

## METHOD

**T**HE first decision in editing this work was to publish the letters by correspondences and not chronologically. The Advisory Committee, I believe, are now unanimous that this decision is the right one, since most of the major correspondences and many of the minor ones have a predominant subject. It is my belief that Walpole selected his correspondents with a subject more or less in his mind and that when the correspondence ended, through death or 'coolness,' he immediately chose another correspondent to whom he could write on the same themes. As we have seen, Cole followed Zouch; Lort and Pinkerton followed Cole. Mason followed Gray and was succeeded by Hannah More. Lady Ossory followed Montagu, and so on. A chronological arrangement would have destroyed this unity, and would have hampered the reader concerned with a specific subject. To take an example at random, the following letters are at present known for February 1764: Cole to Walpole, Walpole to Hertford, Walpole to Cole, Cole to Walpole, Drumgold to Walpole, Walpole to Hertford, Hertford to Walpole, Mann to Walpole, Walpole to Mann, Walpole to Anne Pitt, Walpole to Cole, Walpole to Dalrymple, Walpole to Hertford, Hertford to Walpole, Walpole to Grosvenor Bedford. Such an arrangement lacks the simplicity of a single correspondence and becomes a maze of unrelated subjects. Walpole's letters gain greatly in interest by being restored to his correspondent's. They can now be read for the first time, as they were written and answered, with 'ease and opportunity,' in Stevenson's phrase.

A much more difficult decision, and one in which the Advisory Committee are by no means unanimous, was what to do about 'normalization.' The decision was to retain Walpole's punctuation and spelling of proper names, but to normalize other spellings and capitalization. A list of Walpole's obsolete spellings is given on page xliii. It is often not possible to tell whether Walpole intended a capital, and the extra labour and expense of