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The *George Eliot Archive*: Current Reception & Comparison of DH Projects

An Undergraduate Honors Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
University Honors Program Requirements
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

by
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Abstract

As the field of Digital Humanities continues to grow, the projects also continue to develop their own identities with unique goals. The interdisciplinary nature of multimedia projects has allowed DH to develop in a number of different directions. As a research assistant for the *George Eliot Archive* digital project launched in early 2019 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, it is essential for us to stay current this development in the field of DH. Through exploring twenty digital projects and archives at various stages of development or establishment, I have gained a cohesive and current snapshot of Digital Humanities projects, and gained insight that will be implemented into current and future *George Eliot Archive* features. In addition to my own primary research with a primary focus of Victorian single-author-focused archives and repositories, I have also delved into the history of digital humanities through secondary sources in the form of guides to building projects, journals, and scholarship.

Key Words:

Digital Humanities, George Eliot, Digital Archive, Accessibility, English

Dedication/Appreciation

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Thank you to Dr. Beverley Rilett, director and editor of the *George Eliot Archive* and all sister sites, for being a passionate leader in the field of George Eliot scholarship and a caring supporter of her students and team members. Under her direction, George Eliot has become tremendously more accessible not only to the academic community, but to the author's wide fanbase.

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Finally, thank you to the George Eliot Archive team of the past and present for their valuable contributions to this leading Victorian resource. This thesis is dedicated to the promising and successful future of the *George Eliot Archive* and its sister websites under the continued impressive direction of Dr. Rilett and her team.

The George Eliot Archive: Current Reception & Comparison of Digital Projects

I. Current Reception of Digital Humanities

Computers and the internet offer unique storage and sharing options that allow material to be both saved and shared without boundaries. As technology has in general rapidly evolved over the past two centuries, this ability to store and send information has become ingrained in our everyday life from managing finances through banking applications to posting a photo of your family reunion to share with 200 of your closest “friends”. With the trend of blogs and social media in popular culture across the globe, there has never been such a low barrier to begin publishing: “At virtually no cost, millions have access to their own printing press (Cohen and Rosenzweig 4). This lack of prerequisite for online publication is also shifting practices in the academic community. Not only have daily habits of news and communication been permanently changed, almost every historian in 2020 would regard a computer as basic equipment needed to perform his duties (Cohen and Rosenzweig 1). One field technology is just beginning to be used to its full potential is digital humanities.

Computers offer even more facets for both the preservation and discovery of information from within historical primary texts. In terms of preservation, restrictions of space, paper, and ink no longer exist when the material is being preserved digitally (Gray and Price 14-15). With the compacity of digital media storage, there is no reason for collections to be cut short due to restricted space in a museum or on a library shelf. In terms of discovery, a digital environment provides a new potential for a single object to be represented in multiple ways (Gomez 8-9). One of the most popular ways objects within DH are being re-represented is by borrowing data

methods from computer science. The impact of data science is all over the current field: “Statistical criticism has always been a feature of [DH] conferences... but the number of presentations describing the use of text analytics methods has increased dramatically to the point where large portions of the program guide could be mistaken for an IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) conference” (Alvarado 76). The digitization of the text allows the computer to become a detective for connection. The bias of the human eye is now obsolete; Digital texts can effortlessly learn specifics about a text within seconds of receiving them. Text searching provides researchers with the powerful tool of manipulation that can lead to advanced pattern-matching techniques such as the “regular expressions” used by computer scientists (Cohen and Rosenzweig 4). Texts are no longer required to be scoured and searched; the digitization allows certain words, phrases, and ideas to be simply plucked out for comparison.

Academic fields can often be best described in terms of its scholars driving research goal. R.C. Alvarado refers to this shared objective as the “great project” of a field in his article “Digital Humanities and the Great Project”; but the end target for DH tends to be moving, the same is true for any current field reliant on technology (75). In the case of DH, the goal has become more complex overtime as the field continues to grow. In the beginning, when it was still referred to as Digital Computing rather than Digital Humanities, the “great project” was the retrieval and remediation of large collections of primary sources, mostly textual, that had accumulated in museums, libraries, and archives around the world, hidden from the public (Alvarado 76). The earliest goal of DH, then, was to find a way to preserve and publicize valuable texts in a way that took up less physical space and took better advantage of sharing them.

Alvarado borrows the word “operationalizing” from data science to explain the specific way of changing the representation of information for machine use, and to distinguish old DH methods from new DH (78). Digitized text allows the source to become available in a non-traditional way. Connections that might not have been apparent due to human bias in research can now emerge with the help of the ever-objective computer. It also involves a paring down from the specificity and specialization of theory and rhetoric within the fields of traditional humanities. Rather than asking open-ended questions with a myriad of answers, operationalization produces “a rationalization effect” that is caused by the computer’s constant demand for explicit and reductive categories that require one to reimagine ideas into clear and distinct forms (Alvarado 79). The need for this reductive attitude in research was rare before computers in classical humanities fields. Instead of growing simpler and becoming broken down into its most basic components like data in the current climate of DH, rhetoric theories only grew more impressive and complex.

