Challenges of Publishing the Long Eighteenth Century Online

Feedback from British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conference Oxford, January 2009

The 2009 British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conference at Oxford had two roundtable discussions on publishing digital resources for the eighteenth-century. The roundtable included ProQuest, Cengage, Adam Matthews Digital, JISC and around 30 or so scholars, four of whom contributed specific papers. Most of the audience that spoke were researchers in literature rather than historians - this had some bearing on the type of conversations that occurred, which are recorded below in note form.

A list of ten resources (see below) was presented to the audience, yet nearly the entire conversation revolved around EECO and EEBO - these were the key resources that everyone came back to.

There was frequent mention of the need for completeness in a resource (e.g. does EEBO really have every early English book?), Gaps in a resource needed to be highlighted, particularly as undergraduates can be unaware that not everything is in digital form. There was also discussion about what undergraduates needed from a resource like EEBO? Should they be shown everything? Or should an interface be tailored for their specific learning process? The need for student training was mentioned (none of the academics mentioned that they might need training).

The importance of being transparent in policy and editorial decisions was raised. Often users are unsure why one thing is included and another not.

Relatedly, the audience talked about the need for variants of texts and manuscripts to be included in digital resources. I.e. not just have one version of a book, but have different editions and variants of it to allow for comparison. This allowed liberation from the concept of their being 'one true version of the text'.

There was general agreement that the digitisation of resources was so useful and so obvious ('you can work without putting your socks on' one scholar said) that actually stating the case for digitisation was not really necessary.

Getting to grips with interfaces in different resources was a pain and there were repeated call for standardised interfaces. "Every car I drive may be different, but I still know how to drive it without thinking. Why should it not be the same for website interfaces?"

One scholar pointed to some of the impact that digitisation is having on the field. Having different versions of the same text allowed one to get a much better idea of textual history, and this has modified scholarly opinion on the history of reading, writing and publishing. Digitisation of popular books also altered conceptions of existing genres - 'courtship novels' and 'gothic novels' were considered in much broader terms since the publication of ECCO. A far greater number of novels dealing with poverty, prostitution and adultery have recently come to light.

Wikis were discussed. There was some ambivalence about user editing, but the possibility of digital annotations was more warmly received.

The weakness of the cataloguing of Google Books was mentioned.

The idea of an 18th-century portal bring different resources together was warmly received. It should deal with the long eighteenth century (1688-1834).

The importance of persistent and citable URLs was mentioned, although many scholars prefer to cite the analogue original, despite having used the digital version.

The digital divide was discussed - independent scholars and those from institutions that could not pay for subscriptions were being disadvantaged. One member of staff at Kingston had a library budget of £400 a year for digital and printed media (i.e. books) in the 18th century, leaving no money for electronic resources. There was discussion of subject societies buying access to the resources as part of their membership costs. Cengage mentioned that pay-per-view may become more common because of this.

Speakers at the two roundtables:

Mark Holland, Gale/Cengage Learning, London
Dan Burnstone, Arts and Humanities Publishing; ProQuest
Bill Pidduck, Adam Matthew Digital;
Alastair Dunning, JISC Programme Manager;

Adam Rounce, Manchester Metropolitan University;
Eve Tavor Bannet, University of Oklahoma;
Kate Rumbold, The Shakespeare Institute;
Nicholas Cambridge, The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at University College London.

Eighteenth-Century Digital Collections

Highlights prepared for British Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies conference, January 2009

1) **ECCO - Eighteenth-Century Collections Online**
Published by Gale/Cengage Learning
Subscription required
www.gale.cengage.com/EighteenthCentury

Eighteenth Century Collections Online is one of the most ambitious single digitization projects yet undertaken. It delivers every significant English-language and foreign-language monograph titles printed in Great Britain during the eighteenth century, along with thousands of important works from the Americas.

New in January 2009: *ECCO, Part II, New Editions* adds 45,000 titles to the original release of 136,000 titles, and comes with a new interface and increased functionality.

2) **17th, 18th and 19th- Century Newspapers from British Library**

Published by Gale/Cengage Learning; Digitisation funded by Gale, National Science Foundation and JISC
Subscription required; free to UK HE
http://gale.cengage.co.uk/britishlibrarynewspapers

Gale has partnered with the British Library, the National Science Foundation and the JISC to create one of the richest collections of primary source material in the world. Unparalleled in depth and scope, British Library Newspapers consists of two major collections from the British Library which span 300 years of newspaper publishing in the UK; *17th and 18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers* and *19th Century British Library Newspapers*. The two collections combined contain nearly 3 million pages and 40 million articles and provide an enormous resource for research on all subjects including history, literature, social sciences, business and economics and the history of journalism and advertising.

