JISC

JISC Final Report

Project Information			
Project Acronym	IJDDiP		
Project Title	Intute / Jisc Digitisation Dissemination Project		
Start Date	1/10/2008	**End Date**	30/7/2009
Lead Institution	Work conducted by the University of Oxford on behalf of the Intute Executive, University of Manchester		
Project Director	Caroline Williams		
Project Manager & contact details	Dr James A J Wilson, Oxford University Computing Services, 13 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 6NN Tel. (10865) 283347 Email: james.wilson@oucs.ox.ac.uk		
Project Web URL			
Programme Name (and number)	Digitisation Programme		
Programme Manager	Alastair Dunning		

Document Name			
Document Title	IJDDiP Final Report		
Author(s) & project role	Dr James A J Wilson, Project Manager		
Date	11/08/2008	**Filename**	IJDDiPfinalreport.docx
Access	☑ Project and JISC internal		☐ General dissemination

Document History		
Version	**Date**	**Comments**
1.0	13/08/2009	First draft
1.1	28/09/2009	Added more user feedback and an appendix of conference presentations.

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary

- The aim of IJDDiP (Intute / JISC Digitisation Dissemination Project) was to disseminate information about the second wave of JISC-funded digitisation projects to the academic research community.

- One of the key objectives of the project was to utilize the communication channels that academics use themselves, in order to reach those researchers that other forms of publicity are thought to miss.

- IJDDiP involved the organisation of two half-day workshops, three panels at historical conferences, and the development of five themed websites. It also attempted to bring the digitisation projects to the attention of scholarly journals to encourage critical review.

- Although the success of the project is difficult to quantify, feedback from the conferences suggests that the project achieved its aim of disseminating useful information about the digitisation projects to researchers who otherwise would not have heard of them or appreciated their relevance to their research.

- The project also gathered feedback from the research community in order to inform future digitisation work.

- The response to the JISC-funded digitisation projects was very positive, with many of them demonstrating precisely the qualities that researchers felt to be important.

- Many academics highlighted the usefulness of the digitisation projects to their undergraduate teaching, rather than specifically to their own research.

- It was felt that greater investment should be made into digital literacy, to enable people to use digitised materials more effectively.

- There was no clear consensus amongst members of the research community regarding the best way to inform them of future digitisation projects, although web portals, the use of academic mailing lists, and workshops were all suggested by several of the workshop participants.

- Researchers would like to be able to search across many different digitised collections from one place.

- Many suggestions for future digitisation projects revolved around the narrow research interests of the academics asked, although three general areas were mentioned repeatedly:
    - Additional newspaper sources, particularly local newspapers
    - Government records and papers
    - Early primary materials, from the medieval and early-modern periods, which were thought to be under-represented at present

- Researchers were concerned about preserving free access to digital content.

2. Background

To ensure that the investment made by the JISC in the second wave of digitisation projects leads to the anticipated returns in terms of scholarly usage and impact on research, it is imperative that the research community knows about the projects, what they offer, and how relevant information may be accessed. The JISC therefore funded the Intute / JISC Digitisation Dissemination Project (IJDDiP) in order to raise awareness of the outputs of the Digitisation Programme amongst relevant sections of the UK academic research community.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that academic researchers can be a difficult group to alert to new digitised content, as the usual dissemination channels for such content (leaflets, blogs, presentations, etc.) do not always penetrate the forums of academic discussion that the researchers themselves inhabit and use to exchange information.

Furthermore, publicity for digitisation projects has typically focused on the project as a whole, rather than the particular aspects of it that might appeal to more specialised research audiences. Most researchers focus above all else on their own particular lines of research, rather than looking out for large electronic resources covering a broad range of content, much of which might seem at first glance to be irrelevant. An attendee at one of the IJDDiP workshops commented after trying out some of the new JISC-funded digitisation projects, "I am impressed by the scale and interlinking of the projects, finding things in unexpected places. I have been looking for Spanish Influenza and found material in both the cartoons project and the cabinet files". The key point is that the useful content was 'unexpected' – simply hearing about the projects would not have alerted the researcher to the fact they might contain material actually relevant to her.

IJDDiP therefore sought to engage researchers on their own turf, by using the traditional forums of academic exchange. It promoted the digitisation projects according to research themes – attracting the attention of specialised audiences by highlighting the relevance of the projects to their research, rather than hoping that the project name alone might reach out to interested parties.

It is difficult to quantify the success of IJDDiP in terms of the number of researchers that have been alerted to relevant JISC-funded digitisation projects, or the rapidity with which it has helped spread the word, although it has undoubtedly had some impact in this regard. Instead, attention has been paid to the thoughts and opinions of the researchers that the project has affected, in order to better understand their attitudes to digitisation projects, digitised content, and indeed how best to communicate the good news about such projects in future.