Ultimately, operationalization is able to illustrate interdisciplinary connection: “Instead of only building collections based on shared authorship, genre, provenance, or period, we might focus on how such categorized collections can be connected and aggregated to pursue deep research questions that cut across these boundaries” (Alvarado 79). An example of this on the *George Eliot Archive*, the topic of the next section and my research, are the interactive maps depicting Eliot’s various European travels; it combines the timeline of Eliot’s writing agenda with the historical record of sights and destinations that may have inspired her. In many ways, computers are the only unbiased researchers because, unlike human researchers, they don’t develop trends to search for that might blind side them from other, more obscure elements. Additionally, the *Whitman Archive* speaks about the danger of over categorizing leading to

unnecessary isolation: “The archival objects...fit into a category of correspondence, but many of them also fit comfortably into other categories” (Gray and Price 15). This example is based off Whitman’s correspondence that was often turned into poems, or vice versa. To solve this, Gray and Price have proposed to create new pathways that allow for a single object to appear in multiple sections and categories, instead of limiting it to only one classification (16-17). In this instance, limiting material to belong to only one collection could limit potential research outcomes from users.

Working towards a goal of operationalization also allows digital humanists to take a unique stand in the present that is both backwardly compatible with the building of thematic research collections, and forwardly comparable with engagement of data science and the ultimate goal many digital humanists share of internationally public humanities (Alvarado 81). As the *Whitman Archive* noticed, the regrouping of traditional collections can lead to new observations in the future. Multiple avenues for users to explore the transforming relationship between sources will create a richer environment for scholars when looking for opportunities to further expand access to Whitman documents (Gray and Price 18-19).

The essential goal of DH is to preserve the past using methods of the present to inform the future. Scholars like Nowvickie warn of using digital collections only as “lenses for retrospect”, and instead encourages “archival liveness” that brings participants to view the archive as an entity being created and maintained in the present (Ward and Wisnicki 201). Even though the majority of material showcased in digital collections is from the past, it is important to show active engagement that evolves with the project, like stages leapt upon by performers and co-creators through multiple temporalities (Ward and Wisnicki 202). It is also relevant to remember the extensive work done with data in the field of DH will be done in vain if the time is

not taken to ensure our current DH methods are taught to the next generation of humanists (Underwood 97). This is why, as I will discuss later on, many websites have taken an interest in accompanying their research content with their research methods and tools so the same can be utilized in later projects.

II. The *George Eliot Archive*

The *George Eliot Archive* is an online open-access digital project for anyone studying the Victorian author George Eliot. It is a combination of both an archive for the primary texts of Eliot's own work and a secondary source collection providing commentary from contemporaries in the form of essays, reviews, and books. At its initial launch, the archive featured Eliot's complete work of fiction, poetry, translations, and essays in downloadable and searchable PDF format; and a portrait gallery containing all known portraits the author sat for in her lifetime. More recent features were launched summer 2019 including an interactive and collapsible chronology of Eliot's life, along with digital maps illustrating Eliot's various travels throughout Europe in a new, cohesive way. The *George Eliot Archive* also plans to soon release another kind of map centering on Eliot's various and complicated contacts. This relationship web detailing connections with friends, family, contemporaries, and business partners visually represents the author's community, and lists all known letter correspondence with Eliot in addition to biographical and historical information about the acquaintance.

The *George Eliot Archive* has two sister sites: The *George Eliot Review Online* and the forthcoming *George Eliot Scholars*. The *George Eliot Review Online* was born digital from Dr. Rilett's frustration toward not being able to access many editions of the Eliot themed academic

journal, the *George Eliot Review*, published annually and distributed selectively to paying members of the *George Eliot Fellowship*. Dr. Rilett made it her goal to make all annual editions of the literary journal accessible online to the public as a collection, regardless of membership status. The publication just celebrated its 50th volume, and users can read and download all content. As more resources become available that are relevant to the history of both the journal and the founding body of the fellowship, they will be added to the *George Eliot Review*. For example, the history of the *George Eliot Fellowship* up to the year 2000 has been recently posted to give context to the legacy of the academic study of George Eliot. The *Fellowship* also has their own website, but they work primarily with local efforts in Nuneaton where the George Eliot Visitors Center is located.

The newest sister site, *George Eliot Scholars*, dealing with the accessibility of scholarship, will be discussed more in detail in the final section. In an effort to make a collection of all scholarships pertaining to Eliot's life and works, *George Eliot Scholars* will be a contribution based professional site devoted to making this information downloadable, searchable, and free for all regardless of affiliation, institution, or location. Inspired by other academic sharing platforms such as MLA Commons or Academia, *Scholars* will be the first to fill this community need for Eliot academia.

My work as a team member on the *George Eliot Archive* began last Spring. As a novice research assistant with little prior DH knowledge, my initial duties tended to be tedious record-keeping tasks. Through this, I learned the intricacies of working on an academic team; our team is primarily composed of undergraduate students, so new researchers come and go every semester. This can make it easy for the team and project to become disjointed if there isn't active effort to relay past tasks and future goals to the next wave of team members. Keeping detailed records of work is crucial to this development. Some other examples of early archival work I

participated in were scanning books and journals then creating searchable PDFs of them, keeping detailed records about various forms of media and contact information, and primary and secondary research in several areas pertaining to the author and the *George Eliot Archive*.

