -

The Stillness in the Room

Was like the Stillness in the Air -

Between the Heaves of Storm -

The Eyes around - had wrung them dry -

And Breaths were gathering firm

For that last Onset - when the King

Be witnessed - in the Room -

I willed my Keepsakes - Signed away

What portion of me be

Assignable - and then it was

There interposed a Fly -
With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -

Between the light - and me -

And then the Windows failed - and then

I could not see to see -

The first piece is the transcription from Mable Loomis Todd that is in the collection at Amherst College. The second piece was put back in its original format by a later editor, then printed to be as close as possible to the original manuscript. Upon closer inspection of the transcription by Todd, you can see where Todd crossed out the original “in the Room” and replaced it with “round my form.” Todd also changed the capitalization and removed the dashes and replaced them with semicolons. The first line of the second stanza also had a word changed- “around” to “beside.” These changes may appear to be small, but altogether they form an entirely different piece from what Dickinson had originally.

Todd and Higginson decided to create more interest around the first volume of poetry, with Higginson writing some essays about Dickinson and her life, so they would sell even more copies. (Kirk 132). In this essay, Higginson included samples of poems as well as giving the first print description of Dickinson as a recluse “one who rarely left home, and who wrote pure poetry as though it were for herself alone.”(Kirk 132). To say Dickinson would have found this to be in invasion of privacy would be an understatement. However, it was the success, in part, of these volumes that caused Dickinson’s celebrity status in the literary world to skyrocket. But at what point did Dickinson’s work stop being hers and become Todd’s and Higginson’s? The edits that were done completely changed the poems so it could be argued that the real author wasn’t
Maun goes on to say that after the success of the first volume of poetry, Higginson and Todd thought the public might be more open to accepting Dickinson’s unique punctuation, so they didn’t change as much in the second volume. (59). Maun states that only 34% of the poems in the second volume had been regularized(59). Considering how Dickinson’s poems were edited for the first volume, this is a significant change. It seems that Higginson and Todd wanted the public to see what Dickinson’s writing was actually like, though not enough to stop changing her punctuation, grammar, and leaving out entire stanzas in the “finished” pieces. It’s well known that changes such as these can completely change how a poem is read. It can be inferred, based on the evidence, that Dickinson would have been extremely angry with the editorial decisions that changed her work. As they were friends, I have to wonder what Higginson was thinking as this was happening. Did he wonder what Dickinson would say to him if she were there? If she would agree with the choices that were made? These questions cannot be answered now, but based on the evidence of her reaction to the poem published in 1866, Dickinson would have been livid.

Morally speaking, I have to wonder if Todd and Higginson ever stopped to consider that the author of the project they were working on stopped being Dickinson and was very much themselves? They may have published it under Dickinson’s name, but as Kirk pointed out- those poems were unrecognizable compared to the original manuscripts. Essentially they took Dickinson’s work and edited it to make it their own. Dickinson was no longer the author of her own poems. This leads to the question: If the author is no longer alive to publish their work, where is the line in the sand to stop editing? In this case, they should have stopped when they changed the grammar. When does it stop being the author’s work and become yours, as the
editor? With every change made, it became less and less Dickinson’s work and more Higginson’s and Todd’s. As Dickinson made her stance on publishing her own work clear, should it still be published and studied now? This question has no “right answer” because so many people have been exposed to her work now that you cannot un-show it. So many scholars have spent their careers studying Dickinson’s life and her work, she would never stop being a subject of mystery and awe. While some of Dickinson’s work is now in public domain, not all of it is. Harvard and Amherst College both have publishing rights to some of her work as well. If Todd and Higginson hadn’t published it at all, the world would never know about Dickinson. While the world appreciates her genius, it begs the question of is it really okay to publish her work even now? Was it ever okay?

After the second edition of poems was publishing, Higginson had to step away from the project because of illness, so Todd started working on Dickinson’s letters on her own. (Maun 59) She obtained the letters from Dickinson’s friends and copied them by hand. (Maun 59). This was the first project done entirely on her own. (Maun 59). It could be inferred that Dickinson would have been incredibly upset about this publication and that Todd was taking liberties with Dickinson’s personal letters. These were personal missives between the poet and her friends, something vastly different from Dickinson’s poems. It could be said that at this point, Todd was after more fame and money. After the second volume of poems was published, public interest in Dickinson’s work was waning. (Maun 59). Maun states that at this point, Todd changed her editing policy and left entire stanzas out in the third volume of Dickinson’s poetry. (59). This volume sold the fewest copies, despite Todd lecturing about it in several different cities. (Maun 59-60)

It was the third volume of Dickinson’s poems that seemed to cause a lot of people in the
audience to take offense during live readings. (Maun 60) These offenses were directed toward Dickinson’s “irreverence” toward God, and Todd had to scramble to reassure them of Dickinson’s religious beliefs. (Maun 60). It’s interesting that a woman who never actually met Dickinson in person thought she knew the poet so well that she felt comfortable stating such things to perfect strangers. Maun states, and I agree, that Todd took public opinion of Dickinson very seriously. (60) It seems that Dickinson was Todd’s money maker and it’s well known that if the public doesn’t like what you’re writing, they aren’t going to purchase your book.

Maun goes on to refer to a story that Todd’s daughter, Millicent, discussed. (Maun 60) One of Dickinson’s religious poems, “God is a distant —stately Lover —,” was published in The Christian Register on April 2, 1891. (60). The editor apparently received mail from upset readers about the piece and these reactions appear to have caused Todd to not include the poem in the second or third volumes of Dickinson’s poetry. (Maun 60). In fact, this poem was not published again until Dickinson’s niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, put it in Further Poems in 1929. (Maun 60). Public opinion and Todd’s editorial policy seems to have gone hand in hand—Todd wanted to avoid any controversy in Dickinson’s work. (Maun 60) Unfortunately for her, Dickinson’s poetry seemed to scandalize people in the 19th century, and this didn’t stop in the 20th century.

In the third volume of Dickinson’s poems, Maun argues that the removal of stanzas in the third volume wasn’t necessarily entirely Todd’s fault, as there were times Todd wasn’t the copyist, and they were removed without her direction, though in other instances it’s not clear who deleted the stanzas. (61) Still, at other times it’s clear Todd decided to remove the stanza, though it isn’t clear why that happened. (Maun 61) In several cases, Maun argues that Todd seemed to have removed verses when there were mentions of explicit topics. (61) Maun states:
“Objectionable material seems to have primarily included explicit references to madness, the mixing of sacred and sexual imagery, and “irreverence,” the topic that Todd returned to again and again in her public lectures and in her writing on the poet.”(61)

Todd seems to have taken it upon herself to be Dickinson’s own censor. She went to great lengths to avoid any controversial topics in Dickinson’s work. All this editing completely changed the poems themselves and therefore changed how they were read. With the subjects of the poems being changed in even minor instances, they were no longer Dickinson’s work, but a Frankenstein’s monster of Todd’s editorial efforts to patchwork her way through the pieces. Though other poets have used unconventional grammar and punctuation, Dickinson was one of the first to experiment with free verse and slant rhyme. Because of Dickinson, people today are currently using free verse and slant rhyme to express themselves in whatever way they choose.

The eventual publications of Dickinson’s poems and letters never had the full collection in any copy until author Thomas H. Johnson was given access to all the poems and letters in 1955. (Kirk 116). According to Kirk, Johnson was the first editor to have full access to all of Dickinson’s original manuscripts, but he was also the first editor to restore the faded punctuation markings in Dickinson’s work.(116) He went so far as to carefully examine the documents and put them in chronological order by examining the handwriting as well as the letters the poems were sent in to determine a timeline.(Kirk 116) Though Todd and Higginson have received due credit for publishing the first editions of Dickinson’s poems, it was not until Johnson came along that scholars found firmer footing for the editing of future publications. If Todd and Higginson had not gone forward with Dickinson’s work, we would not have her poetry today. But the editing of her work has taken several twists and turns, with each editor contributing more and more to the editorial theory agreed upon by all editors today. To look at this more in depth, we
need to look at the editors that came after Higginson and Todd. They were the first editors and were also the catalysts behind the eventual editorial theory for Dickinson’s work.

**Emily Dickinson: Current Day Editorial Theory**

Since Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson first edited Emily Dickinson’s work, there have been some significant changes in the editorial theory agreed upon by Emily Dickinson scholars across the globe. While Todd and Higginson focused on “correcting” and “regularizing” her work, editors in recent years have gone to great lengths to leave the original punctuation and word choice Dickinson wrote herself. However, this eventual agreement between scholarly editors did not come easily, as Dickinson’s work poses more than a few challenges to editors in general.

