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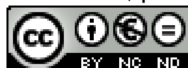

BOOK HISTORY AND DIGITAL HUMANITIES IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Justin Tonra

Abstract: This article examines the current state of research at the intersections of book history and digital humanities within the field of eighteenth-century studies. It addresses the popular and intellectual origins of the nexus between the book and the digital and surveys developments in this area of eighteenth-century studies in the last decade. The article examines current research trends within the field, with a particular focus on large-scale corpora and databases and the use of distant reading methods, and assesses what directions the future might hold for research in book history and digital humanities in the long eighteenth century.

Keywords: book history, digital humanities, eighteenth-century studies, bibliography, corpora, databases, distant reading, computational literary studies, ECCO

The worlds of the book and the digital are instinctively opposed. The parent who prefers to see their child immersed in a book than tapping at a keyboard or screen represents a deep cultural seam which views books as enriching and absorbing and the digital as superficial and distracting. Despite that opposition in the popular imagination, Matthew Kirschenbaum and Sarah Werner suggest that, "the two are now inextricably linked."[1] The authors, writing in 2014, set themselves the task of exploring connections between scholarship of the book and the digital at a time of heightened anxiety about the threat posed to books by digitization. Yet, their discoveries focused more on opportunities and possibilities than on the apocalyptic futures then common to public discourse on the book.

[1] Matthew Kirschenbaum and Sarah Werner, "Digital Scholarship and Digital Studies: The State of the Discipline," Book History 17, no. 1 (2014): 406–58, https://doi.org/10.1353/bh.2014.0005.

Two years before, David Hill Radcliffe reached a similar conclusion that, in the digital age, "one area of scholarship that is undeniably flourishing is the history of the book."[2] How can we explain this discrepancy between public and academic perceptions of the links between the book and the digital? No essential connection exists between the fields of book history and digital humanities, though they share certain similarities. Both are interdisciplinary, ranging widely across a set of concerns that transcend disciplinary boundaries in the humanities, and, for book history, sometimes cross into law, medicine, and the sciences. Both provoke definitional questions about their academic status: are they theories, methods, or distinct fields of inquiry with claims to the same institutional stature and recognition as other disciplines in the humanities? Broadly speaking, the focus of one is on written communication in material forms and the other applies digital tools and methods to the study of topics in the humanities, but neither of these definitions is adequate to capture the wide variety of research in these fields or to delineate fixed boundaries for either. In fact, the borders between book history and digital humanities are porous, with ample research inflected by the concerns of both fields. As book historians subject e-books and born-digital texts to the bibliographical scrutiny once reserved for rare books, digital humanists are concerned with the epistemological consequences of the shift from print to digital as a means of humanistic inquiry and production. The diversity of possible approaches to this topic offers greater scope for engagement than the binary consumer choice between books and e-books that animated public discourse.

The kinds of intellectual exchange between book history and digital humanities are supported, even prompted, by arguments for the expansion of bibliography's purview by D.

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[2] David Hill Radcliffe, "No Man But a Blockhead: What the Eighteenth Century Has to Teach Us about Digital Humanities," in Textual Studies and the Enlarged Eighteenth Century: Precision as Profusion, ed. Kevin L. Cope and Robert C. Leitz III (Cranbury: Bucknell Univ. Press, 2012), 20–32, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/nuig/detail.action?docID=928508.

F. McKenzie in his influential Panizzi Lectures of 1985. Presenting W. W. Greg's scientific view of bibliography as detrimental to a discipline surrounded by cognate developments in various fields of the humanities and human sciences, McKenzie argued that the study of the book must be broadened in order to consider additional social and historical forms of evidence which impact on the book's construction and comprehension. His proposed redefinition of bibliography began in relatively uncontroversial terms: as the discipline which studied texts "as recorded forms, and the processes of their transmission, including their production and reception."[3] However, McKenzie's view of what constituted a "text" was a radical departure for bibliography. This would include "verbal, visual, oral, and numeric data, in the form of maps, prints, and music, of archives of recorded sound, of films, videos, and any computer-stored information, everything in fact from epigraphy to the latest forms of discography."[4] What made McKenzie's idea compelling and influential was its recognition of the changing realities of media: how books were part of an increasingly crowded market of repositories for human culture. Books might have been the supreme source for the cultural record for a span of several centuries, but they were never the only source, as McKenzie's allusion to epigraphy attests. As twentieth-century media weakened books' dominion, McKenzie acknowledged that bibliography must adjust or perish: "There is no evading the challenge which those new forms have created."[5] More importantly, though, he argued that the forms of social and historical inquiry that were already familiar to scholars of the book, but subordinated to expressions of scientific clarity by Greg, were precisely those that uniquely qualified those scholars to contribute to fundamental understandings of new media. While no essential connection may be apparent between book history and digital humanities, McKenzie's argument suggested that important aspects of digital culture fell within the ambit

[3] D. F. McKenzie, Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts (London: The British Library, 1986), 12.
[4] McKenzie, Bibliography, 13.
[5] McKenzie, Bibliography, 13.

of bibliography. The study of the book, once conceived in narrow terms, was suddenly admitted to a wider sphere of influence and critique.

As they use digital tools and methods to study and remediate the culture of the eighteenth century, the digital humanist may overlook the fact that they, too, produce objects of inquiry for the future. By incorporating the perspectives of the book historian and bibliographer, they can better understand the demands that posterity makes of those objects. Similarly, as McKenzie detected the limits that an older conception of bibliography placed on the field's ability to create and articulate knowledge, the book historian can look to recent and emerging digital tools and methods to imagine new ways that they can advance the study of written communication in material forms. The efforts of interdisciplinary teams of scholars from both fields—attuned and sympathetic to the backgrounds of the other—may advance knowledge in ways that we have yet to imagine. This special issue of Eighteenth-Century Studies, which focuses on book history and digital humanities, includes new and fruitful examples of these kinds of intellectual collisions.