As my foundational knowledge of digital humanities grew, I began to take on increasingly interesting and complicated projects, like building the legal foundation for *George Eliot Scholars*. Much of my work on this project has dealt with studying the legal grey area of internet archival work copyright, and whether transformative use holds up as an exception for copyright infringement in terms of online collections. These limitations will be discussed more clearly in the final section of this discussion. In addition to a large amount of research on similar user-generated content academic sites, I also wrote the terms of use for the website and have developed an email with templates messages for contacting potential contributing professionals.

The final piece of my research has been on the current reception of digital humanities projects in general. As a fairly young project, we hope to only be in the beginning, and have the time and resources to continue implementing new features on the website. With this being said, I began an exploration of other archives and digital humanities projects to discover the usual components of successful and accessible archives. Many of the projects were selected as already established projects that would provide a fair amount of knowledge to be gained from them as an archive still in its first five years since launch.

III. Comparison of Projects

There are hundreds of thousands of digital history and humanities projects all operating in their own ways, curating their collections and catering their content to various kinds of

communities and audiences. The rapid advancement of web-based technology has propelled the development of digital Victorian studies in multiple directions (Wicnicki 975). For example, the *George Eliot Fellowship* aims their content at a more local crowd, promoting city events like plays and museum exhibits. While the *George Eliot Archive* tries to be accessible to a network of international scholars, historians, students, fans, and anyone else who might be studying the author. The content of your project also must be considered in relation to your features. The *Blake Archive* has a digital lightbox tool that allows you to drag, drop, and re-arrange all the photos on their site on a blank white background. While this feature is relevant to Blake who was primarily a visual artist, it would not be executed as successfully on the *George Eliot Archive* because her work is primarily textual. A complete list of all analyzed projects with short synopsizes of their features can be found at the end of this section.

While single author projects were my primary focus since that is what our own *George Eliot Archive* is, larger projects were not excluded entirely. I studied several collective sites like *COVE*, *NINES*, and the *Victorian Web*. These sites tend to have more data to sort through in general, and deal with general topics of research and scholarship. As well-known peer-reviewed tools, however, together these sites are able to provide an accurate picture of the current climate of DH Victorian studies. *COVE* and *NINES* can also be places for DH projects to be featured, potentially allowing them gaining traction and audience members.

My methods to research each website were initially pen and paper, but in the name of digital humanities, I also took advantage of digital tools. As I progressed through each website's individual pages, I took hard copy notes and screenshots of visual images using my laptop. The handwritten notes were then digitally transcribed with the screenshots dropped into their respective spaces, combining my written notes with images directly from the sites. I also kept a

digital research journal to record my initial reactions to the projects. I chose to keep a digital journal instead of the traditional pen and paper because this allowed me to color-code entries, highlighting important features to ensure ease of recall as I scrolled back through the journal: the archives; names highlighted in purple, great features in green, and questions or shortcomings in red.

Accessibility was at the core of my research as I navigated each website and project. At first, I struggled to find a working definition of accessibility that could cover all facets of multimedia digital collections. Cohen and Rosenzweig in their introduction to their book *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* define accessibility as making “the documentary record of the past...open to people who rarely had entry before” (3). With many features and not always a lot of overlap from project to project in terms of features, I instead began to look at how the assumed audience of the site is able to operate and experience the project. I quickly learned that accessibility deals with much more than catering to disabilities; being accessible online means enhancing the user-experience to make the material available to the largest number of people possible.

Later on, after I was familiar with several projects and had begun doing secondary source information scouting, I discovered a mine of DH resources in a curriculum document from a George Mason summer graduate course called “Doing Digital Humanities 2016”. Sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Office Humanities, the purpose of the course was to introduce new media methods to already established historians (3). Each class examines different tools and websites for beneficial features and inspiration for digital humanists and archivists. This is also where I discovered the free online accessibility tool called WAVE.

WAVE's mission statement presents their goal to make accessibility achievable for all websites: "To focus on issues that we know impact end users, facilitate human evaluation, and to educate and inform about web accessibility" (WebAIM). Upon visiting the site, any web address can be entered and examined in terms of its accessibility. WAVE gives users several view options, including a normal site view and a text only option, but all views include color-coded alerts regarding the accessibility of the site's physical features. This initially seemed like a magic wand for my research; was this really a website that could scan the accessibility of a site in seconds, something that had been taking me hours per site to do on my own?

After examining the George Eliot Archive and several other projects through WAVE, it became clear that WAVE's disclaimer was correct: "Only humans can determine whether a web page is accessible. While WAVE can identify errors... it cannot tell you if your page is accessible"(WebAIM). It is a great tool for beginning archivists, curators, and humanists, but it can essentially only help with the cosmetics of the site. It would identify where alternate text was missing, or where there were dead links or empty buttons, but struggled to provide a report speaking to the true accessibility for a wide range of unique users with individuals goals. For example, there were three errors on the *George Eliot Archive* of two missing alternate text for images and one empty button. Both the *George Eliot Review* and *Willa Cather Archive* showed no errors, and similarly *Livingstone Online* only had one error of an empty button on the homepage. It is also important to add that many of the more computer science based features of WAVE were lost on me with little experience beyond Computer Science 101. A user with web design background could understand the specifics of the site to a higher degree than I was able. Regardless, it became clear that the accessibility of any site is more subjective than the objectiveness of running it through a website design scanner.