After Todd and Higginson edited Dickinson’s work, then Todd herself, Kirk states that the next people were Todd and her daughter Millicent.(116) Then Dickinson’s niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi with her secretary, Alfred Leete Hampson, published Dickinson’s poems, and finally Johnson gained access to the entire collection of manuscripts and letters.(Kirk 116) In “The Cambridge Introduction to Emily Dickinson” by Wendy Martin , she states that Johnson published three volumes of poetry. (119) He had removed the “false” titles that earlier editors had assigned the poems and restored the original punctuation and then numbered the poems roughly in chronological order. (Martin 119). She then states:

“Because multiple versions of many poems existed, all with slight variations, Johnson still had to make editorial choices about which words and punctuation marks to include in the “final” versions.”(Martin 119)
Even when restoring Dickinson’s work, Johnson still had to make editorial decisions that could well have been controversial. Martin states that Johnson kept track of all the variations of the poems and later published them in a 1955 variorum edition. (119). The definition of “variorum”:
“A variorum is a collection that presents all of the known word variations of each poem.” Johnson did not include these in his 1960 Reading Edition. (119). For years, Johnson’s editing was the gold standard for Dickinson’s work—until 1981. (Martin 119)

The next groundbreaking editor of Dickinson’s work was R.W. Franklin. Martin states that he wanted to build upon and improve Johnson’s work, so each collection of poems or letters he edited and published were closer to what Franklin thought was Dickinson’s original intent. (120). Martin states:

“For example, he collected facsimile copies of Dickinson’s poems, placed them in their original sequence, and published them as The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson in 1980.” (120)

Martin states that Franklin was the first editor to put the facsimiles back together and astounded editors and readers alike to see how the poet originally wanted her work in a book. (120) While there is no easily discernable pattern in the facsimiles, Dickinson obviously had one in mind when she put them together in their original order and sewed them together. But this was not enough for Franklin, he wanted to do more, and he did in 1986. (Martin 120). Martin states:

“Respecting the visual nature of the letters and the importance of spatial relationships on the page, Franklin knew that transcribing the letters into a typewritten format and reformatting them for publication would ruin their natural line breaks. The action would be comparable to taking poems and forcing them into prose.” (120).
While Johnson went a long way to correcting past mistakes with editing Dickinson’s work, there was still room to improve the publishing process and the editorial theory for her work. (Martin 120). With these actions, Franklin was greatly impacting the public’s image of Dickinson and her work. (Marin120). This played a huge part in Dickinson’s celebrity icon status in the 21st century as it brought her to the attention of more modern people and showed them her actual work at the same time. Martin continues with:

“The best way for readers to experience what Dickinson’s letters looked like, Franklin reasoned, was to give the public as close a reproduction as possible. So each copy of The Master Letters of Emily Dickinson came with an envelope that included a few photographic reproductions of letters, printed onto folded sheets just like the original documents.” (120)

It seems that Franklin understood Dickinson’s audience very well. At this point, the author was still mysterious, and a large portion of her readers would never actually have access to one of her original letters or manuscripts. For them, receiving this edition in such a way was almost like Dickinson had sent them a letter herself. They also got a peek inside Dickinson’s mind and could see what made her tick through the small windows through each letter. This also would have contributed to Dickinson’s celebrity icon status. By publishing Dickinson’s letters this way, Franklin introduced a groundbreaking new aspect to editorial theory that editors would follow for years when it came to Dickinson’s work and apply to other authors. If the Dickinson’s fans reacted so positively to this new format, other authors could also have the same success.

As previously mentioned, there are a few different problems that have to be addressed with Dickinson’s work when it is going to be published. The poet mostly took English grammar as it was understood and turned it on its ear and people in the 19th century took it as accidental mistakes, not the deliberate choices we see it as today. Editors had to come together and agree on
how they would publish her work after Johnson and Franklin so thoroughly restored the original punctuation and took the extra steps to publish the poems and letters as closely as possible to the originals. Martin points out that one of the persistent problems editors run into with Dickinson’s poems is how to publish them. (120). She questions if they should be organized in quatrains or triplets as they were initially in the letters? (120) Or should they be in free verse, as they were in the fascicles? (120) Martin continues questioning if Dickinson’s handwritten line breaks were intentional or if she had to break the line where the page ended? (Martin 120) Should the line breaks be put where the form dictates, or where Dickinson indicated? (Martin 120) These questions plagued editors constantly and they needed to decide together what should be done so Dickinson’s work could live on for future generations in its originally intended format and grammar.

Though Martin suggests that the most complete and closest to the original poem manuscripts is Franklin’s three-volume variorum that was published in 1998, there was a problem with these volumes. (120) Martin states:

“However, Franklin still had to make several editorial decisions in terms of how the poems would be arranged and presented. In the variorum, poems are listed chronologically and are regularized – they are often presented as eight-line poems divided into two stanzas.” (120).

There was still the problem of editors having to decide exactly how the poems would be arranged and presented and because there was no firm editorial theory in place, it was up to the individual editor. And, since Franklin was the first editor to do this, there were not any firm rules he could follow when deciding. While he tried to stay true to the original work, not all of Dickinson’s poetry was at the stage that it was ready to be published, as previously mentioned. These drafts caused Franklin to have to make editorial decisions that weren’t necessarily agreed with by his
fellow scholars. That is when scholarly editors who studied Dickinson’s work decided they
needed to decide what all future publications of Dickinson’s work and letters would look like.

Martin states that in 1992 the Dickinson Editing Collective was formed. (120). Their
mission was to concentrate on and reexamine the problems that Johnson and Franklin ran into
when they published volumes of Dickinson’s letters and poems. (120). They focused on the
calligraphy, punctuation, lineation, capitalization, and stanza format and developed alternate
forms of editing Dickinson’s poems and letters. (Martin 120). Martin goes on to state:

“Dickinson often drafted multiple versions of letters and changed them slightly to suit the
different people they were being sent to. This led to the multiple variations of poems and letters
today.” (120)

As you can imagine, this proved extremely problematic for editors because they did not know
which version to use, or even which version was the original. They needed rules to decide how to
deal with this problem. But even with the formation of this collective, Martin argues that the
effects of Dickinson’s incredibly problematic publishing history are still being felt in college and
high school classrooms today (121). She states:

“Should instructors refer to the poems by their Johnson numbers, Franklin numbers, or use the
new Franklin variorum, which introduced a dual-numbering system? Because the poems lack
titles, the convention has been to refer to them by their first lines or any of the various numbering
systems.” (121)

This situation bears some contemplation. How do we teach students Dickinson’s poems and
letters if we are not even sure which edition is the “correct” edition? Without directly talking to
the poet herself, we will probably never know what her thoughts are. At this point in time, the
public did not have access to Dickinson’s original manuscripts and letters, so there was confusion as to which numbering system was the correct one. Though this has been mostly corrected in 2020, the numbering caused issues for teachers and students for years. (Martin 121).

Martin goes on to say that Emily Dickinson’s poetry and biography have caused further research and debate since the *Springfield Republican* first published “I taste a liquor never brewed” as “The May-Wine” in 1861 (121). Martin states:

“Dickinson’s work has had a powerful impact on the world. Each year new findings and interpretations provide an important extension of thought in the development of Dickinson scholarship, particularly because of the ambiguity that surrounds both the poetry and the letters.”(121)

Dickinson’s work has a complicated editing history that has taken many twists and turns, but her impact on the world is still being felt. The poet, herself, is a mystery Dickinson scholars seem determined to uncover to understand her poetry better.

It’s the mark of a good author that their work remains relevant in a century where technology has advanced to the point we can send text messages instead of making phone calls or talking in person. Letters are rarely used anymore because we can facetime with people across the world. We can access webcams to watch animals in zoos across the country, and we share funny pictures on Facebook about cats. Yet, despite all of these things, Dickinson has remained relevant to the point we have coffee mugs, t-shirts, bags, and bumper stickers with lines of her poetry printed on them. They’re worn or displayed proudly because she was a literary genius ahead of her time.

In conclusion, the discovery of Dickinson’s work by Lavinia, and the work of the first editors, Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, were the catalysts responsible
for the beginning of Emily Dickinson’s impact on American Literature, and eventually the world. But, it was not only her writing that left such a legacy, it was the editing done posthumously that paved the way for editorial theory for other authors that has also greatly impacted literature. Though the question remains as to whether or not the poet would have appreciated their work, regardless Dickinson is one of the most beloved American Poets in today’s world.
Chapter 3:

Emily Dickinson and Fandom: 19th Century and Now

In the 21st Century, fandom and celebrity have reached a place where fans can see and reply to their celebrity idols on social networks online, get a glimpse into their personal lives via magazine articles, and even purchase merchandise with their faces printed on them. You may be wondering how all of that connects to Emily Dickinson considering she died over 130 years ago. Even though Dickinson is no longer alive, her literary legacy has lived on through her family, Amherst College, and her fans. This article will discuss Dickinson’s own experience with fandom, her first fans, how her literary legacy was kept alive and contributed to her fandom and celebrity, and finally what her fans now have to show their love of the poet and her work. All of which combined has played a large part in keeping Dickinson relevant and famous in the 21st century.

To understand where Dickinson stood with fandom herself, we need to look at one of her first experiences with fandom in the 19th century. To this end, Gerard Holmes, who wrote “Emily Dickinson, Jenny Lind, and Rural Nineteenth-Century Fandom” discussed the letter (known as letter 46) where Emily wrote to Austin about Jenny Lind and her performance as it was previously stated in Chapter 1. Dickinson saw Jenny Lind perform and was amazed at the reactions from her fans. (Holmes 40). She was quite critical of the fawning over Lind and her singing, more so when she saw the merchandise being sold at her concerts. (Holmes, 41). Holmes goes on to point out that fandom in the 19th century, while less technologically advanced, can still be compared to fandom today because fandom is not solely based on more advanced technology like the internet or television. (41). He then states: “For nineteenth-century
audiences, newspapers, magazines, novels, and sheet music were mass media, quickly and cheaply distributing information across great distances, and nascent electronic technologies made that distribution possible.” (Holmes41). In fact, Holmes later says it was common behavior among women wishing to express their admiration of a celebrity, collecting sheet music, writing letters expressing their admiration or seeking advice, “imitating recognized styles or admired authors or musicians in performance among friends and family, submitting one’s own creations to admired writers or to the newspapers and magazines with which they were associated, reading literary or music news in newspapers and magazines, and playfully identifying with fictional subjects or their authors in letters or other writing.”(43). Dickinson herself did submit some of her poems to newspapers and magazines and she kept up to date on the latest news of her favorite authors and musicians. She was very much a fan of those she chose to admire, not unlike other women in the 19th century or even the 21st century. While her fandom did not change her opinions on publishing her own work and becoming famous, it did leave behind artifacts that can still be seen today in the Emily Dickinson museum. But first, there is a need to look at some of Dickinson’s first fans, though they had no idea at the time that the poem they so admired was written by Emily Dickinson.