In the last decade, scholarly activities at the nexus of book history and digital humanities in eighteenth-century studies have become more common. The increasing prevalence of papers and panels addressing these topics at the annual meetings of societies such as ACECS, BSECS, and SHARP has been accompanied by the work of special-interest groups like the ASECS DH Caucus. At the recent virtual ASECS Annual Meeting for 2021, the Caucus ran a short introductory workshop on "Getting Started with Digital Humanities" (Session 102). Designed to familiarize beginners and the curious with the field, the range of topics gave a good representation of prevailing concerns. Talks on digital humanities pedagogy and digital mapping were accompanied by others that touched on both book history and digital humanities: databases and information tracking; 18th Connect and digital editions; and apps, bibliography, and project management. Elsewhere, another conference workshop

focused on using GIS to digitize historic maps (Session 176), and panels and roundtables considered topics such as reviewing digital humanities scholarship (Session 168), databases and pedagogy (Session 62), and Enlightenment networks (Session 96). Perhaps the most novel contribution came from two panels on the theme of "Sensory and Interactive Digital Humanities for Eighteenth-Century Studies" (Sessions 78 and 86). Papers orbited the themes of VESPACE, a collaboration between Louisiana State University and Nantes University that uses virtual reality and artificial intelligence technologies to produce an immersive, virtual, multi-sensorial experience of eighteenth-century Parisian theatre. Overall, contributions to the ASECS program represented different stages of engagement with these fields: facilitating beginners and reporting on advanced, technologically sophisticated research.

The introductory and instructive instincts of conference workshops are also found in courses and programs dedicated to book history and digital humanities. Rare Book Schools at the University of Virginia and University of London offer a growing suite of courses that address the junctures between book history and digital humanities at introductory and more specialized levels. The Center for the History of Print and Digital Culture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which hosted a "BH and DH" conference in 2017, also organize a Book History and Digital Humanities Summer Institute, while Texas Tech University offers a formal qualification: a graduate certificate in Book History and Digital Humanities. In our libraries, classrooms, and scholarly publications, an increasing confluence between these areas is apparent.

Given the manner in which access to primary materials for research is often mediated by databases—both proprietary and non-proprietary—research at the intersections of book history and digital humanities has much to impart to the broader field of eighteenth-century studies. Questions about the profits and losses of digital facsimiles of eighteenth-century books may be familiar, but they are of such fundamental importance as to bear repeating: the

issues of materiality, representation, accuracy, and rigor that they raise are key for all scholarly enterprise. As Gale's upgrade to Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) in December 2020 demonstrates, the digital ground of eighteenth-century studies is dynamic and shifting. So too, as a consequence, is our responsibility to keep pace with understanding our relationship to those developing digital resources and how they shape and influence our research. The narrative about using these resources should not be solely cautionary, however, as digitized books offer opportunities for researchers to see what cannot be seen with the naked eye, encouraging a trajectory of inquiry that begins in the digital and returns us to the material. Other concerns of book history and digital humanities can impact the wider field of eighteenth-century studies, too. With bibliometric analysis at the scale of the century possible, the digital age has helped to expand longstanding desires to enumerate books. Identifying and analyzing patterns in the publication data of a century of books can offer new perspectives on literary history, shifting focus from the canon towards histories that accommodate the lesser-read and unread majorities. These examples are just some of the ways in which the book and the digital can meet in the study of the literature, history, and culture of the period—how the two media blend and clash in the accounts that we forge and how their affordances might enable us to view the period afresh.

The call for papers for this special issue described a number of individual projects that were unimaginable without a purview that accommodates both the book and the digital. These included digital catalogues that employ and exploit the rich bibliographical metadata of the analogue cultural record: Stationers' Register Online, Eighteenth-Century Book Tracker, and the continued development of legacy projects like the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC). Spatially-oriented projects which map the terrain of the period in diverse ways: Mapping the Republic of Letters, Atlas of Early Printing, The French Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe, 1769–1794, Mapping Colonial Americas Publishing Project. Digital

archives and editions devoted to the work of William Blake, the Shelley-Godwin Circle, Thomas Gray, Hannah More, James Macpherson, Anne Finch, and many more. It should be clear, though—without prejudice or favor to the named projects—that this short list is far from comprehensive and only partially representative. The scope and scale of activity in book history and digital humanities in the period is large, diverse, and occasionally hidden. For instance, the digital objects currently aggregated by 18th Connect come from sixty sites. In addition to the better-known resources, teams and individual scholars are building and using digital tools and methods in conjunction with those of book history. A comprehensive survey of these would require more time and space than this article allows. The articles that follow in this special issue speak for themselves and for some of the concerns of the field at the present time. When Paddy Bullard wrote, in 2013, that "[o]ne much-needed service is a regularly updated, peer-reviewed index of relevant humanities websites," 18th Connect was in its relative infancy.[6] The resource has fulfilled much of its promise, in the meantime, by broadening its compass from seventeen to sixty federated sites, but one of Bullard's desires remains unfulfilled: a browsable list of digital resources for eighteenth-century study. A master list of this kind, also regularly updated, would be a boon for the field.

The list of topics suggested in the call for papers for this special issue are largely represented in the nine articles that follow. Some explicitly address subjects such as the differences between analogue and digital book history, historical datasets and information structures, and histories of digitization. Articles that focus on creating and using databases also discuss issues related to the creation and exploitation of metadata and to the study of reading and libraries in the long eighteenth century. Pervasive themes that thread their way

[6] Paddy Bullard, "Digital Humanities and Electronic Resources in the Long Eighteenth Century," Literature Compass 10, no. 10 (2013): 748–60, https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12085, 751. Radcliffe made a similar appeal for "a periodical publication to guide the curious through the mass of [eighteenth-century] scholarly documents and databases beginning to appear on the Internet." "No Man," 27.

through the special issue, linking otherwise disparate subjects, include the use of quantitative methods and the relationships between physical and digital materiality.

Two suggested topics are notable by their absence. Digital scholarly editing and editions, a field of research and practice identified for expansion with the coming of the digital, is not represented.[7] A survey of recent volumes of Scholarly Editing and Textual Cultures journals reveals a temporal lacuna, as subjects skip from the medieval and early modern to the nineteenth century with little representation of eighteenth-century materials. Despite the scale of activity in digital scholarly editing that is apparent from 18th Connect's federated sites, some questions remain. Do print editions still hold a superior status in the field? Has the digital's promise to revolutionize scholarly editing not been realized? The need for accurate texts and editions of eighteenth-century material will not diminish. A survey of the state of scholarly editing in the field would be salutary.

Discussion of book history and digital humanities pedagogies are, likewise, absent from this special issue, despite comprising a rich field of activity in other spheres. A field that relies so heavily on the touch and feel of physical objects, book history has been disproportionately affected by the move to online teaching during the coronavirus pandemic. Certain aspects of teaching book history may be more amenable to the change, of course, but educators who prioritize the interactive opportunities of teaching with rare books and special collections will need to be creative for as long as noli me tangere prohibitions persist. As we remain too deep in the thick of things for reflection, our reports of how we taught in the last year may only materialize later.

