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Illegible Text

There are two ways to deal with illegible text within a manuscript: `<unclear>` and `<gap>`. `<unclear>` should be used only when you are able to transcribe the material in some fashion. For example, if you encountered a name that you could not read but at first glance it appeared to be Dear Captain blampinau, you would code it as Dear Captain `<unclear resp="MH" cert="low">blampinau</unclear>`. However, if you are unable to determine the text in any fashion, you should code it using `<gap>`. Thus, Dear Captain {??????} would be coded as Dear Captain `<gap extent="1 word" resp="MH"/>`.

`<unclear>` is used to indicate a conjectural or uncertain reading of a passage.

- **reason** is used to explain the reason for the difficulty in transcribing the text. You would not need to include this attribute if the reason was simply the main author's bad handwriting. If the reason for the problem is manuscript damage, be sure both to indicate that here and to provide supplementary information in the agent attribute.
 - **resp** this attribute contains the initials of the individual responsible for making this editorial decision.
 - **cert** if the editor is uncertain of the accuracy of his/her expansion, he/she should indicate so using the cert attribute. Valid values are: **low**, **medium** and **high**.
 - **hand** if the reason for the difficulty in determining the text arises from some action (i.e. a partial deletion) that can be assigned to an identifiable hand other than that of the primary author of the text, the individual should be indicated here.
 - **agent** if the text is uncertain because of some non-human cause, such as foxing, water or fire damage, indicate it here. Be sure also to indicate the reason for the unclear text is manuscript damage in the reason attribute.
- `<gap>` is used to indicate material that is utterly illegible.

- **reason** is used to explain the reason for the gap in the transcription. At present, the only valid values are **illegible**, **illegible deletion** and **damage**. If the reason for the problem is manuscript damage, be sure to provide supplementary information in the agent attribute.
- **resp** should contain the initials of the editor responsible for tagging this gap.
- **hand** if the reason for the illegible text in the manuscript can be assigned to the actions of a specific hand other than that of the main author, then that individual should be identified here.
- **agent** if the reason for the illegible text is manuscript damage, then supplementary details should be provided here (i.e. foxing, water or fire damage). If a value is provided for the agent attribute, be sure to enter 'manuscript damage' for the reason attribute.
- **extent** is used to indicate the length of the omitted text, in characters, words, lines or cm. The format for this should be:
 - **1 character**
 - **2 words**
 - **3? characters**
 - **2 cm**

For example, the text, "I discovered that the most important thing in my travels was always to {illegible text of about 8 characters that is struck through}" would be coded I discovered that the most important thing in my travels was always to `<gap reason="illegible deletion' extent="8? characters" resp="MH"/>`

Find out about encoding [Person & Placenames](#)