In “Emily Dickinson’s Teenage Fanclub” by Laura Langer Cohen, Cohen discusses one of Dickinson’s first admirers, who happens to be in a demographic that most think avoid Dickinson on purpose: teenage boys. Cohen states that in November of 1882, a version of “Success is counted sweetest” was printed in the Amateur Journal “a homemade newspaper from Judsonia, Arkansas, edited by eighteen-year-old Albert E. Barker.1 Dickinson almost certainly did not know of Barker’s existence. Barker almost certainly did not know of hers. He likely reprinted “Success is counted sweetest” after reading it in A Masque of Poets, an
anthology of anonymous poetry issued by the Boston publishers Roberts Brothers in 1878.\textsuperscript{2} (Cohen32). Because it was anonymous, no one had any idea who wrote the poem and were therefore able to read it without any previously formed opinions about the author. Though it could be inferred that at least some of those teenage boys would be embarrassed if they found out the poet was a woman because of some notion that they should only like male authors. This further demonstrates Dickinson’s ability to reach anyone, male or female, through her work and gain a fan. Cohen later states that “Success is counted sweetest” was published three separate times “first in the April 27, 1864 issue of the \textit{Brooklyn Daily Union}; then in \textit{A Masque of Poets}; and then in the \textit{Amateur Journal…”} (Cohen32). From this information, it can be inferred that the poem was quite popular among readers, though Cohen does say later on that it was edited in \textit{Amateur Journal} and once again, Dickinson’s work took on a very different meaning compared to what she wrote originally.\textsuperscript{(42)} This begs the question: was it Dickinson’s poem that readers liked so much or the version editors printed? And if it was the editor’s edition, does that mean they were really Dickinson fans? There is no simple answer to these questions, though it can be said that Dickinson had fans when she was still alive, including her own friends and family. By only sending her poetry out to specific people in her letters, Dickinson controlled just how famous she was and how many fans she had. It was only after her death that she gained the sort of fame she did not want while alive.

After Emily Dickinson’s death, her siblings Austin and Lavinia still lived at The Homestead and The Evergreens, next door. In \textit{The “Poet Hunters”: Transforming Emily Dickinson’s Home into a Literary Destination} by Jane Wald, Wald discusses the events that occurred that would eventually turn The Evergreens and The Homestead into The Emily Dickinson Museum. Wald states “The Emily Dickinson Museum exists today as the product of
specific choices made by Dickinson’s heirs in managing their literary and physical property against the backdrop of rising general interest in American literary tourism.” (71). Literary tourism began in Great Britain and the Grand Tour was a large part of how it was started. (Wald 77). Wald explains that many famous author’s homes, such as Shakespeare, Robert Burns, and even Sir Walter Scott had homes that were now literary tourist destinations. (77) Wald continues with

“By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, this trend generated determined promotion and commercial reward. Early literary guides employed the terms “shrines” and “pilgrimage” to characterize the sightseeing interest in dead poets’ sites, suggesting a hagiographical quality. “Haunts,” on the other hand, promised a close-up encounter with a writer’s home and habits.” (Wald 77-78)

Literary tourism was a booming new industry, and it showed no signs of slowing down. Specific terms in advertising caused more visitors to come to these homes. Writers published biographies of famous author’s homes that were open to the public in guidebooks. Eventually, these guidebooks included biographies by other authors. (Wald 78). These guidebooks provided details for both the physical visitor and the armchair visitor. And the Dickinson’s, like many others, had several copies of these guidebooks. Wald states:

“Early literary guide books were written in nearly the same vein as biography and memoir of the same period. The growing popularity of biography among the American reading public in the nineteenth century was reflected in the Dickinson family libraries. They held dozens of books covering this terrain -- memoirs or biographies of statesmen, religious thinkers, writers, and memorials of individuals known to the family.” (Wald 79).
While Emily Dickinson is infamous for retreating from society all together as an adult, it is clear she managed to experience the world and continue her fandom through these biographies and guidebooks. While she physically stopped leaving the Homestead, she managed to experience the entire world through books and her imagination all within the security of her home. But it would not be until after her death that Dickinson’s own home became one of these destinations.

Wald states “Emily Dickinson’s “afterlife” as a celebrity began with the first published volume of her work four years after her death, and the conversion of her private space into a public attraction began at virtually the same moment.” (Wald 72). As previously mentioned, Todd and Higginson wrote essays to help bring in sales for the poems they published under Dickinson’s name. It was these essays that caused the public view of Dickinson to be a lonely shut-in. And it was not until Martha Dickinson Bianchi came along that this image was challenged.

Wald states “Martha Dickinson Bianchi’s emergence as Dickinson editor in 1914 transformed the family homes into literary tourism destinations of the kind promoted in tourism texts in the previous three decades.” (72). It was her work that eventually led to the museum today. Wald continues with “Her attempt to pin Dickinson’s biography to place and family relationship both fueled and were sustained by Dickinson’s growing celebrity. Once Thomas Johnson, a scholar outside the family circle, edited the complete poems, and the two Dickinson homes emerged from management by family heirs and assigns, a new era opened for public access to and understanding of the poet’s living legacy.”(72) It was the combined work of both new editors that brought about the change in Dickinson’s image and the real poetry that Dickinson wrote. These events led to the eventual opening of The Emily Dickinson Museum, though they still had a long road ahead of them.
Wald states that after Susan Dickinson’s death in 1913, her daughter Martha Dickinson Bianchi made a bid to take back control over her aunt’s work by re-publishing her poems. (83). Bianchi wrote to the publishers to ask about stopping the production of the books edited by Todd and Higginson. (Wald 87). Though it should be noted that editions of those volumes continued into the 1920s, so Bianchi was unable or did not want to stop publishing them. (Wald 87). After Susan’s death in 1913, Bianchi published another volume of Emily’s poems as a tribute to the sisterly love between her mother and aunt. (Wald 87). The second thing she did was sell the Homestead in 1916 and take most of its contents to the Evergreens where she set up a room knows as “The Emily Room”. (Wald 87). Wald states this was Bianchi’s first step in reclaiming ownership- literally and physically- of Emily Dickinson’s work and their family history. (87). This was also the first step of many that would lead to the Emily Dickinson Museum.

According to Wald, over the next 25 years Bianchi’s strategy to change the public’s image of Dickinson and cultivate her celebrity was to edit and publish her work. (88) It was these editions that eventually rekindled the public interest in Emily Dickinson. (Wald 88) When it coincided with the centenary of Dickinson’s birth and the 50 year anniversary of her death, it gave Dickinson’s biography and related tourism new life. (Wald 88). Bianchi continued to publish her aunt’s work and eventually went on a lecture circuit to continue this strategy of changing the public’s opinion. (Wald 88). Wald states:

“Her goals to ensure accurate biography, protect family reputations, and promote celebrity required a tight grip, which she exercised for as long as possible, even beyond her death in 1943.” (Wald 91).

Bianchi’s actions indicate she cared deeply about her aunt and her poetry and she was determined to get the public to see her aunt in a different light. It could be inferred that Bianchi
felt Todd and Higginson did not paint her aunt in a favorable light and she was determined to “fix” that by re-publishing the poetry and fixing her aunt’s image with the public. Todd and Higginson damaged that through their efforts of editing, promoting, and publishing Emily Dickinson’s work originally. Though Lavinia also had a hand in that by reaching out to them in the first place. This imagery is still being fought today as it has had lasting impacts on Dickinson and how her work is read – imagery of a woman alone, sad, perhaps in tears, refusing to leave her home has stuck to Dickinson’s name since Todd and Higginson published her work. With the truth revealed—that Dickinson was a relatable person who chose to stay in her home because it made her happy, also alone because it pleased her, this changes public perception and how her work is read. Instead you find an independent woman who was before her time in both thought and deed.

After Bianchi’s death in 1943, she left the Evergreens to her literary assistant Alfred Hampson. He and his wife, Mary Hampson, in turn agreed to give Dickinson manuscripts and “a few hundred books, and several dozen objects to Harvard College in 1950.” (Wald 91). After Alfred’s death, Mary was the sole owner of the Evergreens and guarded it staunchly, leaving a trust to take control and care for the property upon her death in 1988. (Wald 92). In the meantime, a regular family had moved into the Homestead and were dealing with Dickinson tourists and literary pilgrims until they sold the house to Amherst College in 1965. (Wald 92). It was not until 2003 when both the Homestead and the Evergreens were reunited again under the same ownership. (Wald 92). Bianchi’s work and the eventual conversion of these homes into a museum greatly impacted Dickinson’s lasting celebrity status as a literary icon in American literary history. Without them, without any of these events from Todd and Higginson’s editing, to Bianchi regaining ownership, Dickinson and her work would have faded into infamy. But this
story is not yet complete, because no celebrity is complete without her current fans.