Certain trends are evident from the contributions to this special issue. For one, the database continues to exert a significant influence over eighteenth-century studies. Some

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[7] Radcliffe, "No Man," 27.

authors investigate the implications of studying the period through the evidence of established databases like ECCO and ESTC (Orr, Holahan) while others discuss how they have built new databases to facilitate research on specific topics such as women's involvement in the book trades (Sharren, et al.), the Enlightenment (Montoya), and library records (Sangster, et al.). Proprietary databases are also used as the basis for creating customized textual corpora for computational analysis (De Mulder). As a system for storing, retrieving, and querying large quantities of information, the database reflects structural desires and principles familiar to scholars of the Enlightenment. When a knowledge domain presents too much to know, to borrow Ann Blair's term, scholars turn to available technologies for information management solutions: commonplace book, dictionary, encyclopedia, and database. The nonlinear structures of these technologies promote new habits of mind and orientations toward information, often revealing, in the process, fresh intellectual opportunities and challenges. The need to manage information and the expectations of discovery are factors that motivate the humanist to construct a database, but the very process of construction can expose additional questions. Decisions about including and excluding data, mapping relationships, and extracting and analyzing patterns are all tasks, Stephen Ramsay writes, that "imply a hermeneutics and a set of possible methodologies that are themselves worthy objects for study and reflection."[8] Too often, as Leah Orr and Cassidy Holahan illustrate below, databases like ECCO and ESTC conceal these decisions, obscuring users' ability to fully grasp the nature of their interactions and queries. Similarly, a new project may be constrained in its ability to address research questions by the initial design of its database. For as long as the database appeals to the humanist for the opportunities it offers

[8] Stephen Ramsay, "Databases," in A Companion to Digital Humanities, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 177–97, 177.

for novel discovery and pattern recognition, a complementary degree of self-consciousness and critical awareness of its structure, design, and interpretation will also be necessary.

This special issue arrives at an auspicious time for ECCO, the "flawed and indispensable" resource for studying the eighteenth century that is ubiquitous, "always open on the desktop."[9] At the risk of repeating the familiar, ECCO's shortcomings include issues of representativeness, inadequate reproduction of books and pages, restrictive search features, unavailable transcriptions, and optical character recognition (OCR) errors.[10] Now included in the federated search of Gale Primary Sources, ECCO's upgrade brought a new interface, with the old interface, familiar to so many for so long, now consigned to history. The upgraded ECCO includes some new features that address longstanding problems: perhaps most significantly, the text derived from the digital page images by OCR is now available for users to view and download, and this text is accompanied by greater and more transparent information about its origins and estimated degree of accuracy. Additional features are intended to improve searching in the database, as search terms now have their frequency across the entire collection visualized and automatically linked to relevant topics within the database. In her article for this special issue, Holahan offers insights and critiques of these new features and the broader implications of the ECCO upgrade.

Recent months brought a second notable event for ECCO in the shape of Stephen Gregg's book, Old Books and Digital Publishing: Eighteenth-Century Collections Online. While aspects of the background and provenance of ECCO are familiar to many, the book provides the most detailed and comprehensive account of the history of ECCO available.

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[9] Bullard, "Digital Humanities," 754.

[10] Several publications offer critiques of ECCO and discuss implications for its general or specific use. Examples include: Mark J Hill and Simon Hengchen, "Quantifying the Impact of Dirty OCR on Historical Text Analysis: Eighteenth Century Collections Online as a Case Study," Digital Scholarship in the Humanities 34, no. 4 (2019): 825–43, https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqz024. James May, "Some Problems in ECCO (and ESTC)," Eighteenth-Century Intelligencer 23, no. 1 (2009): 20-30. Patrick Spedding, "'The New Machine': Discovering the Limits of ECCO," Eighteenth-Century Studies 44, no. 4 (2011): 437–53.

That history is laid out in a precise chronology that helpfully reveals the different forces that have contributed—and continue to contribute—to the shaping of this important database. Certain introductory parts of the book will be known to book historians, but these are elements of a larger effort to illustrate the relevance of ECCO's history to a broader group: one that may not have expertise in book history or digital humanities, but whose members still want to use the resource effectively and conscientiously. It will be particularly useful for graduate students in book history as well as for a general eighteenth-century readership who want to "understand what we are seeing via ECCO and how we might better use this digital archive."[11] Gregg also offers a glimpse of the possible future for ECCO, as a third phase which began last year promises a "huge expansion" of the database to incorporate new color imaging of around 90,000 missing editions and titles.[12] If databases like ECCO continue their trajectory of improvement and transparency, further opportunities to conduct research at scale on its collections should follow.

With such prospects growing, will distant reading figure prominently in the future of eighteenth-century studies?[13] The large-scale application of computational methods to literary data has been on the rise within the broader field of literary studies but has arguably yet to make a significant impact on the literature of the long eighteenth century. An instinctive rejoinder is that distant reading is more amenable to literary history than to book history: to the texts rather than the books. This view led Margaret Ezell to conclude, in 2017, that: "the daunting question for me, however, still remains whether there is any reason why a single-authored 'big-book' literary history has any positive function in the digital age."[14] Here, of

[11] Stephen H. Gregg, Old Books and Digital Publishing: Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108767415, 48.
[12] Gregg, Old Books, 100.
[13] A term that covers a range of computational approaches to analysing literary data, it is usually attributed to Franco Moretti. See Franco Moretti, Distant Reading (London: Verso, 2013).
[14] Margaret J. M. Ezell, "Big Books, Big Data, and Reading Literary Histories," Eighteenth-Century Life 41, no. 3 (2017): 3–19, https://doi.org/10.1215/00982601-4130753, 11.

course, disciplinary lines blur: can a literary history be written without touching on the concerns of book history? More broadly, is it plausible that the literary history of the long eighteenth century can continue to be written without recourse to distant reading analysis—not as the final word, but as a complement or counterbalance to the other methods of literary history and the stories they tell?