Instead, I tracked and studied the patterns of accessibility across the projects in other ways. I began to think about the best way for websites not only to bring in users, but keep old users coming back. I gathered information from the websites pertaining to accessibility: How easily could one access the archive or project content? Who is the intended audience of the website, and is it specified? In what ways was the site attempting to have an online presence, and fine more direct ways to interact with users?

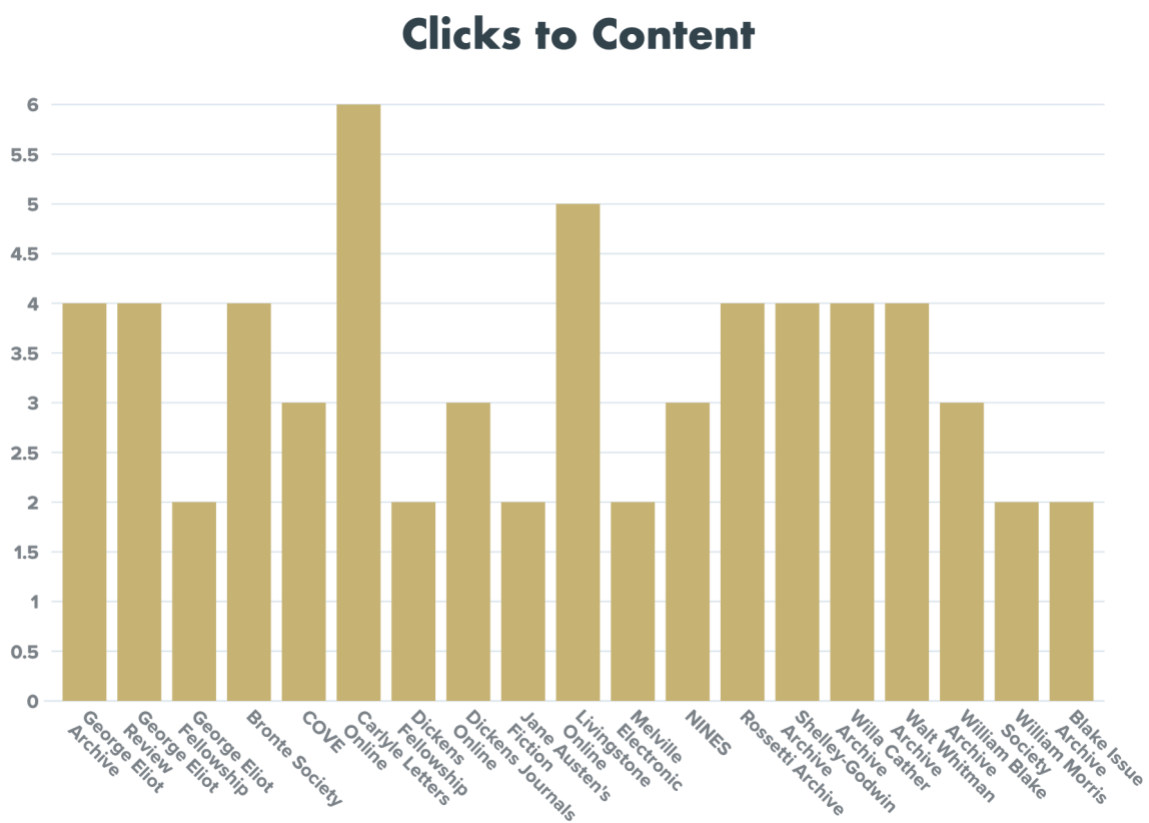


Figure 1: Clicks to Content, made with Adobe Spark

The first study is the number of clicks from the home page of the website to the content of the collection it is supporting. This is measured in clicks of how long it takes a user to navigate the website and access the content. Researching the number of clicks to content allowed

me to test the coherence and navigability of the website's interface: (Gray and Price 15). I tallied the clicks starting with the first button of the link I initially clicked that took me from the home page of the website to the next, and repeated this until I reached the main project content. Note that these tests were administered after I had visited each site a few times, and thus had an established idea of what each website offered.

On a well-done project, the click count should be somewhere in the middle. A low number means it would be too easy for something or someone malicious to steal the entire website data, while a high number means users are struggling to find the content they come to view in the first place. In terms of accessibility, this measures not only ease of access, but also the success of the site's layout and design. Are users clicking the right things? Is their attention being directed to the beneficial parts of the archive? The most common number of clicks that occurred in my research was four, with the highest number being six and lowest number being two. I realize that these numbers also tend to reflect the amount of documents and content. For example, the sites that only take two clicks to access content are mostly membership based websites that don't offer much free access to begin with. *Carlyle Letters Online*, contrastingly, takes six clicks to access the majority of content due to having a large number of letters from the famous couple.