As Dickinson has gained literary fame over the years, fans have progressed from buying editions of her poems to buying t-shirts, coffee mugs, bumper stickers, key chains and more with lines from her poetry on them. This merchandise has played a role in the circulation of Dickinson’s work, but it has also changed how people read these poems and view Dickinson herself. But how have these literary objects become popular among her fans?

While it cannot be ignored that Dickinson lived over 130 years ago, and while her popularity may have faced waning periods, it has never completely died out. But why is that? Well, in part it seems that her fans are purchasing merchandise with lines of her poetry on it. This is essentially free advertising for Dickinson and plays a part in public opinion of her and her work, but it is also another form of circulation. In the past, Dickinson circulated her work herself through letters and occasional publications. She did have her poems published in newspapers, though there is some argument as to whether Dickinson submitted all her work herself. It is not fully known who of Dickinson’s family and friends would have submitted her work to be published. The other aspect of this merchandise is that the lines of poetry were edited, which is an issue all on its own.

The story of the editing of Dickinson’s work is long and has many twists and turns. She made her feelings about publishing and fame quite clear, and yet after her death her work was essentially torn apart and then put back together like so many puzzle pieces. It was not until many years later that two specific scholars were able to go back and fix what had been done, thus putting the poems back to their original states. By printing these lines of her poetry on various products in the way that they have, these companies have repeated what was done originally to Dickinson’s work. But this may be due to demand by her fans.
Dickinson’s popularity has continued to grow, and she is now well known around the world. In the US in particular, she has reached pop culture icon status. If you asked a random person on the street who Emily Dickinson is, chances are good that they know she was an author, who lived many years ago. Others might remember her work, others still might be able to describe her now infamous refusal to leave her house. She has permeated into well-known children’s cartoons, comic strips in the Sunday paper, and even The Simpsons. Every day Dickinson gains more fans as children see and hear her work and learn about her in school. But you might be wondering why this matters when it comes to merchandise?

Fandom in 2020 has reached a place where admiration of someone, whether it is a band, a fictional character, or even a long dead author you wear t-shirts. You buy key chains, mugs, and even socks with their work on it. You have purses with their faces printed on them. People dress as the object of their admiration for Halloween and Comic Con. Money is spent on merchandise and declarations to the entire world of love for that celebrity on social media is not uncommon. To say fans go overboard in their admiration seems like an understatement at this point. But fans of Dickinson are just as enthusiastic in their love of her and her work. So, how has this played a part in Dickinson’s lasting celebrity status?

Fandom is part of the reason why Dickinson remains relevant today. Without her fans, Dickinson would have faded into the ether and never have reached that coveted pop culture icon status—though the question remains on if she would actually care that she had reached that level of popularity considering she never wanted to publish her work and be famous. So, what are her fans purchasing?

Dickinson Scholars agree that she wrote about 2,000 poems over her lifetime. That does not include the numerous letters Dickinson sent to friends and family during that time. This is far
too many to search on Google and Amazon, so the list was whittled down to three—two poems and one letter to be exact of Dickinson’s more well-known pieces.

The lines in Question

The way the poems and letter were chosen was using a simple Google search on the most popular poems and lines by Emily Dickinson. The results were then compared to apparel, coffee mugs, bumper stickers, and other merchandise that had lines from Dickinson’s poetry or letters printed on them. The pieces that were chosen are “Hope” is the thing with feathers (314),” “I dwell in possibility (466),” and finally the letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Holland with the line “pardon my sanity in a world insane”. What was most noticed are the lines, like Dickinson’s poetry and letters from her early editors, had been heavily edited by the makers of these products. They took the editorial theory for the publication of Dickinson’s work and threw it out. But it doesn’t seem to have caused an issue with Dickinson’s popularity. The two poems and letter can be found in the appendix.

The lines on this merchandise have been taken from Dickinson’s more well-known poems and letters and edited to fit whatever product they are going on. The companies producing these things have made a profit off her work outside of the literary world—an industry that is thriving using not just Dickinson’s work, but other authors as well whose work is now in the public domain. This work is being used in a visual aspect, though the literary aspect stays because it’s the people who have read their work that are purchasing the products made.

Looking at the merchandise, you may notice that many of the products take the first lines or stanzas of the pieces, removing any slashes or dashes, and leaving out the rest of the poem. They rely on the people wearing them and anyone who sees them to recognize the piece and
either recognizing Dickinson’s work and/or going out to buy a similar product. However, because of this editing, the poems no longer read like the originals did—just like Todd and Higginson did to Dickinson’s work originally.

In the case of Dickinson’s letter to Elizabeth Holland, the letter discusses several things between the two friends, yet the specific line “pardon my sanity in a world insane” is the only part that is being used. It’s not until you read the entire letter that you know exactly what Dickinson was talking about when she penned that line—she wants to be in heaven with her friend because it would mean that they’re together again. Considering the history occurring at the time, this makes perfect sense. The Civil War was approaching, and a lot of unrest was occurring between the states. These specific lines are used by a few different companies and are sold online all over the world, but they have yet to be part of a scholarly discussion about Dickinson and her work in the modern age.

The focus for the scholars who have studied Dickinson in the past has always been on her life, the people she was around, and her writing. Prior to this capstone, there was not any research done on Dickinson and her writing through this lens. This research has provided an opportunity to look at Dickinson in a more modern way. The merchandise has provided more circulation and exposure of Dickinson and her work, which feeds right back into Dickinson becoming a 21st Century pop culture icon. While scholars have hammered out the details of publishing new editions of Dickinson’s poems and letters—keeping things as close to how the author originally wrote them, the companies selling this merchandise have no such qualms. Looking at it from that perspective, it does not seem like these companies are actually fans of the classic literature they’re printing and selling. That can be seen from the lines edited and taken out of context.
The lines are extracted from the poems and the grammar Dickinson painstakingly added and defended to editors is completely gone. This is precisely what Dickinson did not want done to her work. As fans of literature, are the people purchasing this merchandise supporting the destruction of their beloved authors and poets? Do they see it that way, or do they see it as a way of celebrating classic literature? However, these products have played a part in keeping Dickinson and her work relevant today and circulated today, so this merchandise required a closer look.

**Analysis of the products**

Searches for this merchandise on both Google and Amazon yielded thousands of results for Dickinson apparel, coffee mugs, and bumper stickers among other products. Several companies that already sell these things have branched out into selling work by several famous authors. Dickinson is far from the only author who has her work on a t-shirt. Mark Twain, Jane Austen, Edgar Allen Poe, and William Shakespeare among several others also have similar products with their names stamped on them. Companies such as CaféPress, ValxArt, Speedy Pros, and Sound Affections are a few in several thousand hits between a search in Google and Amazon. Several of the companies have the same designs for the t-shirts, coffee mugs, bumper stickers and more at varying prices. Buyers tend to go by reviews on the various company websites or Amazon itself to determine the best place to buy these products.
“Hope” is the thing with feathers”

As each piece was examined, different key words pulled up different results. Just typing in “Emily Dickinson” directed me to the various books of her poetry and letters. Typing in “Emily Dickinson apparel” gave slightly better results, though it was a mix of shirts, for men, women, boy, girls, and even babies with different lines from her poems or letters. The results were in the thousands when combined with Google and Amazon. There was a need to find better key words to narrow down the results list.

Eventually, a hit on a coffee mug directed the search to Cafe Press’s website. While the design of the mug was quite poor with tiny lettering, they had a treasure trove of Dickinson apparel, coffee mugs, bumper stickers and more listed under “gifts.” After typing in “Emily Dickinson gifts” there were 400 hits. Dickinson’s poems and letters are not organized in any way, everything was grouped together Figure 1. When “Hope” is the thing with feathers” was typed in, along with “Emily Dickinson gifts” Google had 152,000 results for several different websites, including Amazon, Etsy, Society 6, and FineArtAmerica Figure 2. When these keywords were typed into Amazon, looking at all departments, the results were much smaller: 93. There was one t-shirt, and disturbingly, a few urn cremation necklaces with the quote stamped on. Several pins, keychains, and bookmarks also came up. Of those results, six products had nothing to do with Dickinson or the quote.
“I dwell in possibility”

After learning the specific keywords needed to bring up apparel, coffee mugs, bumper stickers and more, the search turned to “I dwell in possibility.” This produced some similar
results to “Hope” is the thing with feathers” with a few differences.

An initial search on Google came up with 12,200 results. Companies that sold “I dwell in possibility” were Etsy, Society6, Zazzle, and redbubble. When the same keywords were typed into Amazon looking at all departments, only 20 results came up Figure 3. This was a significant drop in result numbers and caused confusion over why that would be the case. This search also resulted in not all of the results having to do with Dickinson. Of the 20 products, only 11 had anything to do with Dickinson, though not all had to do with the poem lines that were originally used to search for this merchandise. Better results search results occurred when using Google with some links to Amazon appearing this time Figure 4.
“Pardon my sanity in a world insane”

This quote came from a letter and leaves part of the original text out. When the entire letter is read, you see this quote much differently. This quote had the most interesting of the three pieces examined. The original quote in the letter is “Pardon my sanity, Mrs. Holland, in a world insane, and love me if you will, for I had rather be loved than to be called a king in earth, or a lord in Heaven.” Of course, not all of that would fit on a keychain but the companies producing the products don’t print it on t-shirts or coffee mugs either. And the world itself doesn’t recognize the entire quote as the edited version is the most common.