Perhaps the challenge in teasing out this question is the reading that loads the implications of both close and distant reading. Called "cultural analytics" or "computational literary studies," this collection of methods might renounce claims to conventional reading and better illustrate its affordances to the field. Anyway, text was always going to be a problem. Unlike Early English Books Online (EEBO), corrected machine-readable texts only exist for a small portion of ECCO: fewer than 3,000 of the 180,000 titles in the database. Before addressing the issue of how ECCO does or does not represent the literature of the eighteenth century, no distant reading of around 3,000 texts could make plausible claims to comprehensive coverage of the century. But it is a start, and a useful one, as is evident in the dataset's use in resources like the Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive and pamphlets from the Stanford Literary Lab, both of which, among others, have drawn on those texts.[15] Despite the efforts of ECCO-TCP and 18th Connect, the prospect of a machine-readable corpus of ECCO texts is uncertain, even with the promise represented by the third phase of the database. Accepting these limitations, as the field must also do with ESTC, is the first step towards clearing the ground for more quantitative research with these 3,000 texts.

Kirschenbaum and Werner's argument that "[t]his big data trend in the humanities is not one that has spoken to book historians" relied on a textual view of literary big data.[16] Since their article's appearance in 2014, the field of cultural analytics has developed to prove

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[15] See https://www.eighteenthcenturypoetry.org/ and https://litlab.stanford.edu/pamphlets/.
[16] Kirschenbaum & Werner, "Digital Scholarship," 410.

that meaningful computational literary and historical research can still be completed without full-text corpora. The large-scale analysis of literary and bibliographical metadata is the kind of work to which book historians are perfectly suited. Leo Lahti, Niko Ilomäki, and Mikko Tolonen's analysis of the ESTC largely disregards the contents of the books and uses metadata to analyze trends in the publication of history books in early modern Britain and North America from 1470 to 1800. The questions they address sit firmly within book history's wheelhouse: "1) who wrote history 2) where was history published, and 3) how did publishing of history change over time in early modern Britain and North America[?]"[17] A recent article by Allen Riddell and Michael Betancourt touches on the long eighteenth century while introducing key methods and questions for long-durée computational book history. "Reassembling the English Novel, 1789–1919," uses existing print and digital bibliographies to estimate "yearly rates of new novel publication in the British Isles and Ireland between 1789 and 1919."[18] Even in the absence of full-text corpora of eighteenth-century literature, research opportunities exist in the realms of digital book history and bibliography.

Studies like these represent both challenges and opportunities to the scholar of the eighteenth century, however. The mathematical and statistical knowledge required to understand some of these methods are far beyond the capabilities of most researchers in the humanities: witness the mathematics of Riddell and Betancourt's predictive modelling to make your head spin. These methods need not necessarily be prohibitive, however: basic

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[17] Leo Lahti, Niko Ilomäki, and Mikko Tolonen, "A Quantitative Study of History in the English Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC), 1470–1800," LIBER Quarterly 25, no. 2 (2015): 87–116, https://doi.org/10.18352/lq.10112, 87. Two of these co-authors are also co-authors of a recent study which uses the ETSC as the basis for developing a data-driven canon which considers changes over time, subject-topics, top-works, authors, publishers, publication place, and materiality. Mikko Tolonen et al., "Examining the Early Modern Canon: The English Short Title Catalogue and Large-Scale Patterns of Cultural Production," in *Data Visualization in Enlightenment Literature and Culture*, ed. Ileana Baird (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 63–119, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54913-8_3.

[18] Allen Riddell and Michael Betancourt, "Reassembling the English Novel, 1789–1919," Journal of Cultural Analytics 2 (2021): 1–39, https://doi.org/10.22148/001c.19102, 2.

calculations and common technologies yield important evidence in a number of articles in this special issue. If we see value in these methods for advancing the study of the long eighteenth century, though, we should be prepared to learn more about these methods or to work in interdisciplinary research teams. The unusually high rate of co- and multi-authorship in this issue of Eighteenth-Century Studies is testament to the realities of collaborative research at the intersection of these fields. If, as Ezell surmises, these methods are likely to become a feature of literary history in the future, it also behooves the field to equip itself to assess and critique such methods.

Mathematics and calculations arguably represent less of a conceptual obstacle to book history and bibliography than to literary history, since quantification has been an essential component of many of its methods—explicitly or implicitly—for some time. The appeal of enumeration and its possibilities is evident in some of the questions addressed by authors in this special issue: is it possible to count all the books published in one year (Orr); where do Enlightenment authors figure in quantitative evidence from private libraries (Montoya) and university libraries (Sangster, et al.); can counting textual features help us to assign authorship (Hill and Tolonen)? While she doesn't use the term, Alessandra De Mulder's use of word embedding technologies is the contribution to this special issue that most closely fits the practice of distant reading textual corpora. How this practice develops, however, seems bound to a degree to questions about the availability of textual corpora for the eighteenth century. It seems logical, though, that a field like book history, which has relied for so long on lists—bibliographies, catalogues, databases—should have fewer constraints in moving towards methodologies which enable research on these lists at ever larger scales. Certainly, some work remains to be done in migrating crucial print sources to digital form, but—as we recognize was the case with monumental bibliographical efforts by A. W. Pollard and Redgrave; Wing; Garside, Raven, and Showerling; Mary Pollard, and others—that work has

a lengthy and very fruitful payoff for the field.[19] Reflecting on the research enabled by those prior works, the potential value of additional developments in digital bibliography to research at the intersections of eighteenth-century studies, book history, and digital humanities, is evident.

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On 19 February 2020, I agreed to serve as editor of this special issue of Eighteenth-Century Studies. That morning, the Irish Times reported on passengers leaving the Diamond Princess, the cruise ship docked in Yokohama and struggling to contain a coronavirus outbreak. The threat of the virus still seemed relatively remote in western Europe, as the newspaper also reported on European share prices hitting a record high after a drop in reported coronavirus cases. Ten days later, Ireland's first case was recorded and little more than two weeks after that, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic, my university campus closed, and the country entered its first lockdown. In presenting these details, I heed Samuel Richardson's advice about writing to the moment. What began last spring has been an ongoing moment. Geoff Dyer's 2007 book used that phrase as its title to capture photography's unique power to change the way we see the world.[20] The world has changed in myriad ways since the pandemic began and yet parts of our lives seem frozen in time, locked in an ongoing moment.

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[19] I argue for the potential value of a digital version of Pollard's Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade, 1550–1800 in Justin Tonra, "Digital Bibliography and the Irish Book Trades," Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture 49 (2020): 337–41, https://doi.org/10.1353/sec.2020.0029.
[20] Geoff Dyer, The Ongoing Moment (London: Abacus, 2007).