Project Audience Type

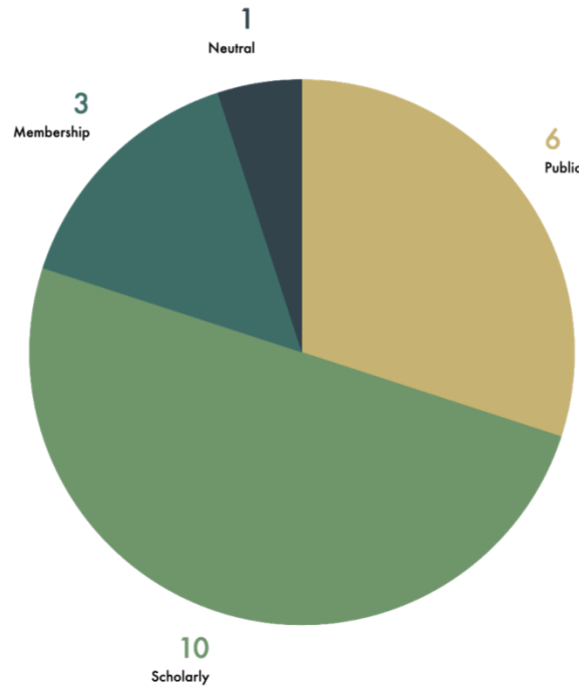


Figure 2: Project Audience Type, made with Adobe Spark

The next thing I did was split the websites into three categories of audience type, with the option of a neutral fourth featuring a combination of resources: public, scholarly, or membership. At this time, there is not a widely accepted system or ranking for categories of DH, but several scholars have proposed options. Roy and Dan's major categories of DH website in 2005 split them into four groups as well: 1) Archives, including all digital collections, 2) Exhibits, films, scholarship and essays, 3) Teaching and learning, and 4) Discussion and organization sites, or online communities (George Mason University 8). This breakdown is organized by content rather than audience, also helpful when attempting to understand a website's main goal. Since the majority of the projects I researched would fall under the first two categories of Roy and

Dan's list, exploring the intended audience of the project instead revealed who the site is most available to.

Public sites, like the *Willa Cather Archive* and *Livingstone Online*, are interactive and often aimed at an all-encompassing audience above prioritizing professional scholarship. For example, the *Cather Archive* provides playful everyday features like the letter of the day: did Cather write a letter, or multiple letters, on this day in history? In his 2016 essay "Digital Victorian Studies Today", Wisnicki points to *Livingstone Online* targeting open-access scholar and archive-led initiatives, not pay-for-access projects led by commercial interests (976). An example of a public feature on *Livingstone Online* is their inclusive elementary-aged worksheets for the classroom. This represents an attempt to make Livingstone accessible to all age groups and education levels.

Scholarly websites are sometimes based around a journal or periodical, like the *Rossetti Archive* and the *George Eliot Review*, and aimed at furthering academic study on the topic or subject. For example, the *Rossetti Archive*'s mission statement establishes them as a scholarly resource. It states, "The *Rossetti Archive* facilitates the scholarly study of Gabriel Rossetti... the archive provides students and scholars with access to all DGR's pictorial and textual work." Similarly, the *Review* provides access to all editions of the *George Eliot Review* and holds an annual essay contest open to university humanities students. Scholarly sites can also be large databases of information or collections of projects, like *NINES*, *COVE*, and the *Victorian Web*.

The final category of membership requires users to build an online account and, usually, pay an annual fee to receive various special benefits; for example, the *Brontë Society* and the *William Morris Society*. The *Brontë Society* rewards paying supporters of the project with an annual gazette, monthly member newsletters, and free admission to the museum. Similarly, the

Morris Society offers members to attend talks and events, and receive a society magazine and journal. Membership websites offer the most inaccessible environment for digital projects due to the entrance fee guarding information.

Social Media Presence					
ARCHIVE:	Twitter-	Facebook-	Video-	Blog-	Instagram-
George Eliot Archive					
George Eliot Review					
George Eliot Fellowship	800	800		No posts	
Bronte Society	15000	7000	Vimeo		
COVE					
Carlyle Letters Online	1400				
Dickens Fellowship					
Dickens Journals Online	1300	1300			
Austen's Fiction Manuscripts					
Livingstone Online				WordPress	
Melville Electronic Library					
NINES					
Rosetti Archive					
Shelley-Godwin Archive					
Victorian Web	10000	800			
Willa Cather Archive	600	400			
Walt Whitman Archive	3800	5300		Blog Spot	
William Morris Society	5000	5800	Youtube: 57		6000
Blake Issue Archive					

The final study dealt with the archives' social media presence. Deriving information strictly from their direct websites, I looked into what kind of social media every project is active on, along with the amount of people that follow them on the platform. This affects who the archive is most accessible to online because different social media websites will have different audiences. In addition to looking at what kind of social media their websites used, I also looked at the success of their application: Did the extension of the site to another improve the user experience, or allow new users to find the archive? For example, the *Brontë Society* has a Vimeo account with several videos, but they all have less than twenty views meaning that Vimeo has not been a successful or accessible outreach tool.

Twitter was generally the most successful application for digital projects. With a few exceptions of the *Morris Society* and the *Whitman Archive*, almost all projects had a larger following on Twitter over Facebook. The *Victorian Web* reaches over 10,000 followers on their Twitter, and more impressively yet the *Brontë Society* boasts a spectacular 15,000. I was surprised to not see more projects taking advantage of visual media sites like Instagram. The only project with one linked to their main website was, once again, the socially successful *Morris Society*.

Reviewing other archives and their features allowed me to gather inspiration for current and future projects implemented on the *George Eliot Archive*. I began my research by critically analyzing twenty different digital humanities projects that are summarized in the following bullet points, many that have also been mentioned thus far. I selected the projects with the purpose of including a sample of several different kinds of projects to compare; while a majority are also Victorian single author sites, there is a sampling of well-known projects of various ages and topics. When analyzed as a collective body of digital humanities, one can see emerging types of projects that were discussed above in terms of audience accessibility in the graphics and their descriptions, as well as the future of the field that will be elaborated upon next.