3. Aims and Objectives

The principal aim of IJDDiP was to generate awareness amongst relevant sections of the UK academic research community of the new JISC-funded digitisation projects and indicate what they can contribute to research. A secondary aim of the project was to gather feedback from the academic community regarding the shape that future digitisation projects should take, and how information about such projects should be disseminated.

The stated aims of the project at its outset were as follows:

By the end of July 2009 to have:

- Identified research themes that are common across several of the digitisation projects, which may then be used to engage the interest of researchers in related fields
- Created re-usable online materials that contextualise and expand knowledge of the digital collections.
- Arranged and attended suitable events where the collections may be introduced and demonstrated to large numbers of researchers interested in the identified themes
- Utilised respected academic information channels, such as peer-reviewed journals, for disseminating information about the content and use of the new online collections
- Initiated scholarly discussion of the new collections and their impact on research and methodology

All of these aims have, broadly, been met, although it has not proved as easy as hoped to get information into peer-reviewed journals (this is discussed in more detail under the section on implementation).

There were no significant changes to these aims during the lifespan of the project, although the 'reusable' aspect of the online materials took something of a backseat to their general usefulness, and, if anything, we ended up with richer feedback from the community than we had initially hoped for.

4. Methodology & Implementation

The first stage of the project involved determining 'research themes' that would be attractive to a significant number of scholars whilst also involving as many of the JISC-funded digitisation projects as possible. These research themes could then be used to contextualise the projects according to the interests of the research community. Given that the bulk of the digitised collections concerned British history, it made sense to choose research themes that were essentially historical in nature. We looked at conferences, societies, journals, and more general Internet sites to define themes that would match the distinctions and divisions that historians themselves tend to apply to their discipline. From this we settled on two broad themes: British Political History and British Social History, and five more narrow themes: British Electoral History; The History of Ireland and its Relations with Britain; The History of Crime and Punishment in Nineteenth-Century Britain; The History of Healthcare in Britain; and the History of British News Media. The two broad categories were intended to fit the way in which history conferences are often categorized, whilst the five more narrow themes were felt to be more appropriate to actual scholarly research, being more at the level that scholars might define their own fields of interest.

One of the limitations of the 'research theme' approach was that it was impossible to give each JISC-funded digitisation project equal prominence. The FreezeFrame and Pre-Raphaelite Resource Site projects, for instance, could not realistically be accommodated in the selected themes. This concern was brought to the attention of JISC, who accepted that equal exposure of the collections was not feasible given the terms of the project.

Part of the theory behind IJDDiP was to employ the dissemination channels used by academics themselves to publicize the digitisation projects to their target audiences. However, due to the relatively short time frame of the project, plus the necessity of holding off the major dissemination activities until April 2009, when the second wave of digitisation projects had actually been released, we were limited regarding the activities in which we could engage. The long lead-times involved in conference organisation, and the even longer lead-times associated with many journal publication schedules, meant that some avenues were closed to us before we began. Some of the larger conferences between April and July, for instance, had already closed submissions before we had determined the research themes (at the end of October 2008). Both the annual Economic History Society conference and the Social History Society conference, although ideally scheduled for April, had already closed to submissions. Were this kind of work to be undertaken again, it would be sensible to allow an extra three months before the launch of the digitisation projects to allow for these academic lead-times.

Nevertheless, we identified and successfully applied to three relevant history conferences, staged two in-depth workshops, and commissioned original research guides from five academic experts.

For the conferences, we recruited panels of academics who had each made substantial and innovative use of digital resources in their own research. Appropriate speakers were identified via a mixture of Internet research and recommendations from senior academic staff. The idea was that such speakers could both draw in their audiences as peers and stimulate interest in digitised collections and new ways to use them. Each panel was introduced by the IJDDiP project manager giving a short presentation about the various JISC digitisation projects (including those not obviously germane to the panel), their content, and any significant or unusual features. In addition to this, handouts summarizing all of the digitisations with URLs and access details were circulated amongst the audience. The project manager chaired each of the panels and initiated discussion afterwards, noting significant comments.

IJDDiP also ran two free half-day workshops to introduce researchers to the new digitisation projects. These were held in Oxford on the 16th April and the 2nd July 2009, with researchers being invited via mailing lists and via hand-outs at the conferences we attended. For each workshop we gave an

overview presentation of the Digitisation Programme, running through each of the individual project in brief. We also invited members of the digitisation project teams to attend and present a more in-depth view of their work. Plenty of time was provided for attendees to try out the digitisations for themselves, and time was set aside at the end of the afternoon to discuss responses to them as a group. We also collected written feedback from the attendees before they left.