The circumstances of this moment and its effects on our profession are too great to overlook. Long accustomed to crisis, the humanities have endured through the past year and its relentless tests of fortitude. No scholars were better placed to correct the exceptionalist narrative of our unprecedented times. Suddenly, Daniel Defoe and his Journal of the Plague Year were again in vogue. Xavier de Maistre reminded us how to stay in our rooms. Multiple events and exigencies drained us of our time, our energy, and our spirits: the rushed conversion to emergency online teaching, the closures of libraries and archives, the shuttering of campuses, the absence of the collegial corridor chat, and the dominion of its egregious obverse, the endless Zoom. None of us is untouched by some of the consequences of the pandemic: illness, bereavement, loss; sadness, anger, fear. That our field has preserved even a semblance of normality is a remarkable achievement, but we may not know the full and true costs to our students, our profession, and our universities for some time to come. That hidden future is mirrored in a hidden present, and Cassidy Holahan's article in this special issue reminds us that we are ill-served by what remains hidden. The articles below clearly capture the resilience of our field. However, the absences are more difficult to record, so I acknowledge them here. All calls for papers arrive at an inconvenient time—unless they don't. But this time was different: notice of this special issue circulated as many of us began to deal with the unexpected effects of the pandemic: those described above, coupled with increased caring responsibilities and homeschooling for some and solitude for others. Those consequences were—and continue to be—unevenly distributed, with some more profoundly affected than others. In ordinary circumstances, the submissions we received may have been quite different, and it is likely that some colleagues wished to submit to this special issue but were prevented from doing so by the changed conditions of pandemic life. One bright spot is that the reported journal submission and publication deficits among women during the

pandemic do not appear to be evident on this occasion.[21] Of the contributing authors who submitted articles, 40% were female and 60% male; for published articles, the division is 50/50. All five of the single-authored articles in the issue are written by women; in submission, the rate was roughly 70/30 in women's favor. The proportions are reversed in co- and multi-authored articles, where male authors comprise around 70% of the submitted and published articles. In addition, the contributors to this special issue represent a broad spread of disciplines, regions, career stages, and academic and professional backgrounds. I want to thank those authors who responded to the call for this special issue and recognize those who could not. I am also very grateful to all those who contributed their time and labor for this issue: to the peer-reviewers, the Editorial Board of Eighteenth-Century Studies, and especially to Editor, Sean Moore and Managing Editor, Adam Schoene.

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The first two articles of this special issue are concerned with methodological questions, and each addresses a set of topics that is central to research at the intersections of book history and digital humanities in the long eighteenth century. To study book history in that period, where do we go? "To the library!" might be the instinctive response, but the reality for book historians of the eighteenth century is often quite different. The closure of libraries during the pandemic has had a leveling effect in this regard, as most scholars have

[21] Giuliana Viglione, "Are Women Publishing Less during the Pandemic? Here's What the Data Say," *Nature* 581, no. 7809 (2020): 365–66. https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-020-01294-9. Flaminio Squazzoni, Giangiacomo Bravo, Francisco Grimaldo, Daniel Garcıa-Costa, Mike Farjam, and Bahar Mehmani, "Only Second-Class Tickets for Women in the COVID-19 Race. A Study on Manuscript Submissions and Reviews in 2329 Elsevier Journals," SSRN Scholarly Paper, Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, October 16, 2020. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3712813.

become accustomed to conditions that are the norm for many researchers without institutional collections or the means to travel in order to consult primary sources. The last year has seen many of us turn, by necessity, to digital images of rare books, manuscripts, and other documents. The first two articles in this special issue, then, are timely reminders of the stakes involved in using digital databases and collections of eighteenth-century documents. Leah Orr sets out to discover nothing less than what we can know when we use different methods of digital book history, and Cassidy Holahan trains her gaze on the opacity of ECCO. If the first two articles address issues that relate to the broad field of eighteenth-century studies, the next two attempt to untangle more focused, but no less challenging mysteries. Again, the question of what is knowable amid masses of information comes to the fore. This time, the inquiries that animate the two articles are about attribution: whodunnits, of a kind. First, when was the "Ornaments" edition of Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan published, and by whom? An interdisciplinary team of researchers—Christopher N. Warren, Avery Wiscomb, Pierce Williams, Samuel V. Lemley, and Max G'Sell—apply novel methods of computational bibliography in attempting to solve the puzzle. Second, Mark J. Hill and Mikko Tolonen ask "who wrote Sister Peg?" To give the work its full title, The history of the proceedings in the case of Margaret, commonly called Peg, only lawful sister to John Bull, esq. (1761) is a pamphlet of disputed authorship which discusses a controversial proposal to extend the Militia Act to Scotland. This article uses the methods of stylometry—a statistical analysis of language used to attribute authorship—to intervene in a longstanding debate.

While the opening articles of the special issue urge us to consider how we use established collections, the next three articles illustrate the affordances and challenges of constructing new databases. Though each is motivated by different research questions and derives its data from different kinds of sources, a shared set of fundamental concerns emerge about how to structure data about books and how to interpret that data at different scales. All

engage in kinds of distant reading, using computational methods to understand social, cultural, and historical phenomena, and each attends to bibliographical metadata—data about books. Kandice Sharren, Kate E. Ozment, and Michelle Levy introduce the Women's Print History Project and demonstrate how bibliographic data set in a dynamic digital environment can reveal new information about women's contributions to the print trades of the long eighteenth century. The MEDIATE database comprises data from catalogues of western European private libraries of the period, and Alicia Montoya uses her article to show how modeling the circulation of books can complicate established narratives about the intellectual history of the Enlightenment. What can contemporary borrowing records tell us about the development of the Scottish Enlightenment? This is the question posed by Matthew Sangster, Karen Baston, and Brian Aitken as they analyze the patterns in their database, Eighteenth-Century Borrowing Records from the University of Glasgow. Enlightenment knowledge structures also feature prominently in the special issue's penultimate article, where Jeanne Britton traces the influence of encyclopedism on two annotated maps of Rome by Giovanni Battista Piranesi. The intellectual customs and orientations to information that are promoted by the nonlinear navigation required of users of Piranesi's maps anticipate the digital research methods that are evident throughout this issue, as Britton's article alludes to pervasive concerns about how our modes of interacting, reading, and viewing primary materials are influenced by the digital. Finally, Alessandra De Mulder emulates another common theme from this special issue by balancing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in her quest to understand how words and phrases signified in London auction advertisements of the long eighteenth century. Using word embedding technology to analyze a large corpus of newspaper adverts, the article seeks to uncover fresh correlations between the consumer marketplace and the world of print.