Comparison Site Summaries:

- *George Eliot Archive* (GeorgeEliotArchive.org): Launched in 2019, the *Archive* provides free online access to all of Eliot's writing. In addition to this, there are hundreds of documents pertaining to the author in the form of reviews, biographical studies, and all known-portraits. The *Archive* also has a selection of interactive features: an expandable chronology, interactive maps of Eliot's travels, and a visual relationship web.

- *George Eliot Review* (GeorgeEliotReview.org): This is the sister website of the *George Eliot Archive*. It features 50 years of the George Eliot Fellowship's annually published journal the *George Eliot Review*, with a total of 877 documents and counting. The documents are searchable by keyword, field of study, collection, and tags. The fellowship also holds an annual essay contest for student scholars of Eliot with a cash prize.
- *George Eliot Fellowship* (GeorgeEliot.org): Founded on November 9, 1930 by Mr. A.F. Cross, the *Fellowship* provides the first known home for Eliot online, followed by the *George Eliot Review*, and now the *George Eliot Archive*. The main purpose of the site is to provide digital access to 50 years' worth of the *Fellowship's* journal, the *George Eliot Review*. The *Fellowship* also has an annual essay contest for students researching Eliot with a cash prize.
- *Brontë Society* (Bronte.org.uk): Originally founded in 1893, this membership based service offers information about the Brontë family's life and works, based around the Parsonage Museum in West Yorkshire that provides a permanent home for this collection of treasures from the famous family. Membership requires an annual fee to be paid, and members are compensated with exclusive newsletters and events.
- *COVE* (CoveCollective.org): Standing for "Central Online Victorian Education", *COVE* is a scholarly platform that makes peer-reviewed Victorian material accessible online maintained by NAVSA, BAVSA and AVSA. Their toolset allows users to build maps, timelines, and then upload the content to *COVE*. studio. Most of the exhibits are image based, and built into galleries by content.
- *Carlyle Letters Online* (CarlyleLetters.dukeupress.edu/home): This collection of the famous couple's letters gives perspective on the nineteenth century through the words

and correspondence of Thomas and Jane Carlyle. The project is a part of the non-profit Victorian Lives and Letters Consortium that strives to create interactive archives containing life-writing. The letters can be browsed by date or volume, and each letter contains source notes and footnotes. As a fairly new project, work is still underway for more interactive features including a new home for the complete selection of the Carlyle family's photo albums.

- *Dickens Fellowship* (DickensFellowship.org): The *Dickens Fellowship* was first founded worldwide in 1902. Members must submit an application and pay an annual fee to be a patron of any branch of the fellowship found in various places throughout the world. The fellowship is also connected to the website *The Dickens Letters* (DickensLetter.com) that is dedicated to making all of Dickens correspondence open and accessible to the public.
- *Dickens Journals Online* (djo.org.uk): Started in 2006 and completed in February 2012, *DJO* is home to four Dickens journals in their entirety: *Household Words*, *Household Narrative*, *Household Words Almanac*, and *All Year Round*. Users of the site are able to download each weekly number with a fully searchable transcript of each page. One of the site's newest features is their text-to-speech tool; all 30 million words of the archive have been converted into speech. Any page can be played as audio from a toolbar located in the top right corner. The version currently on the site is still a prototype, but a more accurate and permanent tool is in the works.
- *Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts* (JaneAusten.ac.uk/index.html): A joint project of the University of Oxford and King's College London, *Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts* gathers over 1,100 pages of fiction written in Austen's own hand to offer users the ability to trace her development as a writer. Their transcription tool developed with the help of

the Bodleian Library at Oxford allows Austen's manuscript corpus to be used as a pilot to train students.

- *Livingstone Online* (LivingstoneOnline.org): This digital museum and library began in 2004 with the goal of making the written, visual, and material legacies of Victorian explorer David Livingstone accessible online. The modern archive is devoted to exploring all sides of history surrounding Livingstone and his explorations, and their detailed website offers a plethora of material for beginning archivists and digital humanists in the form of project documents that detail the development of the project and thus offer a real and accurate look at work as a digital humanist. The collection is now recognized as the leading academic resources for the study of African History, the British Empire, and digital humanities practice with over 15,000 images and 780 transcriptions.
- *Melville Electronic Library* (Mel.Hofstra.edu): This archive provides editions of Melville's texts with additional information about the text and tracking changes throughout the editions. Many features are still in the works, such as a translation tool and a biographical map feature.
- *NINES* (NINES.org): The scholarly organization of *NINES* stands for "Networked Infrastructure for Nineteenth Century Electronic Scholarship". Their mission statement is threefold: 1) Serve as a peer-reviewed editing body for digital work, 2) Support scholars' practices in creating digital research materials, and 3) Develop tools for both traditional and new forms of research and analysis. The website offers almost 900,000 peer-reviewed digital objects in addition to 145 federated sites.
- *The Complete Writings & Pictures of Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Hypermedia Archive* (RossettiArchive.org): The *Rossetti Archive* was completed in 2008 from a plan laid out

in 1993. The site is completely devoted to the scholarly study of the artist, and has been peer-reviewed by and acted as a testhead for the development of the *NINES* project (see above). A complete list of Rossetti's work is sortable by chronology and alphabetically, or one can view the history of his work on an interactive timeline, allowing researchers to see the overlap of style and influence in particular eras of the artist.

