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UCSB Editor-in-Chief Receives Thoreau Society Medal

Elizabeth Witherell, editor-in-chief of The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau, has received the Thoreau Society Medal in recognition of "significant and sustained contributions that exemplify the ideals and values represented by Henry David Thoreau." The award was presented on July 12 –– Thoreau's 191st birthday –– at the society's annual meeting in Concord, Mass.

Located in the Davidson Library at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the Thoreau Edition is a projected 30-volume series that when completed will include the contents of all 47 volumes of Thoreau's handwritten journal, his writings for publication, his correspondence, and other uncollected papers.

"The Thoreau Society Medal means a great deal to me, coming as it does from people whose own commitment to the study of Thoreau is so deep," Witherell said. "The award is not only a validation of the work I've done so far, it's an encouragement to continue that work and complete it."

At the same meeting, Thoreau Society Medals were awarded to Robert Hudspeth, an emeritus professor of English at the University of Redlands and editor of three volumes of Thoreau's correspondence for the Thoreau Edition, and Paul Tsongas, who served in the United States House of Representatives from Massachusetts's 5th Congressional District and was an active supporter of wilderness preservation. Tsongas died in 1997. The medal was accepted by his wife, Niki Tsongas, who now

holds his seat in Congress.

Witherell joined the Thoreau Edition staff in 1974 and became editor-in-chief in 1980. Under her direction, 10 of the project's current 15 volumes have been published by Princeton University Press. They include seven volumes of Thoreau's Journal (1981-2002) as well as "Translations" (1986), "Cape Cod" (1988), and "Excursions" (2007). Before becoming editor-in-chief, she co-edited another project volume, "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" (1980). Also, she has made available on the Thoreau Edition Web site transcripts of Thoreau's Journal that have not yet been edited. These will eventually be published as Journals 9-16.

Established in 1941, the Thoreau Society is the largest and longest running organization devoted to an American author. Its mission is to promote Thoreau's life and works through education, outreach, and advocacy. Previous medal recipients include David Brower, an environmental activist who was the first executive director of the Sierra Club and founded Friends of the Earth and the Earth Island Institute, and E. O. Wilson, the Pellegrino University Research Professor at Harvard and the scholar who popularized sociobiology.

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Thoreau Edition

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