In "From Methods to Conclusions: The Limits of the Knowable in Digital Book History," Leah Orr asks an apparently straightforward question: what was published in 1728? To find an answer, she addresses the query to four different types of sources: traditional literary histories, the ESTC, contemporary newspaper advertisements, and contemporary accounts of reading. What results from these inquiries are sets of answers that are sometimes contradictory, occasionally puzzling, but ultimately instructive in two notable ways. First, they help the author to get closer to an answer to her initial question, though that question is finally unanswerable for the "unremarkable year" (786) of 1728 or for any other year in the century. The second notable contribution of the article is methodological and goes right to the heart of the concerns of this special issue. Orr demonstrates that asking the same question of different resources—in both print and digital format—yields very different results. The conclusion of her investigations suggests that scholars undertaking research of this kind will be more successful when they use a range of these resources in combination and in dialogue with one another. Moreover, the article reveals important limitations that arise from the isolated use of each type of source. Orr's argument is a salutary antidote to the temptation to assume that ECCO, ESTC, or any other individual source provides a comprehensive account of publication in any given year. In combining inquiry in digital and analogue form, she offers a reminder of different ways in which manual methods can still gain access to the so-called slaughterhouse of literature, the unread majority of the published record that has become intrinsically associated with the methods of distant reading: a world where John Cam's Practical Treatise on venereal disease is better known that The Dunciad.[22] Balancing the view of print culture to be gained from contemporary advertisements and reading records against more recent catalogues and literary histories broadens our perspective with new forms

[22] Franco Moretti, "The Slaughterhouse of Literature," MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly 61, no. 1 (2000): 207–27.

of evidence, while underlining the ways in which each type of account is partial. The elisions and biases that are revealed in this balancing act help us to understand what is missing from the tools of our field, so we can "draw accurate conclusions and know the limits of what we can know" (797).

ECCO is a central research resource for scholars of the eighteenth century, despite longstanding recognition of its shortcomings. With such widespread agreement on the limitations of the database, users might be tempted to accept this recognition as a substitute for alertness to the ways in which ECCO's biases influence research. With "Rummaging in the Dark: ECCO as Opaque Digital Archive," Cassidy Holahan provides us with a timely reminder of the dangers of archival opacity and an initial assessment of the changes in ECCO's recently updated platform. In a similar fashion to Stephen Gregg's book, discussed above, this article examines the provenance of ECCO, its structural arrangement, and the history of curatorial decisions that it manifests. Its account of this history is necessarily more concise that that provided by Gregg's monograph, but comprehensive enough to articulate and explain the pertinent issues at stake. Moreover, as Holahan argues, these issues bear repeating because of the way that "archives can powerfully shape the research that comes out of them" (1089). The author assesses ECCO's aura of completeness, how it has arisen, and how perceptions about its coverage have changed. Part of the reason to uphold this aura is tactical, as Gale has previously been evasive about delineating the scope of the database and its contents. Holahan notes welcome developments in transparency in the new platform and a willingness from Gale to incorporate researchers' suggestions into its efforts to improve the resource. As scholars come to grips with the new ECCO, this article provides insightful early critiques of some of its features, including its revised subject headings and term-frequency tool. The author moves beyond the purview of Gregg's book by providing revealing snapshots of how eighteenth-century studies has been using ECCO and surveying the impact

of the database on specific fields of study. That ECCO has been "especially useful" in bolstering book history research should give us cause for reflection, since it underlines how important it is that book historians view this resource "as an archive with limited holdings and a cumulative, multi-generational history of curatorial decisions" (812). Not quite a dark archive, accessible only to its custodians, Holahan suggests that ECCO is best described as an opaque archive because of the information it has tended to obscure. This article aims to help us see this crucial resource more clearly.

In their article, "Canst Thou Draw Out Leviathan with Computational Bibliography? New Angles on Printing Thomas Hobbes' 'Ornaments' Edition," the contributing authors introduce a notable conceptual distinction between digital and computational methods. A sometimes strategic term gaining increasing currency, computational methods are opposed to digital methods in their foregrounding of information processing and analysis, rather than the creation of digital objects. The computational bibliography described and utilized in this article functions by making very large volumes of bibliographic data comprehensible on a human scale. The methods the authors deploy are in the service of reinvestigating a previously settled question about the so-called "Ornaments" edition of Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan. Described as "one of the most enduring mysteries in Hobbes scholarship" (828), the printer and date of publication of the edition had previously been attributed to John Darby (1702) from a pool of three candidate printers and publication dates within a broad range of time between 1651 and 1702. Using computational methods to marshal a range of evidence comprising running titles, damaged type, paper stock, and font types, the authors are decisive in making a new attribution of the "Ornaments" edition to a printer and to a publication date within a window of a few months at the end of the seventeenth century. Perhaps the most forceful evidence they present arises from the use of computer vision, a technique by which computers analyze digital images, to investigate patterns of damaged type. To address the

mystery of the edition's publication, the authors compare its standard font to that of 130 books from candidate printers. Those who have completed visual collations of even a few copies of an edition will appreciate why computer vision might be beneficial at this scale: imagine the infinite monkey theorem, but with Hinman collators instead of typewriters. At all steps of the process, however, the authors demonstrate the computer's ultimate blindness in the absence of bibliographical expertise. The article enlists machines to assist in extending the traditional tools and methods of analytical bibliography, in "a mix of computer vision of shoe-leather sleuthing" (836). The results are incisive contributions to Hobbes Studies and to the intersections of bibliography and digital humanities. Ending with a refreshing paradox, the authors argue that their research illustrates a way that "digital surrogates prompt a more complex engagement with material processes and originals" (847).

Stylometry is a branch of linguistic study that applies statistical tools and methods to evaluate the style of a body of writing. Though quantitative methods of analyzing writing style can be traced back to the nineteenth century, stylometry's academic breakthrough moment in the 1960s may be familiar to scholars of the eighteenth century. On that occasion, Frederick Mosteller and David A. Wallace used statistical methods to attribute the authorship of the pseudonymous articles of The Federalist Papers (1787–88).[23] In time, the computational approach used by Mosteller and Wallace became the norm in stylometry, as the field relied on enumerative tasks that were more readily and reliably performed by computers. We see this method at work in "A Computational Investigation into the Authorship of Sister Peg," by Mark J. Hill and Mikko Tolonen. More accurately, we see the authors undertake a number of different stylometric procedures in order to intervene in the long-running debate about the authorship of the Scottish militia pamphlet, Sister Peg (1761).