- *Shelley-Godwin Archive* (ShelleyGodwinArchive.org): This unique collective website provides the digitized manuscripts of several writers: Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, William Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft. One of the main goals of the project is to not only document England's first family of writers life, works, and thoughts, but include the development of their famous writings of literature and philosophy through access to manuscripts. The project takes advantage of TEI, or text encoding initiative, to accommodate the needs of the scholarly community within the humanities, and offers introductory videos to know where to begin exploring the archive.
- *Victorian Web* (VictorianWeb.org): As one of the oldest and most scholarly websites, the *Victorian Web* project initially began long the world wide web, but first entered the internet in 1994. The site encourages multiple points of view and debate by presenting images and documents as nodes that emphasis connection and linking over direct search tools. This popular resources features over 104,000 documents and brings in 1.5 million views per month.
- *Walt Whitman Archive* (WhitmanArchive.org): This pioneer of digital humanities first began in 1995 at University of Virginia, but moved the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2007 where it has since stayed. It features Whitman's published works in the form of books, including all six editions of *Leaves of Grass*, and periodicals where his work first

appeared. As an established archive, the site also has a plethora of other resources: a scrollable chronology of Whitman's life, contemporary reviews and criticism, catalogs of manuscripts, and a gallery of 128 images in addition to several audio recordings of Whitman reading his work. Much of the original inspiration for the *George Eliot Archive* was drawn from the *Whitman Archive*.

- *Willa Cather Archive* (Cather.UNL.edu): Started in 1997 and born digital in 2004, the *Cather Archive* strives to create an accessible site for the study of both Cather's life and writings. The collection of Cather's writing contains books, short fiction, non-fiction, and journalism in addition to the authors correspondence through letters. To learn more about this famous Nebraska native's life, there is a scholarly chronology and a geographic chronology searchable by time and location. In the scholarship collection of the archive, one can find access to a translation bibliography and a reading bibliography, a calendar of letters, and scholarly journals devoted to Cather. The site also uniquely has several multimedia features; over 2600 images of Cather and her life, two audio speeches, and two movie clips.
- *William Blake Archive* (BlakeArchive.org): This international public resources provides unity to works of both visual and literary art to achieve the greatest coverage of Blake's work possible. The project first began in 1996, and has acted as a prototype for D.H. tools and techniques, including *N.I.N.E.S.* since its inception in 2003. A majority of the archival material is image based, and the unique interactive tool of the Lightbox allows users to group cropped and rotated images together on a blank white screen, mimicking the experience of a physical lightbox. Additionally, the *Blake Issue Archive* allows users to read current and past editions of *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*, sortable by decade.

- *William Blake Issue Archive* (bq.blakearchive.org): The *Blake Issue Archive* is a sister site to the *Blake Archive*. It contains all published editions of the scholarly journal, *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*. The site's purpose and relation to its main archive is similar to the *George Eliot Review* and *George Eliot Archive*.
- *William Morris Society* (WilliamMorrisSociety.org): The purpose of the *Morris Society* is to share knowledge the life and works of William Morris among the organization's members and the public. The website offers information about the Society as a governing body, and the Morris Museum. Members are required to pay an annual fee that entitles them to receive three magazines a year, and a discounted rate on the twice yearly journal, *The Journal of William Morris Studies*.

IV. Towards an Accessible Future

Both my primary and secondary research have led me to believe that the field of DH is indeed moving towards an accessible future. Current projects present a plethora of free resources, and the many new projects of them tend to favor a public or wider audience over just academia; strictly scholarly sites exist for research, but single source archives tend to exert some effort to also cater to fans. Furthermore, the secondary sources reiterated the interest in accessing all sides of history for the good of all people, and the interest in continuing our current methods of digital humanities based heavily on data.

The future of DH has been approached almost wearily by some scholars, pointing to the history of educational technology remaining a bit of a blind spot (Fletcher 369). In recent history, much of the money and time invested into new educational technology has been lost in the

whirlwind of development. Fletcher contends that much of this problem begins with humanists willing to develop technology for research over technology for the classroom (369). While research methods have drastically changed making the physical location of the library more and more obsolete, the mode of education has primarily stayed the same of lecture and discussion. He walks us through the history of educational tech to reiterate this point.

The revolution of computers in the 1950s and 60s led scholars and educators to use audiovisual systems in the classroom, beginning in the 50s with instructional television leading to the famous PBS educational television of the late 60s that became famous (Fletcher 369-370). Video technology within the classroom allows for a third party moderator between students and the educator that may offer more common ground than previously existed between the two; we see this still today in educational tactics with the incorporation of popular culture icons and topics into education to enhance class conversation. The shortcoming of educational television and video can be found in its lack of separation from the lecture model of instruction: “Multimedia instruction, in contrast, allowed humanists to direct more imaginative and critical engagements with multisensory formats” (Fletcher 374).

