It seems to be my fate in life to be called upon periodically to give an assessment of Phenomenology in America. My first, published in 1964, and entitled, "Recent Work in Phenomenology," was written at the request of the editor of a major American philosophical journal at the time when phenomenology was just beginning to become a recognized force on the American philosophical scene. Once again, in 1974, I did another brief report on "Phenomenology in America" for the second volume of the proceedings of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Once again, in 1974, I did an assessment of the state of phenomenology in America for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Phänomenologie and for the British Society for Phenomenology. In each of these I could report substantial progress of development and today I can say that it is evident to any observer that this movement, begun so modestly shortly after the Second World War, now cuts a very wide swath through the field of American philosophy as a whole. We have more journals available to us (and eager to accept sound research in this field) than any other country on earth. The most notable are certainly Research in Phenomenology (edited by John Sallis), Man and World (edited by John Anderson, Joseph J. Kockelmans and Calvin Schrag), Philosophical Topics (presently edited by Robert Shahan), and the recently founded Husserl Studies (edited by J. N. Mohanty and Karl Schumann). There are of course a number of other philosophical, psychological, and social science journals, well known to our membership, which occasionally, and sometimes even regularly, accept articles on phenomenological topics.
Rereading the report I made in the early 1960s is now something quaintly nostalgic. It contains such lines as:

One year ago, about forty philosophers, psychologists, and psychiatrists from widely scattered parts of the country gathered at Northwestern University to hold a symposium on phenomenology and existential philosophy and to found what has been tentatively named the Society for Existential Philosophy and Phenomenology. Whether this Society will develop into a permanent organization and exert any appreciable influence on American philosophy remains to be seen . . . .

And, later: “The most pressing need, and the one least likely to be quickly filled, is the need for good translations of the major works of Edmund Husserl.” And it goes on to say that “within the next few years translations of major works by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Aron Gurwitsch, Paul Ricoeur, Henri Duméry, Georges Gudorf, Helmuth Plessner, Eugène Minkowski, Alfred Schutz, Mikel Dufrenne and a number of other leading European phenomenologists” will be published.

With our hindsight of today, reviewing the progress of phenomenology in America, it is almost impossible to empathize with the uncertainty over the future which we felt in those times. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Dorion Cairns had reminded us that phenomenology in the United States was still an “exotic” import, and Herbert Spiegelberg in his monumental The Phenomenological Movement, first published in 1960, had said that phenomenology had actually “lost ground” in the United States after 1950.

But we now see that the promise made in 1962, with the founding of S.P.E.P. and of the Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, has been kept and that we do have available to us excellent translations of a great body of European phenomenological literature. Given the fact that American and other English-speaking philosophers will not (and often cannot) read philosophical writings in any language but their own, we can see that an important task has been accomplished and is continuing.

At the present time several series of publications are now devoted to publishing titles in phenomenology. The Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy originally published by the Northwestern University Press (where over fifty titles were published) is being continued by the Indiana University Press (and will soon have well over twenty-