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[23] Frederick Mosteller and David L. Wallace, Applied Bayesian and Classical Inference: The Case of the Federalist Papers (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1964).

In the process, the article illustrates how stylometry is not merely a case of running the numbers to determine a result, but a complex process of iteration, refinement, and evaluation. Stylometry does not deliver certainties or operate in an empirical vacuum, as the authors demonstrate with their thorough knowledge and sensitive attention to the historical research that has set the previous terms of debate about this work's authorship. Sister Peg's topic—the proposed extension of the Militia Act to Scotland—and the contexts of its composition and publication within the intellectual circles of mid-eighteenth-century Edinburgh have contributed to the identification of a number of candidate authors. While the pamphlet is commonly attributed to Adam Ferguson, scholars have more recently given credence to David Hume's claims to authorship. The question of whether the author was Ferguson, Hume, or a case of collaborative authorship is important because it would enhance our understanding of the work's intentions and its author's (or authors') concerns. Moreover, such a resolution would contribute to knowledge of authorial and onymous conventions of the period and of the pamphlet's intellectual milieu. The authors are keenly alert to the material influence of book production on textual authority—which is not always the case in studies of this kind—and present an accessible introduction to stylometry in the course of their investigations.

The authors of "Gendering Digital Bibliography with the Women's Print History Project" investigate the transformative potential of digital bibliography, conceived as a means of augmenting the static nature of bibliography's conventional lists and catalogues with more fluid and dynamic possibilities. A born digital bibliographical database, the Women's Print History Project (WPHP) collects information about women's contributions to the print trades of the long eighteenth century. Its editors and staff generate records which more effectively and comprehensively identify women's roles in the making of books, whether as contributors to books' intellectual or material content. The article advances arguments for the ways that

digital bibliography builds upon the foundations of traditional bibliography while making meaningful advances to the forms of knowledge that the field can address. Crucial to this argument is the relational nature of the WPHP database, where relationships and connections are prioritized in the data structure: thus, the data models relationships, "making it explicit that books are made by many actors, engaging in a variety of production processes in dense human networks" (888). Many existing bibliographical sources provide the data for WPHP, but the labor of its editors and staff involves taking the data from these static and siloed resources and representing it within a new data structure which elucidates the often hidden or obscured evidence of women's involvement in the print industries. In contrast to resources like ESTC and ECCO, whose histories of print and digitization are key to understanding their affordances and shortcomings, WPHP's born digital status rids it of "the sedimentation of a print-based ideology in its data" (894). As such, this article offers a complement and a contrast to other articles in this special issue which examine legacy databases by providing a vision of a new resource which is hardwired to accommodate the research questions of the present. Hewing to the principles and practices of data feminism, the authors describe their efforts to create data structures that enables scholars to make connections which advance feminist research, while looking outwards to situate their embodied practice of bibliography within a broader disciplinary shift (including Black bibliography, queer bibliography, and Indigenous textualities) that "self-consciously explores the work of the past through the lens of the present, with attention to how our own research practices and embodied experiences shape the work we do" (891).

Providing an example of how digital tools and methods are brought to bear on understanding the culture of the Enlightenment, Alicia Montoya's article uses bibliometric methods to nuance existing perspectives on how the books of the long eighteenth century correlate with our perspectives on that era. Entitled "Enlightenment? What Enlightenment?

Reflections on Half a Million Books (British, French, and Dutch Private Libraries, 1665–1830)," the article presents preliminary findings from the MEDIATE database (Measuring Enlightenment: Disseminating Ideas, Authors, and Texts in Europe, 1665–1830). The database is being constructed by a project team that has digitized and derived structured data from a corpus of 600 printed catalogues of private libraries, mostly sold at auction in Europe during this period. The initial arguments presented by this paper demonstrate some of the ways that this new dataset has enabled the research team to adopt distant reading methods to model the circulation of books in western Europe during the long eighteenth century. A particular aim of the article is to address the impact of canonical Enlightenment works within the broader scale of publication and reading available to eighteenth-century readers: "How, in other words, can Enlightenment be measured, or expressed in quantitative terms?" (910). Those familiar with scholarly discourses on the origins of Enlightenment thought may be unsurprised to learn of the predominance of classical authors within the MEDIATE dataset. In this respect, the article enters into dialogue—at a larger scale—with the findings of the article, on the borrowing habits of Glaswegian students, which follows it in this issue. However, the affordances of large-scale bibliometric analysis allow the author to present some distinctive perspectives. For example, instinctive hypotheses explaining the overwhelming presence of classical authors within private libraries of the time are nuanced with the aid of different types of quantitative evidence from the database. The ideas that these books were relics of owners' schooldays or objects of multigenerational inheritance are complicated by patterns that emerge from the data. By turns, this method corroborates and advances the rich existing body of scholarship about the influence of classical learning on Enlightenment culture. The article encourages us to think more carefully about how and where we locate evidence of Enlightenment in bibliographic records. Rather than prioritizing the presence or absence of certain authors and books, Montoya argues, we must view the

Enlightenment as "an ongoing intellectual debate" (929) where old and new books coexist in a changing environment of knowledge.

To what extent can we hold the eighteenth century to account for creating systems of knowledge that influence how we view the world today? This question, familiar to many scholars of this field, underpins many aspects of how we might engage with the Eighteenth-Century Borrowing Records from the University of Glasgow, a dataset that contains student borrowing records from the university library from 1757 to 1771 and information from professorial registers between 1751 and 1790. Creators of the dataset and authors of the article "Reconstructing Student Reading Habits in Eighteenth-Century Glasgow: Enlightenment Systems and Digital Reconfigurations," make two associated claims for the resource's value. First, they argue that the dataset provides the basis for thinking afresh about the circulation of books beyond constrained categories of reception such as individual publication points, reviews, and annotations. Second, the process of digitizing manuscript sources reveals how the organization of Enlightenment systems was "bound up in mental habits derived from organizing physical spaces" (950) and how their remediation for digital media may assist us in moving beyond "received narratives and technologies of Enlightenment" (1090). Reconstructing the physical arrangement of the library from borrowing records, the authors consider the limitations of Linnaean hierarchies that assign every object to its proper place. Such thinking resists the relational logic of databases which facilitate a knowledge system based on connections and relationships between objects. This is not the only legacy of Enlightenment knowledge systems, as the authors acknowledge, and their discussion complements and augments recent scholarship which sees the basis for our interconnected world of digital information in the encyclopedism and reference systems of the eighteenth century. The article provides evidence of the valuable insights to be gained from studying the borrowing records at different scales of attention. Individual instances of