The previous process of typing in the keywords, changing them to “pardon my sanity in a world insane” produced only 1,500 results in Google Figure 5. This seemed a little strange considering the wealth of hits from the two previous pieces. Some of the companies selling
products with this quote were redbubble, teepublic, and etsy. Google also came up with some Amazon results. When the links were opened, the products were no longer available. This caused even more curiosity to see what the keywords typed into Amazon would result in. Only 16 results came up and none of them had anything to do with the specific quote from Dickinson’s letter Figure 6. Of those results, only seven had anything to do with Dickinson, as shown below.

![Google search results for Emily Dickinson gifts](image)

Figure 5.
I felt there was a need to compare results across all three pieces and the places I searched. The information can be found in the table below.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Search Results for Emily Dickinson Gifts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Google Search Results</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Hope&quot; is the thing with Feathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amazon Search Results</strong></td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After examining these results, it seems Amazon does not have the corner of the market on "Emily Dickinson gifts." Considering how large Amazon has grown and the multitude of things you can buy, this seems a little odd. It seems there are other companies out there that have found the lucrative business opportunity in Dickinson and have created a submarket for her and other authors to sell the plethora of merchandise available. Based on these numbers, while Emily
Dickinson merchandise does not hold a large part of the market, it does hold a big enough piece that internet search results through Amazon and Google yield results and indicates that there are still Dickinson fans in the 21st century who are proud to show they admire her and her work. Fans love her work and want others to know they love it and her. Admirers have several different companies to choose from and it’s only a few keystrokes away on Google. Long gone are the days where you could only find bookmarks and books themselves for authors no longer alive. It causes me to wonder what Dickinson would think about her fans running around with her face plastered on a t-shirt, or bits of her work on coffee mugs and keychains? Would she be embarrassed? Amused? Some of both? Considering how Dickinson reacted to fans of the Swedish singer her merchandise at the time, I wonder if she would have a similar reaction to the merchandise available now? And fandom was only starting in Dickinson’s time- now we have entire Facebook pages and websites dedicated to celebrities. All of this seems to help support Dickinson’s relevance and pop culture icon status in the 21st century, though it is far from the only thing that has caused her to remain relevant in 2020.

As her story has unfolded, there were many twists and turns, and several surprises along the way. It has taken years for Dickinson’s image and work to reach this celebrity status, and some of those years her image was vastly different and her work unrecognizable compared to the original manuscripts. With every new discovery and the determination of scholars and family members, the true Dickinson has been revealed to the world and her fans have stayed with her every step of the way.
Reflection

Reflection on Chapter 3, and the project overall, I’ve come to better understand academic writing and the different nuances it requires as compared to creative writing, or even the slightly more relaxed scholarly magazine. When writing for academia, the overall tone of the article must be more serious, and some may describe dry. You cannot make jokes about the conclusions you’re drawing—this is serious work and joking only undermines that. After all, the people who publish those articles have spent years, perhaps even entire careers researching that subject. When your entire life’s work is spent on that subject, there’s a serious aspect already ingrained. But there is more required for a research paper.

The grammar used must be perfect, and there cannot be any deliberate choices or risks while explaining why you did your research on that subject and the evidence you found. While creativity may need to be used to look at a subject from all sides and find a new angle, creativity cannot be used in a scholarly research paper. This can lead to questions of faking research and lying—never a good thing in academia. Scholarly magazine articles differ in this aspect, which is part of the reason I chose to write Chapter 3 in that tone.

In choosing to write in a slightly more relaxed tone, I found my own voice. From my perspective, research needs to have a little humor involved. While I appreciate the sincerity and seriousness of scholarly research papers, reflecting back on choosing to write an article for a scholarly magazine, I knew that the overall tone would be a little less formal as compared to a traditional research paper that is then peer reviewed and eventually published. You have the freedom to try to connect with your reader in ways that aren’t allowed in traditional research papers because your peers wouldn’t take your work seriously. Academia, in general, is much more serious by nature because the research process has been refined and is guided by a strict set
of rules and guidelines for the research, writing, and peer review process that occurs.

This process was formed from the first experiments, into when universities formed, and then through the peer review process of conducting those same experiments to see if the results were repeated and accurate. While science may initially have formed this research process, other areas of academia also started going by those rules and guidelines because they found that they were universal. If those rules and guidelines did not exist, anyone could publish articles claiming to be a professor or grad student- an expert on the subject- and with no peer review, no one would know that the research was falsified. But, more often than not, the every day person doesn’t have access to those articles and isn’t interested in the academic writing style. It doesn’t grab a reader’s attention like a magazine article would. Or even a fiction book. Academic writing appeals to other academics who are seeking to learn more about a specific subject. Thus, the scholarly magazine article was born.

While academic article writing is often more technical and serious, scholarly magazine articles allow a little more freedom in work choice, grammar, and overall tone. If Chapter Three were revised into a more formal research paper, there are several areas that would need to be revised to change the overall more casual tone- for example the paragraph discussing fandom in 2020 and humans wanting to emulate their idols in various ways. The jokes that were inferred and spelled out would have to be deleted and the entire paragraph would change dramatically. But it isn’t just tone, there are several areas throughout that would need to be changed.

In traditional research articles there are often explanations of quantitative evidence through charts and graphs that are then thoroughly explained as far as trends and results that can be concluded, at least for scientific experiments. For the humanities, research papers can look a little different, depending on what the research was as experiments can occur, but more often the
research covers other areas- authors, how their work impacts modern people, or even like my own where I look at a famous poet, but I’m not looking at her work or her life in the scope of a detective trying to find more information. Often, the humanities have taken a specific side and are required to form an argument and then back that up with scholarly research. My research surrounds Emily Dickinson, but it spans from her life to current day and how a long dead poet is still impacting people in 2020. Traditional research papers require specific statements of questions and intent to be spelled out so that the reader knows exactly what it is that is being researched and why. The everyday reader of National Geographic likes a little mystery and the room to come to their own conclusions. They don’t necessarily want every aspect of your research method explained and they want the room to discuss and think about what your experiment could mean to them.

My argument in a traditional research paper would need to be stated clearly: Emily Dickinson was clear about not wanting to publish her work. While it could be inferred that she would not approve of how her work is being used now, with the editing that has been done it could also be argued that this isn’t her work anymore and belongs to the companies that are producing the merchandise. However, they’re also using her name when producing this merchandise, therefore capitalizing off of her fame as a poet. The morality of that move is in question as these companies have edited and taken out lines in the poems and letters written by Emily Dickinson, while also using her name. While fans of Dickinson happily purchase this merchandise, they don’t seem to stop and question the morals of the companies they’re buying these products from and a sort of underground industry has been born from that. Dickinson is not the only author whose work is now in public domain that is being used. Edgar Allen Poe and Jane Austen have merchandise available as well.
Rhetorically, a traditional research paper is very formal in address. There isn’t usually a mention of the author or authors in terms of “I”, “my”, “we”, “they”, “them” etc. As the author, the paper must be objective through both tone and word choice. You must lay out your argument, cover the research done, and then describe any gaps that occur. The scholarly magazine article is designed to still be objective, but it also needs to get the reader’s attention. The overall tone is less formal and objective. There are still explanations, but the way you are looking at the subject is much less obvious to the reader. The writing is more exciting and less formal, also designed to capture the reader’s interest. The article must capture but also hold the everyday reader’s interest. Often, the people reading those articles have some knowledge on the subject, but aren’t as educated as a peer in academia would be. Scholarly magazine articles are designed for the average Joe looking to be more informed on a subject. As such, rhetorical devices must be used to capture and hold their attention, while also educating on the subject without going into the detail required in a traditional research paper. The audience is very much in mind for both types of articles, and thus the rhetorical aspects must weigh heavily on the author(s) when the writing begins.

In conclusion, while there are places for both traditional research papers and scholarly magazine articles, the audience needs to be in mind when choosing the format that is the best fit. Research papers are necessary but tend to be more serious than what the average reader wants to read. They could almost be considered dry in some aspects because the language and grammar must be very technical and spell everything out. There is some room for discussion and argument for or against the view the author(s) choose. Scholarly magazine articles have more going on in the background while the reader pays more attention to what is happening directly in front of them. There is more room to discuss and consider other ideas because not all the details are
explicitly set in front of that reader. The author(s) don’t necessarily need to come right out and choose a side of the argument, it can be left to the reader’s imagination. This was also one of the bigger reasons I chose to write the scholarly magazine article. I like encouraging discussion and hearing what others have to say without explicitly having to state what I think is happening.

While I have strong opinions on Emily Dickinson from all of the research done for this capstone, it doesn’t always mean I want my every thought specifically spelled out for the reader. As I have researched Dickinson, it has occurred to me that there are many different people with different points of view of her and that can impact their research in positive and negative aspects. For me, while I have chosen an argument, this chapter seemed to require I step back a little and see what others thought of the information I found and then presented.
Chapter 4:

Emily Dickinson in the 21st Century

**Dickinson and Public Access**

As the decades have passed it seems Emily Dickinson has continued to remain relevant and even gained pop culture icon status in the 21st century. With the invention of the internet, this seems to have caused her to gain even more popularity. As people all over the world have access to Dickinson’s work now, in various languages, this has helped tremendously in bringing in new fans and keeping her work in the public eye. But there is another element to this that isn’t as widely known to the public.

