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Communicating Textiles Within and Beyond Museum Walls: New Directions

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**NEW DIRECTIONS: Examining the Past,
Creating the Future.****Communicating Textiles Within and Beyond Museum Walls: New Directions**

Dinah Eastop

Innovation in the past, present and future will be considered by reference to an extraordinary but little known collection: the textiles and dress preserved in the Board of Trade Representations and Registers of Designs, 1839-1991. This set of records is held at The National Archives [of the UK government] and contains records of nearly 3 million designs, registered by proprietors worldwide (but mostly UK and mainland Europe). Innovation in the past will demonstrated by this registration scheme which encouraged investment in design by enabling copyright control over both ornamental and useful designs, for many materials and products. Recognising design as intellectual property encouraged interest in 'good design' and led to developments in art and design education, and to the establishment of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The Design Register, which includes designs by William Morris and Christopher Dresser, has hundreds of volumes of textile designs with details of who registered them and when. As well as being of excellent provenance, one distinctive feature of this collection is that many textile designs are represented by samples of cloth or artefacts (gloves, kerchiefs, bonnets), some in 'as new condition'. Innovation in the present will be reflected in two ways. First, by the recent online delivery of the written records for each design registered 1839-1883/4, making these text records fully searchable. Second, by our user-engagement strategies, which include the provision of polynomial texture maps (PTM) to enable user-friendly and effective online study of textiles and other textured surfaces. Innovation in the future will be demonstrated by new ways of engaging users who have grown-up in an age of spectacle and online interaction, e.g. intuitive Image browsing, which allows researchers to sort images in a way that suits them.



Volume BT43/294 with textile designs registered in 1865.