marginalia in copies of popular novels provide anecdotal evidence of the kind familiar to historians of reading, while quantitative approaches illustrate the influence of unexpected categories of writing in an environment conventionally understood as the breeding ground for the Scottish Enlightenment. While the work of Scottish thinkers including David Hume, Frances Hutcheson, and William Robertson was assigned by professors such as Adam Smith and consumed by students like James Boswell, French author Charles Rollins was the library's most popular author in the period examined. Thus, Scottish writings "shared shelves and mindspace with English theology, French rhetoric, Latin and Greek histories, Roman comedies, bawdy novels, and practical technical manuals" (942). Like MEDIATE and WPHP, this is another born digital database which, while indebted to older digital resources, encourages users to reflect on the intellectual consequences of how its information is arranged.

Many of the articles in this special issue demonstrate, in more or less explicit ways, how researchers' modes of interacting, reading, and viewing primary materials are influenced by the digital. At their most basic, digital interfaces enable a reorientation of the conventional linearity of a reading encounter with a book, resulting in a corresponding change in our habits of mind and relationships to scholarly evidence. Of course, the book does not necessarily constrain its reader to linear reading; scholars of the Enlightenment and the age of encyclopedism know this very well. In "Graphic Constructions of Knowledge in Piranesi's Maps and Diderot's Encyclopédie," Jeanne Britton directly engages these issues, and more, in her comparison of two annotated maps of Rome by Giovanni Battista Piranesi to Diderot and d'Alembert's Encyclopédie. Drawing on work at The Digital Piranesi, the author describes Piranesi's complex and unique depictions of his adopted city in two maps from the mid-eighteenth century. As model Enlightenment documents, his "Pianta di Roma" and "Pianta di Roma e del Campo Marzo" rely on linkages of word and image and deploy a range

of perspectives that include the cartographic, the archaeological, and the picturesque. Reckoning Piranesi's absorption of the organizational influences of encyclopedism, Britton argues for parallels "between the twenty-first-century digital form of the hyperlink and the eighteenth-century printed systems of the index, cross-reference, and annotation" (958). The kinship between the two representational modes offers possibilities for a digital representation of the information-navigation and knowledge-creation methods found in Piranesi's maps, which made unfamiliar demands of those who read and viewed them in the eighteenth century. For these users, the author writes, these structures generate "if not Enlightenment, then certainly aesthetic, cognitive, and epistemological oscillation that can yield new types of knowledge" (959). That said, the article cautions readers about some shortcomings of digital remediation, noting ways that certain conceptual features of print cannot be mapped neatly onto the digital. Current digital editions of the Encyclopédie (ARTFL and ENCCRE) have not digitized linkages between text and image, the author suggests, because the directions of movement between the two categories are too great to capture digitally. As book historians know, print is a technology that contains complexities and intricacies of its own.

If you planned to buy a piece of chinaware in the eighteenth century, would you be more attracted to a piece described as "fine" or to a one presented as "beautiful"? "London Calling from the Auction World: A Methodological Journey through Eighteenth-Century London Auction Advertisements" surveys London auction advertisements from 1742 to 1829 to identify and analyze trends in the language used to appeal to consumers. Like many of the articles in this special issue, it deploys a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in pursuit of its objectives. The author, Alessandra De Mulder, presents the central idea that newspaper auction advertisements offer insights into bourgeois value construction by revealing the shared linguistic field occupied by sellers and buyers. Key words and phrases in

the auction marketplace are extracted from advertisements in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection and the British Newspaper Archive by means of word embedding technology, and then subjected to analysis of how their association with certain consumer products shifted over time. A method from computational linguistics, word embedding provides a model of language where words with similar meanings have a similar representation. Combined with the results of this methods, the author presents a series of close readings of advertisements which analyze "how consumers classified a broad range of products and how they assigned meaning and value to them" (982). Building upon a rich body of literature about the history of consumer culture in the eighteenth century, the author seeks to investigate the seductive linguistic strategies of advertising to better understand why customers of the eighteenth-century marketplace purchased the goods that they did.

The nine articles in this special issue represent some of the ways in which the book and the digital are inextricably linked in field of eighteenth-century studies. Whether in their use, construction, or analysis of databases and datasets; their engagement of quantitative methods to address reading, publishing, authorship, gender, or commerce; or their attention to the effects of digital and material resources on consciousness and thought, each considers aspects of how the digital has helped to invigorate the history of the book with updated tools, methods, and possibilities.

A cluster of articles which surveyed the impact of digital humanities and digital studies on book history and eighteenth-century studies appeared from 2012 to 2014. If another sounding were to be taken from 2028 to 2030, what trends would be prominent? The question is a challenge and invites hostages to fortune. Moreover, issues about what the field apparently needs are different from predictions about what directions it might take. In truth, many of the requirements identified early in the 2010s are as urgent today. The interconnection of resources pursued by 18th Connect and Gale is still the means for projects

to “best guarantee . . . the broad impact and sustainability of their work.”[24] If connection is one of the primary promises of the digital, however, so too is preservation—and that task may be more challenging. Kirschenbaum and Werner’s vision for the future of book history included “archivists and other experts work[ing] to stabilize, authenticate, and index the born-digital materials that now function, indisputably, as primary records in and of themselves.”[25] As scholarship in the field becomes increasingly digital, the conservation of digital objects will be more high-maintenance than the demands made by books, which can sit securely on shelves for hundreds of years. To expect continued developments in the two areas I have given extra attention in this article seems a safe bet: in the usability of ECCO and the use of distant reading methods. That the two will soon meet in large-scale analysis of a full-text ECCO corpus seems a more remote prospect. If that is the dream—or a dream—of the field, articles in this special issue show us ample approaches to distant reading the eighteenth century that we can pursue in the meantime. Coupled with the range of other methods represented in these articles, this special issue points towards a future of rich possibility for book history, digital humanities, and the long eighteenth century.

[24] Bullard, “Digital Humanities,” 749.
[25] Kirschenbaum and Werner, “Digital Scholarship,” 452.