Currently, three institutions have the majority of Dickinson’s original manuscripts of poetry and the letters she sent to friends and family. Amherst College with the Emily Dickinson Museum, Houghton Library at Harvard University, and Boston Public Library. For the longest time, these pieces of literary history were only available to a few to view in person because of their delicate nature. Only those studying the paper, the ink used to write, and the handwriting itself had access to these delicate pieces of history. However, each of these institutions has digital copies available of the original manuscripts and letters in their collections—all of which are easily accessible to the public.

While they have been made available to the public, these manuscripts are very difficult to read. Penmanship was different in the 19th century—along with their ink, writing utensils, and paper. All of these things make it incredibly difficult to decipher what Dickinson was saying in most of the letters and manuscripts. However, Dickinson scholars have analyzed them and
transcribed them for easier access. These are also easily available to the public in any of the institutions mentioned. Because of the reading difficulties, these pieces are now used more as visual art rather than literary art. This brings up that while Dickinson was a literary genius, her work is now being used as more than just literature. Companies have taken lucrative advantage of that in producing t-shirts, coffee mugs, and wall prints of her work. These also come up when typing in “Emily Dickinson.” Because of their difficult to decipher nature, any of the manuscripts or letters that are on display currently are now viewed more as artwork than they are great literature.

For most, a few key words in google will instantly take you to one of these websites so you can view Dickinson’s letters and work. There you can download the scanned in images and save them onto your own computer if you wish. Or you can save the hard drive space and just look at your leisure. The collections were put up at different times on the different websites for each institution previously mentioned. If you wish, you can look at transcribed copies of Dickinson’s work in one of the editions of her poetry or letters that have been published over the years by the different editorial scholars. Though you would be looking at transcribed versions rather than the originals, it should be noted. All three institutions have exhibits of some of Dickinson’s letters and/or manuscripts on display for visitors to see—though the timing of these exhibits could depend on the time of year for all but the Emily Dickinson museum. Otherwise, only scholars specifically looking at the paper or ink Dickinson used can get access to these pieces of history any longer. They are too delicate and valuable to allow access to any but a few in specific fields. Though these institutions have the largest collections of Dickinson manuscripts and letters, they are not the only ones who own them.

Another google search easily brings up other manuscripts and letters in the possession of
other universities. Private collectors would not be found through this method, however. In looking at who owns Dickinson’s manuscripts and letters and seeing them now online, I wondered what kind of traffic the websites were bringing in. I decided to reach out to these institutions for more information.

**Amherst College and the Emily Dickinson Museum**

Amherst College also owns and runs the Emily Dickinson museum. They own the infamous Homestead, where the Dickinson family lived for a couple of generations, as well as the house Austin Dickinson had built after his marriage to Susan. They also acquired most of the furniture either original to the family or pieces from the 19th century. The overall feel is like you have stepped back into the 19th century when you visit the museum. This caused me to wonder how this contributed to both foot and online traffic.

Amherst’s analytics took some time to research as I was curious to know how many people visited the college and the museum, but I could not get anyone to answer my emails. It wasn’t until a very helpful member of Houghton Library’s staff pointed out a couple of areas the information might be available on the museum website that I found what I was looking for.

In the 10-year report, which went from 2003-2013 on the Emily Dickinson Museum website, the rate of visitors doubled in 10 years. There was also data for 2012, 2014-2015, and 2017-2018. Please see the chart below.
While the numbers are old, they project that visitor numbers would continue to increase, for the most part, as the years go by. The museum has done several things to reach out to the community and the nation—holding community events, joining other museum programs, becoming listed on national museum tours, and reaching out to both the local k-12 schools as well as the three universities near the museum. They encourage graduate and undergraduate classes from across various majors to come visit and they have held programs for k-12 teachers in teaching about Emily Dickinson and her work. All these programs seem to have increased the visitor statistics for the most part. While these are only the in-person visits to the Emily Dickinson Museum, I believe it shows that overall, more visitors have come to the museum and to learn about Dickinson.

**Harvard University’s Houghton Library**

The next institution on my list was Harvard’s Houghton Library. They have Dickinson’s original writing desk and chair on exhibit, as well as several books from the Dickinson family library and a few portraits of the Dickinson family. They also have 1,000 of Dickinson’s autograph poems—the poems she sent in letters, and 300 of her letters to various friends and family. Houghton Library has the largest collection of manuscripts and letters in the world.

Of the 1,000 poems, Houghton Library has the original poems in the fascicles Dickinson

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children/Students</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>Data not available</td>
<td>1,257</td>
<td>3,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Data not available</td>
<td>Data not available</td>
<td>Data not available</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>9,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of Participants in Programs</td>
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<td>Data not available</td>
<td>Data not available</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>3,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of Tours</td>
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<td>Data not available</td>
<td>Data not available</td>
<td>Data Not Available</td>
<td>10,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of Visitors</td>
<td>7,733</td>
<td>Data not available</td>
<td>more than 14,000</td>
<td>More than 10,000</td>
<td>13,460</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sewed together herself as well as the notes of a herbarium she maintained as a child. They also own the Dickinson family papers, which bring more insight into the poet’s life. However, they do not have as much information about visitor numbers and percentages.

After research and talking to a department member, there are no statistics available for the tours of the Emily Dickinson exhibit or from before the Houghton Library website went live in 2015. The department member was unable to access more information, unfortunately. The Emily Dickinson Archive went live in 2014, and it was after that when the library began keeping statistics on the Emily Dickinson Archive:

**Emily Dickinson Archive**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>per Date Range</th>
<th>Oct 14- Sep 15</th>
<th>Jul 16- Jun 17</th>
<th>July 2017- June 2018</th>
<th>July 2018- June 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of visits</td>
<td>13,091.0625</td>
<td>156,305</td>
<td>150,891</td>
<td>147,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unique visits</td>
<td>7,150,79167</td>
<td>78,172</td>
<td>69,780</td>
<td>72,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pages viewed</td>
<td>3,720,694,38</td>
<td>4,573,820</td>
<td>4,609,902</td>
<td>4,500,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># pages/visit</td>
<td>25.869375</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you can see from the table, the dates from what was considered a year changed after the first year, so there is a gap. However, looking at the numbers for the Emily Dickinson Archive, there is a wave of rising and lowering of visitors and the pages they viewed. It could be inferred that the numbers for the exhibit and Dickinson website through the library also follow
this pattern. While the number of visits decrease in later years, the number of pages viewed increases.

**Boston Public Library**

Boston Public Library owns 73 letters and 40 original manuscript poems by Emily Dickinson. Many of the letters are between Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Dickinson, but there are letters between Mabel Loomis Todd and Higginson as well. In total, the collection has 141 items.

After emailing the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, I received several statistics. They stated that the reports these statistics are in break down the collection by object, by year, and show the number of page views during that year. They also show the average time that a user spent on the item (in seconds). This collection went live online in March 2016, so the years are April 1 - March 31 for the purposes of these reports. The reports that were sent gave statistics for the number of views and viewing times. The first chart, Total Views per Year, shows the average number of views per year starting in March of 2016 and going to March of 2020. It starts strong and then dips, but manages to rise again by 2020. This appears to indicate that there has been more interest in Boston Public Library’s Dickinson manuscripts and letters. This supports my thesis that internet exposure—specifically the availability of the original manuscripts and letters online has caused more interest in Dickinson and her work and therefore has helped her remain relevant to people in the 21st century.
The first chart, Total Views per Year, shows the average number of views per year starting in March of 2016 and going to March of 2020. It starts strong and then dips but manages to rise again by 2020. This appears to indicate that there has been more interest in Boston Public Library’s Dickinson manuscripts and letters.
The second chart, Total Filtered Views Per Year, is filtered because there were several pieces in the collection that had zero or 1 view. This was causing a skew in the numbers while averaging, so they were removed. This chart shows evidence of only the pieces that got views, hence the “Filtered” part of the title. This chart also shows views starting out strong and then dropping, before rising to above where they started. This also seems to indicate that public interest in Dickinson has not waned and she remains relevant.
The last chart, Total Views for Top Five Pieces Per Year, also has a drop and then rise. While in one case the same pieces in the collection did not make the top five, there was an overall trend of the same pieces getting more views. So, the top five pieces for each year were taken and the average is show on the chart. This further points to the internet, with her original manuscripts and letters being digitized, being a reason why Dickinson has remained relevant.
It should be noted that these institutions and their efforts to digitize Dickinson’s work have played a major role in Dickinson’s relevance in the 21st century. Without this public access, it is my personal opinion that Dickinson would not be as popular as she currently is to the people of the 21st Century. However, the major player in that access is the internet.

Like Dickinson’s original manuscripts and letters, Dickinson’s work, overall, is a few keystrokes in a search engine away. This aspect has helped her tremendously when it comes to staying relevant in the 21st Century while also securing her pop culture icon status. Typing her name or even a line of her poetry into Google instantly brings up several thousand hits on her poetry. It is this aspect that has Made Dickinson a world wide sensation even in the 21st century. An article published in 2012 can explain this aspect a bit better.