3) John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera
Published by ProQuest; Digitisation funded by JISC
http://johnjohnson.chadwyck.co.uk
Subscription required; free to UK HE

This collection provides access to thousands of items selected from the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, offering unique insights into the changing nature of everyday life in Britain in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Categories include Nineteenth-Century Entertainment, the Booktrade, Popular Prints, Crimes, Murders and Executions, and Advertising.

4) 18th-Century Parliamentary Papers
Published by ProQuest; Digitisation funded by JISC
http://www.parl18c.soton.ac.uk/
Subscription required; free to UK HE

18th Century Official Parliamentary Publications Portal 1688 - 1834 makes available to the UK academic community over one million pages of British Official Parliamentary Publications from the eighteenth century. The comprehensive collection has been drawn from the University libraries at Southampton and Cambridge and the British Library. Coverage includes the Journals of the House of Commons and Lords, Parliamentary Registers, Sessional Papers of the House of Commons, Acts, Bills and Local and Personal Acts.

5) British Periodicals, 1681-1939
Published by ProQuest
http://britishperiodicals.chadwyck.co.uk/
Subscription/purchase required

British Periodicals traces the development and growth of the periodical press in Britain from its origins in the late seventeenth century through the 18th century to the Victorian 'age of periodicals' and beyond. This unique digital archive consists of more than 460 periodical runs published from the 1680s to the 1930s, comprising over six million keyword-searchable pages and forming an unrivalled record of more than two centuries of British history and culture.

British Periodicals contains 134 titles published during the 18th century, ranging from the celebrated - *The Rambler* and *The Spectator* - to less well-known publications such as the *Lounger's Miscellany, or The Lucubrations of Abel Slug, Esq.*

6) **The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674-1913**
Open Access (i.e. freely available)
www.oldbaileyonline.org
Published by University of Hertfordshire, the Open University and the University of Sheffield; Funded by Big Lottery Fund, AHRC, ESRC

The Old Bailey Proceedings Online makes available a fully searchable, digitised collection of all surviving editions of the Old Bailey Proceedings from 1674 to 1913, and of the Ordinary of Newgate's Accounts, 1690 to 1772. It allows access to over 210,000 trials and biographical details of approximately 3,000 men and women executed at Tyburn, free of charge for non-commercial use.

In addition to the text, accessible through both keyword and structured searching, this website provides digital images of all 190,000 original pages of the Proceedings, 5,000 pages of Ordinary's Accounts, advice on methods of searching this resource, information on the historical and legal background to the Old Bailey court and its Proceedings, and descriptions of published and manuscript materials relating to the trials covered. Contemporary maps and images have also been provided.

7) **Eighteenth-Century Journals**

Published by Adam Matthew Digital
Information at http://www.amdigital.co.uk/collections/Eighteenth-Century-Journals-Portal/default.aspx

This resource comprises three sub-collections at present:

Eighteenth Century Journals I is drawn from the Hope Collection at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. It brings together 76 rare journals printed between 1714 and 1799. The collection combines well-known publications with more minor works, offering users a wide-ranging view of eighteenth century publishing culture

Eighteenth Century Journals II from the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin is a critical resource for the study of all aspects of the eighteenth century. It offers a wide variety of newspapers and periodicals which are not available elsewhere. Many are extremely rare and exist only in short runs. All are now offered in extremely clear greyscale images, supported by fully searchable text that has been double-keyed and is captured in the original format.

Eighteenth Century Journals III is drawn from British Library Newspapers at Colindale and from Cambridge University Library. At the request of scholars and librarians, it focuses on journals published outside of London.

Scholars will be excited by the inclusion of Canadian, Caribbean and Indian journals and can explore the ways in which major world events such as the revolution in Haiti are reported in different areas. There are also many Irish and Scottish journals and newspapers.

8) **Literary Manuscripts (Leeds)**

17th and 18th Century Poetry from the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds

Published by Adam Matthew Digital
Information at http://www.amdigital.co.uk/collections/Literary-Manuscripts-Leeds/Default.aspx

This project opens up new opportunities for the reading, study and appreciation of 17th & 18th century verse and provides valuable source materials for both literary scholars and historians. Scholars can now see the way in which manuscript verse was originally recorded, read and circulated

9) **The Grand Tour:**
Sources from the Beinecke Library, the Paul Mellon Centre, the Chaney Library, the British Library and other sources

Forthcoming from Adam Matthew Digital

10) **E-Enlightenment**

Published by Oxford University Press
Subscription required
http://www.e-enlightenment.com/

Electronic Enlightenment offers unrivalled access to the web of correspondence between the greatest thinkers and writers of the long 18th century and their families and friends, bankers and booksellers, patrons and publishers.

Contents to date

- Nearly 6,000 correspondents
- Over 53,000 letters and documents
- Over 80,000 document sources — citing manuscripts and early editions
- Nearly 230,000 scholarly annotations
- Many languages — English, French, German, Italian, etc.
- A network of external links to other online resources
- Twice yearly updates — both published and previously unpublished correspondence