This does not, however, mean that multimedia DH projects are immune to the rampant increase of technology in the tail end of the twentieth century, and still dominating the twenty-first. Fletcher refers to educational technologies as falling victim to “boom-and-burst cycles”; it is initially popular and striking to users, but as time goes on the technology becomes more frequent and lackluster (375). Much of this lack of consistency in the continuation of digital collections stems from the initial structure of the site. Digital humanists and archivists who are more educated in the humanities and less advanced in computer science are often forced into using web-publishing platforms to build their collections. The danger of this is the host going

out of business, and your project going down with it. The upkeep of a website is also a detouring factor for the successful continuation of projects. It is likely that files will become corrupted and bugs will make small shifts in the site overtime.

The solution to this problem is simple to state, but difficult in practice. Fletcher says it is obvious that we, as digital humanists need to “devote more money and resources to building and maintaining our own set of humanities-tailored educational tools and platforms” (377). Linking knowledge of infrastructure with passion about the content creates a more permanent home for the project. Without this basic foundational structure in place, humanities projects will continue to be lost because of problems outside of their creators’ control.

Fletcher also proposes the incorporation of “cross-purposes” that achieve two different goals with one type of content: for example: teaching and learning, or research and scholarship (377). This strategy allows a wider breath of accessibility to users as well, because expanding the purposes and intentions of the project also expands the group of possible users. Another way to consider this dual purpose is as an interactive medium that provides every point of consumption with a point of production (Cohen and Rosenzweig 5). *George Eliot Scholars* will take advantage of this two-fold strategy by allowing users to discover and contribute pertinent scholarship.

In the near future, the George Eliot Archive hopes to expand even further into yet another type of digital project. The new site discussed earlier, *George Eliot Scholars*, will provide an online environment where experts can submit their scholarship pertaining to Eliot’s life and works to share with other scholars and researchers. This is an effort to make George Eliot scholarship more widely accessible by combatting the extreme fees academic institutions must pay for library databases to be accessible to affiliated students and faculty alike. Additionally,

George Eliot Scholars will make scholarship available to independent scholars who typically can't afford to pay for academic databases independent of an institution and international scholars who struggle to gain access to scholarship published outside of their country.

As a digital collection, there are also numerous benefits to grouping all of Eliot's criticism into one place in terms of connections and researchability. This has been at the heart of all the *George Eliot Archive* sites; the *Review Online* features all fifty volumes of the journal *George Eliot Review* devoted to the academic study of Eliot, the *Archive* is home to all of Eliot's known writings and other important biographical and historical information, and *Scholars* will connect the George Eliot community by making scholarship accessible to all.

The potential problem with *George Eliot Scholars* is due to the current copyright law surrounding digital collections. In her article "Proceed with Caution: How Digital Archives Have Been Left in the Dark", Alyssa Knutson explores the fair use defense against the usual claim of copyright infringement digital collections can frequently face. Throughout the essay, she uses the Internet Archive as an example: the Internet Archive is a digital web archive with the goal of preserving and storing the intangible and permanent content of the internet before it disappears (Knutson 437). Users of the internet archive can view any page of any website at any time that it has been in existence, unless if the website has asked the archive to remove their connected content. The Internet Archive has unsurprisingly faced a fair amount of legal backlash for their modern preservation techniques of the ever shifting landscape of the internet.

There is an exception for public libraries and archives, but digital archives are not currently protected by this exception unless they can prove that the content is transformative; then the fair use defense will protect the collection from copyright infringement. In the future this may change, but with the field of digital humanities being still relatively young, all the laws

that are necessary for this practice to continue have not been completed or perhaps even thought of yet. For the time being, many digital collections are taking advantage of Creative Commons licenses instead; the *Eliot Archive* currently utilizes the Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license that allows users to remix, adapt, and build upon work non-commercially as long as it is credited and licenses with identical terms.

Knutson contends that the strongest defense against copyright infringement is fair use, but this defense is also unpredictable and fact intensive (450). There is an exception for public libraries and archives, but digital archives are not currently protected by this exception. In the future they may change, but with the field of digital humanities being still relatively young, all the laws that are necessary for this practice to continue have not been completed or perhaps even thought of yet. When a case of copyright infringement arises, there are four factors that determine whether the fair use exception can be applied: 1) Purpose and character of the use of the copyrighted information including whether it will be used commercially or for a non-profit organization, 2) Nature of the copyrighted work, like is if published or not, 3) Amount of the copyrighted information used in relation to the amount of content as a whole, and 4) Effect of the use of the copyright material on the commercial value of the material (Knutson 456). In terms of digital collections, it could be difficult for an archive to prove any of these factors especially considering the usual low or non-existent legal budget for archives and collections housed at university institutions.

Knutson perfectly sums up this legal discrepancy saying that this places digital archives in a position where what they are doing is considered copyright infringement with the potential defense of fair use (461). To avoid this risk on our new sister website, I have spent time

researching similar legal cases and their outcomes, and learned how to write a terms of use for the website that successfully protects our content and project.

I have also collected contact information of Victorian Scholars from various sources, like the contributors from George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Studies journal and members of NAVSA (North American Victorian Studies Association). These will be the first people I contact with specific details about the work we would be honored for them to share with us. For the site to be successful, contributions are essential. Not only do we need support for the content of the site, we now need the contribution of your own work. By allowing us the opportunity to make your work seen in the community of George Eliot Scholars, you will also be contributing to a more open and widely accessible online environment promoting free access to scholarship and information alike.

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