“To Fill a Gap . . .”: The Effect of the Internet on the Reception of Russian Translations of Emily Dickinson's Poetry” by Tatiana Anikeeva discusses how the general interest in the Russian translations of Dickinson’s work. Anikeeva argues that:

“This development was triggered by three factors: the lifting of political and ideological constraints on translating religious imagery after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1991; the freedom of access created by the Internet; and the ways in which Dickinson’s aesthetic sensitivities resonate with Russian translators and their readers.” (Anikeeva 98)

She goes on to say that the reception of Dickinson’s poetry can be separated into two categories. The first went from 1940 to 1990, when Dickinson was recognized as an American poet. The second reception goes from 1990 to present day. (98) Anikeeva goes on to state:
“Although the first four translations of Dickinson’s poems into Russian were made in the 1940s, during the Soviet era, Dickinson was a stranger in Russia until 1976, the year a volume of Biblioteka Vsemirnoy Literatury, called Henry Longfellow, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, was published. It included 184 translations of Dickinson poems by Vera Markova and an additional sixteen renditions by Ivan Likhachev, as well as poems by Longfellow and Whitman. Having been published in this popular edition with her famous compatriots, Dickinson became a classic American poet in Russia, and her poetry began to find some resonance here.” (Anikeeva 98-99)

Dickinson’s work was heavily edited by Russian translators, according to Anikeeva (99). They were extremely careful about the translations because they didn’t think her work was socially important. As a result, they cultivated specific images about her- her reclusiveness, unrequited love, and un-believer and “fighter” of religion. (Aniveeva 99) This of course completely changed the meaning in the poems published and is yet another example of posthumous editing of Dickinson’s work. However, this didn’t stop people from reading Dickinson’s poems.

Anikeeva goes on to state:

“The end of the twentieth century, which saw the Iron Curtain swept away, brought a wave of publications and new interest in Dickinson’s poems. Editors now brought out her poems about God, religion, death, and life after death. From 1996 to 2010 (within the second period) ten books of her poems were published in Russian. Almost none of these translations had ever been published before. (99)

Anikeeva goes on to say that only 680 of Dickinson’s 1789 poems have been translated into Russian. She also states it is still impossible to buy books of Emily Dickinson poems in
most Russian bookstores, although a few can be found in libraries. This makes the internet even more important due to limited access of hard copies of translated Dickinson pieces. She states “In this second period of her reception, however, Dickinson has gained wide popularity on Russian literary Internet sites representing different electronic literary journals, almanacs, and literary pages. There are special poetry contests, blogs, and forums where translations of Dickinson’s poetry are widely discussed. (Anikeeva 100). Anikeeva goes on to say that as of 2009, that at least 184 of Dickinson’s poems have been translated into Russian on the internet. 36 of those have never been translated and published before. Some of the websites have different translations of the same poems. (100) Anikeeva did an analysis of the most popular poems according to the number of translations found on these websites and the list goes as follows:

1. “Heart! We will forget him!” (Fr64): seven translations.
3. “This is my letter to the World” (Fr519): six translations.
4. “As from the Earth the light Balloon” (Fr1651): six translations.
5. “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” (Fr260): five translations.
6. “Because I could not stop for Death - ” (Fr479): five translations.
7. “A word is dead, when it is said” (Fr278): five translations.
8. “There is no Frigate like a Book” (Fr1286): five translations.
10. “To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee” (Fr1779): five translations.
11. “Success is counted sweetest” (Fr112): four translations.


13. “If I should’nt be alive” (Fr210): four translations.

14. “‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers - ” (Fr314): four translations.

15. “We never know how high we are” (Fr1197): four translations.

The impact of the internet in Russia has clearly caused Dickinson to gain popularity among Russian people. Even with the edits done in the early period of her introduction to Russia, this hasn’t stopped people from reading the translations of her work. The internet has made it possible for even more people in various countries to have access to her poems.

Because access to Dickinson’s poems and letters is so readily available, more young readers are being exposed to her work. She gains a new fan every time a reader falls for one of her poems or researches her life and finds her letters. Though she seemed to live a very solitary and perhaps lonely in the years before she died, I do not think she would be lonely if she were alive today. Her work speaks to you on a soul level that not many authors are capable of in their lifetimes. She has managed this even after her death—something else not many authors achieve. The topics she brings up are not relegated to one century or person— they encompass anyone in any century. As the years have gone by, we have become more open about mental health, religion, spiritualism, sex, and love. These topics are not as taboo as they once were, and people are openly acknowledging these thoughts and feelings in ways that weren’t as openly talked about in Dickinson’s time.

While these things certainly help Dickinson to gain readers and remain relevant, it isn’t the only thing that has played a part. The invention of the internet has made it possible to access
Dickinson’s work in any country and language around the world. She has managed to not just gain American fans, but fans across the world. Her poems have been translated into many different languages and are just as accessible in other countries. The work and world of Dickinson is literally at our fingertips.

**Dickinson’s Permeation of Popular Culture**

If you were to ask a random person on the street who Emily Dickinson is, they may be able to tell you she is a famous author, or perhaps that she’s a poet. Others may be able to name some of her more well-known poems, recite some history, or even name a poem. Children are learning about her in school and are being exposed to her nature poems early on. But it isn’t just there that children and adults alike are being exposed to her work more now. Dickinson has reached a place that she probably never dreamed of: she’s a pop culture icon over a hundred years after she died.

Dickinson’s pop culture status has caused her to permeate cartoons for small children, comic strips in newspapers, The Simpsons, and casual jokes can be heard in sitcoms old and new. Dickinson has reached a point of permeation that people don’t have to have read her work to recognize her, they understand the jokes about her because enough of her history and work is known that the humor is appreciated even without extensive knowledge. In fact a show that I remember as a child where a young girl cheated in a poetry writing contest and won the Emily Dickinson trophy. Dickinson was one of her favorite poets and she had to win that contest. The trophy would not stop calling her a cheater every time she looked at it. Eventually, the girl could not take the statue calling her a cheater a second longer and she admitted to cheating in the contest. The trophy stopped talking and everything was right in her world again. Dickinson is being referenced in children’s shows and she’s being recognized- I remember knowing she was a
famous poet even at about nine years old. She has permeated popular culture to the extent that even our children understand the jokes that occur when she is in a cartoon, comic strip, or meme on the internet and she isn’t going anywhere any time soon.
Conclusion

In the final analysis, I think it can be safely said that Dickinson and her work have made a large impact on people in the 21st century. Though the story of how Dickinson’s work was published is well known, the impact of the editorial theory that came from publishing her work later on is still being felt and used not only for her, but also other authors today. While she never set out to become famous, let alone a 21st century icon, she has has far surpassed expectations and it plays a large part in why her work is still relevant today. While people in the US may not know her work, they know her name. They see her in cartoons on tv or in comic strips and laugh at the jokes. They’re Emily Dickinson fans whether they know her work or not.

While evidence suggests she was critical of fans in her time, Dickinson was a fan of the famous authors of her time. The concept of fandom was still forming when Dickinson was alive, but it has only grown from there. Though she chose to not become famous, her fame is another reason why her work has lived on. Another is her fans themselves—she has never faded because her fans won’t let that happen. Though she never wanted to publish her work, her poems live on in online archives and in institutions that are world famous. Private letters she probably never thought would be published are revered as psychological insight into a woman who is touted as both rebellious and mysterious all at once.

Though her literary work is celebrated, the fact that Dickinson never wanted to publish her work in traditional means cannot be ignored. Dickinson’s first editors, Todd and Higginson greatly changed her poems then made money off them by publishing them for the world. The
moral implications of editing an author’s work so it is completely unrecognizable posthumously cannot be ignored. Though they helped bring the world’s attention to Dickinson’s genius, it wasn’t really her work anymore after they were done editing. This brings up questions on ethics and if we should really have seen any of her work when it went directly against her wishes. And it’s still happening today with the merchandise being produced. So, when is it enough? When do we decide to stop when it comes to an author and their specific wishes? This seems to change on a case by case basis, so one answer does not fit every situation. While there is a part of me that is grateful to know Dickinson’s work, another part of me feels awful that it took so long before someone decided to at least partially make it right and fix all of the editing done to her work.

The main question running through my mind as I worked on this capstone was what she would think of all of her fans wearing t-shirts and drinking coffee from mugs with lines from her poetry and letters on them. Would she be angry? Would she shy away from her adoring fans? Or would she embrace the insanity that is part of fandom today? Though she hated the versions of her work that were published before she died, I think if she had access, she would have loved self-publishing through Amazon or any number of self-publishers that have sprung up in recent years. She was a rebel who was determined to have her work published as she wrote it—not letting editors tell her what was “correct.” Though I think she would have been in agony over the first editions of her work, somehow, I think she would have jumped on the self-publishing train if she’d had the access in the 19th century. So, what does that mean overall for Dickinson?

