



THE THOREAU SOCIETY

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September 19th, 2025

Dear members of the granting organization:

As the president of the Thoreau Society, the largest and oldest organization dedicated to an American author, I write to lend my support to the proposal by the Concord Free Public Library for a grant to digitize, restore, and rehouse the collection of Thoreau surveys held in the Munroe Special Collections.

As a Thoreau scholar myself, I have found these surveys immensely useful even in their current state. Thoreau was a master of nonfiction prose, but he was also a highly visual thinker, and seeing his survey charts and maps offers an invaluable perspective on his work. His professional surveying was a critical part of his legacy as a thinker and writer, and a number of recent scholars, particularly Patrick Chura, in *Thoreau the Land Surveyor*, and Robert Thorson, in *The Boatman*, have completely reshaped our understanding of Thoreau by placing his surveying at the center of his world. I have relied heavily on the maps Thoreau traced as part of his journeys to and writing about Cape Cod and Maine, faint and difficult to read as they are; to have them newly digitized and easily available would greatly increase their impact for readers and students of Thoreau. His work as a surveyor in Concord and the region sheds important light on how Thoreau balanced his ground-breaking pleas for land conservation and an alternative to a rapacious capitalism with his efforts to make an ethical living within this system – they illuminate his complicated life and world. And they bring people to better understand his work. At our recent Annual Gathering, one of the most popular events was a walking tour retracing some of his surveying work in town. At the center of this effort to use the surveys to better understand Thoreau's legacy is his survey of Walden Pond, a central metaphor of his experience to plumb the depths of Nature that was as rigorously scientific as it was symbolic. To have this original survey restored to full legibility and made accessible to all would be a godsend to readers, teachers, and scholars everywhere.

As president of the Society, I've been privileged to get to know scholars, enthusiasts, and casual readers of Thoreau alike, and I've seen many find their way to the current digital collection of the surveys and grow fascinated, finding their own understanding of this writer deepened and transformed. I very much hope this is a project you can fund – it will bring Thoreau to new audiences at a critical time.

Sincerely,

John J. Kucich, Ph. D
Professor of English, Bridgewater State University
President of the Thoreau Society