

Digital Humanities

Project Name: A Database of Eighteenth-Century Printers' Ornaments

Main Contact: Dr Hazel Wilkinson, University of Birmingham

Useful Links:

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/english/wilkinson-hazel.aspx>

Outline of project:

Printers in the 18th century played a hugely significant role in the book trade and the dissemination of information. They often acted as publishers and literary agents as well as the printer of the physical books. Knowing who printed a book can give insight into the networks of “who knew who” during the 18th century, how information was exchanged, and an understanding of the literary culture of the time. In many cases the name of the printer is not printed in the book. However, most books contain printer’s “ornaments”, images that they printed in the book using woodblocks (which were unique hand-carvings) or metal casts (which developed unique signs of wear over time).

Dr Wilkinson is creating a database of these ornaments in ECCO, using image extraction. Where we know the name of the printer and what their ornaments looked like, it means we can then find books that contain that same ornaments (but not the name) and identify the printer.



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Examples of Research Projects Using Gale Data

Project Name: Representation of the British Suffrage Movement (PhD thesis now published as a monograph with Bloomsbury Academic)

Main contact: Dr Kat Gupta, University of Sussex

Useful links: <http://mixosaurus.co.uk/research/womens-suffrage/>

Outline of project:

Dr Gupta used the OCR text from the *Times Digital Archive*. They used techniques from the field of "Corpus Linguistics" to explore how the language in the newspaper described the campaign for women to get the right to vote in Britain from 1908-1914. They focus on campaigners.

The suffrage movement was not a unified one; it was composed of various groups with differing backgrounds, ideologies and aims. Dr Gupta shows that in the newspaper press, the movement was depicted and described as a single entity – "the people in power simplified the campaign and campaigners' identities through the use of language to describe the women involved. Alternate, pro-suffrage voices can be seen in the Letters to the Editor pages, and these offer a counter-argument to the overriding representation of suffragettes as violent and dangerous.



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Project Name: Commonplace Cultures; Digging into 18th-century literary culture

Main contact: Dr Glenn Roe, Australian National University (with Clovis Gladstone, Robert Morrissey, and Mark Olsen)

Useful links:

<http://commonplacecultures.org/>

<https://researchers.anu.edu.au/researchers/roe-gh>

Outline of project:

“Commonplaces” were a popular form of extracts from texts in the 18th and 19th centuries. Writers would borrow phrases and sentences from earlier authors, and kept “commonplace” books with lists of extracts. They are similar to quotations, except that they were rarely marked as such (i.e. there were no quotation marks), and sometimes it appears that the writer is passing off the quotation as their own work. Nowadays we might think of this as plagiarism, but it was a common and accepted practice in the 18th century.

Glenn Roe and his team have been looking at the use of Commonplaces in the ECCO data, to see how text was regularly re-used during the period. They realised early in the project that they would need to exclude the Bible, as commonplaces from the Bible are overwhelming! Early findings suggest that Shakespeare and writers such as Alexander Pope are the most frequent writers to have their words used as commonplaces.

Commonplace Cultures is a collaborative project between the University of Chicago, Oxford University, and the Australian National University. Awarded a Round Three Digging into Data grant in 2014, its current goals are to bring the results of its data mining efforts to the general public, making the more than 40 million identified shared passages drawn from the ECCO (Eighteenth Century Collection Online) database available in searchable form.

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