In conclusion, I don’t think, based on her popularity and current scholarship research, that Dickinson and her work are just going to disappear into infamy, whatever her personal wishes may have been. She has attained such a status as a pop culture icon and her work is still so relevant in the 21st century that this scholarship won’t just disappear. Dickinson herself is still a
mysterious figure that scholars a determined to know, she led a reclusive life in her later years and this brought her attention. After the essays promoting the first volume of edited poetry, the image of Emily Dickinson sitting at a desk with a feathered quill, writing alone, and sad will not fade away. While more research has been done into what she was really like, this image has impacted how her poetry and her character has been read and seen and will not fade away. I believe that because of these specific events both during and after her death, Dickinson will remain in our culture for years to come. As we learn new things about her and her life, this will only cement her status in our society as an American Literature icon, a pop culture icon, and revered poet who was before her time.
Appendix

Letter 46

6 July 1851

I have just come in from Church very hot, and faded, having witnessed a couple of Baptisms, three admissions to the church, a Supper of the Lord, and some other minor transactions time fails me to record. Knowing Rev A.M. Colton so thoroughly as you do, having received much benefit from his past ministrations, and bearing the relation of "Lamb" unto his fold, you will delight to know that he is well, and preaching, that he has preached today strange as it may - must seem, that just from his benediction I hurry away to you. No doubt you can call to mind his eloquent addresses, his earnest look and gesture, his calls of now today - no doubt you can call to mind the impetus of spirit received from the same gentleman and his enlivening preaching - therefore if you should fancy I'd looked upon the wine from walk or conversation a little fierce or fiery, bear all these things in mind!

Our church grows interesting, Zion lifts her head - I overhear remarks signifying Jerusalem, I do not feel at liberty to say any more today! I wanted to write you Friday, the night of Jennie Lind, but reaching home past midnight, and my room sometime after, encountering several perils starting, and on the way, among which a kicking horse, an inexperienced driver, a
number of Jove's thunderbolts, and a very terrible rain, are worthy to have record. All of us went - just four - add an absent individual and that will make full five - the concert commenced at eight, but knowing the world was hollow we though we'd start at six, and come up with everybody that meant to come up with us - we had proceeded some steps when one of the beasts showed symptoms, and just by the blacksmith's shop exercises commenced, consisting of kicking and plunging on the part of the horse, and whips and moral suasion from the gentleman who drove - the horse refused to proceed, and your respected family with much chagrin dismounted, advanced to the hotel, and for a season halted - another horse procured, we were politely invited to take our seats, and proceed, which we refused to do till the animal was warranted - about half thro' our journey thunder was said to be heard, and a suspicious cloud came travelling up the sky - what words express our horror when rain began to fall - in drops - sheets - cataracts - what fancy conceive of drippings and of drenchings which we met on the way - how the stage and its mourning captives drew up at Warner's hotel - how all of us alighted, and were conducted in, how the rain did not abate, how we walked in silence to the old Edwards Church and took our seats in the same, how Jennie came out like a child and sang and sang again, how bouquets fell in showers, and the roof was rent with applause - how it thundered outside, and inside with the thunder of God and of men - judge ye which was the loudest - how we all loved Jennie Lind, but not accustomed oft to her manner of singing didn't fancy that so well as we did her - no doubt it was very fine - but take some notes from her "Echo" - the Bird sounds from the "Bird Song" and some of her curious trills, and I'd rather have a Yankee.

Herself, and no her music, was what we seemed to love - she has an air of exile in her mild blue eyes, and a something sweet and touching in her native accent which charms her many
friends - "Give me my thatched cottage" as she sang grew so earnest she seemed half lost in song and for a transient time I fancied she had found it and would be seen "na mair," and then her foreign accent made her again a wanderer - we will talk about her sometime when you come - Father say all the evening looking mad, and silly, and yet so much amused you would have died a laughing - when the performers bowed, he said "Good evening Sir" - and when they retired, "very well - that will do," it was'nt sarcasm exactly, nor it was'nt disdain, it was infinitely funnier than either of those virtues, as if old Abraham had come to see the show, and thought it was all very well, but a little excess of Monkey! She took 4000 $ / mistake arithmetical/ for tickets at Northampton aside from all expenses. I'm glad you took a seat opposite Lord Mayor - if he had say in your lap it had pleased me even better - it must seem pretty grand to be a city officer and pat the Sheriff's back, and wink to the Policemen! I'm sorry you got so tired, and would suggest respectfully a Rose in every thorn!

We are all pretty comfortable, and things get along well - Bowdoin has gone home haying - the Tutors are hanging on - Francis March is here, had not been seen at the latest - the Exhibition came, and went for all that I know - choosing not to "tend." Sanford - Valedictorian - Stebbins - Salutatorian - Carr [Karr] - Oratio Philosophico - I do not know the rest, except that Wm Washburn has a Dissertation from the delivery which he is "respectfully excused."

About our coming to Boston - we think we shall probably come - we want to see our friends - yourself and Aunt L's family - we dont care a fig for the museum, the stillness, or Jennie Lind. We are not going to stay long - not more than a week - are sorry Emily is gone, but she shall come to see us - how long will Joel be gone - we have talked of Thursday or Friday as the earliest that we should come - perhaps not until Monday - can you write a line and send to us tomorrow, how long Joe will be gone? Give our love to our friends, and tell them we will write
them and let them know our plans as soon as we hear from you - Thank them if you please for their kind invitation, and tell them we are coming not to see sights but them, and therefore the stillness will not incommode us. I saw Martha Friday - she inquired all about you, and said she was going to write, and Susie too that I could send next time - it has rained ever since then and it is raining now, now so I disappoint you - have patience Austin, and they shall come next time. Father says your letters are altogether before Shakespeare, and he will have them published to put in our library. Emily Fowler's regards - Love from us all - dont know what I say I write in such a hurry.

Your aff Sister

Emilie.
Publication – is the Auction (788)

BY EMILY DICKINSON

Publication – is the Auction

Of the Mind of Man –

Poverty – be justifying

For so foul a thing

Possibly – but We – would rather

From Our Garret go

White – unto the White Creator –

Than invest – Our Snow –

Thought belong to Him who gave it –

Then – to Him Who bear

It's Corporeal illustration – sell

The Royal Air –
In the Parcel – Be the Merchant

Of the Heavenly Grace –

But reduce no Human Spirit

To Disgrace of Price –
I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—

The stillness in the room
Was like the stillness in the air
Between the Heavens of storm.

The Days around had wrung their Joy.
And Nature rose gathering Grace
For that last short while the King
Be witnessed, in the room His home.

I smiled my Helpmeet, singed away
What portion of me the

Designable—and then it was
Then interposed a Fly

With blue uncertain, stumbling Buzz
Between the Light and me.

And then the windows failed, and then
I could not see to see.
I heard a Fly buzz - when I died - (591)

BY EMILY DICKINSON

I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -

The Stillness in the Room

Was like the Stillness in the Air -

Between the Heaves of Storm -

The Eyes around - had wrung them dry -

And Breaths were gathering firm

For that last Onset - when the King

Be witnessed - in the Room -

I willed my Keepsakes - Signed away

What portion of me be

Assignable - and then it was

There interposed a Fly -
With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -

Between the light - and me -

And then the Windows failed - and then

I could not see to see -

"Hope" is the thing with feathers - (314)

"Hope" is the thing with feathers –

That perches in the soul -

And sings the tune without the words -

And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -

And sore must be the storm -

That could abash the little Bird

That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chillest land -

And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,

It asked a crumb - of me.

I dwell in Possibility – (466)

I dwell in Possibility –

A fairer House than Prose –

More numerous of Windows –

Superior – for Doors –

Of Chambers as the Cedars –

Impregnable of eye –

And for an everlasting Roof

The Gambrels of the Sky –

Of Visitors – the fairest –

For Occupation – This –

The spreading wide my narrow Hands

To gather Paradise –
To Mrs. J.G. Holland

From ED

early August 1856?

Don't tell, dear Mrs. Holland, but wicked as I am, I read my Bible sometimes, and in it as I read today, I found a verse like this, where friends should "go no more out" and there were "no tears," and I wished as I sat down to-night that we were there - not here - and that wonderful world had commenced, which makes such promises, and rather than write you, I were by your side, and the "hundred and forty and four thousand" where chatting pleasantly, yet not disturbing us. And I'm half tempted to take my seat in that Paradise of which the good man writes, and begin forever and ever now, so wondrous does it seem. My only sketch, profile, of Heaven is a large, blue sky, bluer and larger than the biggest I have seen in June, and in it are my friends - all of them - every one of them - those who are with me now, and those who were "parted" as we walked, and "snatched up to Heaven."

If roses had not faed, and frosts had never come, and one had not fallen here and there whom I could not waken, there were no need of other Heaven than the one below - and if God had been here this summer, and seen the things that I have seen - I guess that He would think His Paradise superfluous. Don't tell Him, for the world, though, for after all He's said about it, I should like to see what He was building for us, with no hammer, and no stone, and no journeyman either. Dear Mrs. Holland, I love, to-night - love you and Dr. Holland, and "time and sense" - and fading things, and things that do not fade.
I'm so glad you are not a blossom, for those in my garden fade, and then a "reaper whose name is Death" has come to get a few to help him make a bouquet for himself, so I'm glad you are not a rose - and I'm glad you are not a bee, for where they go when summer's done, only the thyme knows, and even were you a robin, when the west winds came, you would coolly wink at me, and away, some morning!

As "little Mrs. Holland," then, I think I love you most, and trust that tiny lady will dwell below while we dwell, and when with many a wonder we seek the new Land, her wistful face, with ours, shall look the last upon the hills, and first upon - well, Home!

Pardon my sanity, Mrs. Holland, in a world insane, and love me if you will, for I had rather be loved than to be called a king in earth, or a lord in Heaven.

Thank you for your sweet note - the clergy are very well. Will bring such fragments from them as shall seem me good. I kiss my paper here for you and Dr. Holland - would it were cheeks instead.

Dearly,

Emilie.
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