IJDDiP also created of a set of 'microsites', self-contained research-themed websites hosted by the national online resource discovery service, Intute. The microsites each consist of several components: links to relevant JISC Digitisation projects; links to other useful resources from the Intute catalogue; and a short essay on conducting online research into the research theme in question, written by an experienced academic. These contributors were each paid £250 for an article of at least 1,200 words. Most of the essays have been lightly edited. It is intended that the microsite content will be re-usable, potentially in printed form for JISC booklets. The copyright is owned by the Intute consortium.

The original intention of getting two review articles about JISC digitisation projects published in scholarly peer-reviewed journal proved more difficult to achieve. In part, this was because of the need for scholarly independence – IJDDiP could not straightforwardly commission reviews from people on behalf of journals. Even if an author were not to be offered any monetary incentive for a review, the suspicion might still persist that he had been cherry-picked to write a positive review. We were therefore limited to contacting relevant journals and encouraging them to commission reviews of the digitisation projects themselves.

Several of the journal editors whom we did approach were unsure exactly how to go about the peer review of online content. Although all were positive and encouraging about the idea of such reviews, the absence of an established model for commissioning such work presented a barrier. We undertook some research to try to find models for reviews, but apart from some journals that published irregular 'round-ups' of electronic resources, or the occasional special notification, the only journal in the discipline of history that we could find that had regularly published proper scholarly reviews of online resources was the *Journal of American History*, which was outside the scope of the IJDDiP themes and digitisation coverage. Although we contacted the *Journal of American History* to ask them their processes regarding reviewing online resources, they did not follow up our emails.

Despite not being able to claim that IJDDiP has led directly to any review publication, it seems that the exploratory emails that we sent may have had some impact on future editorial policy – *History Workshop Journal*, for instance wrote to us to say that the editors has agreed to proactively commission reviews of digital resources. *Reviews in History* announced in March 2009 (independent of any contact by IJDDiP) that they were increasing their coverage of digital resources. They have published reviews of both the First World War Digital Archive and the 19th-century British Library Newspapers website.

5. Outputs and Results

IJDDiP organised three conference panels:

> **Languages of Politics : Mapping Britain's 19th Century**
>
> *Durham University, 2nd-4th April, 2009*
>
> Speakers:
>
> James A J Wilson (University of Oxford), 'A Brief Introduction to JISC Digitisation Projects'
>
> James Gregory (University of Bradford), speaking about his use of various digital resources for researching his biography of William Cowper-Temple
>
> Philip Salmon (History of Parliament Project), speaking on how digital collections have affected the discipline of political history over the last ten years, with particular reference to the various online Parliamentary Papers collections.
>
> Kathryn Eccles (Oxford Internet Institute), speaking on how historians of nineteenth-century politics make innovative use of digital collections.
>
> (plus Chris Burgess (People's History Museum), whom the organisers added to our panel)

Power and History : 29th Irish Conference of Historians

University of Ireland, Limerick, 12th -14th June, 2009

Speakers:

James A J Wilson (University of Oxford), 'A Brief Introduction to JISC Digitisation Projects'

John Garrard (University of Salford), 'Nineteenth-century urban power and the opportunities and problems presented by a digitised local press'

Toni Weller (DeMontfort University), 'History in the Information Age : A Mutable Past and Present?'

Sarah Richardson (University of Warwick), '"The Power of the Petticoat": Researching nineteenth-century women and politics via digital collections'

International Association for Media and History (IAMHIST) Conference 2009

University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 8th – 11th July, 2009

Speakers:

James A J Wilson (University of Oxford), 'A Brief Introduction to JISC Digitisation Projects'

Adrian Bingham (University of Sheffield), 'Using Digital Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges'

Nick Hayes (Nottingham Trent University), 'Making Urban Identity: Digitial Resources and the Historian'

Suzanne Franks (University of Kent), 'Researching the BBC in a Digital Age'

The speakers at the two IJDDiP half-day workshops were as follows:

First IJDDiP Workshop, 16th April 2009

Introductory Presentation and Overview of Digitisation Projects (James A J Wilson, IJDDiP)

First World War Poetry Digital Archive (Kate Lindsay)

The John Johnson Collection (David Tomkins)

Welsh Journals Online (Martin Locock)

The Use and Impact of Digital Resources in the Humanities (Katherine Eccles, Oxford Internet Institute)

Second IJDDiP Workshop, 2nd July 2009

Introductory Presentation (James A J Wilson, IJDDiP)

The Murder of Jean Alexander, or 19th Century Resources from the JISC Digitisation Programme (Paola Marchionni, JISC)

First World War Poetry Digital Archive (Kate Lindsay)

19th Century British Pamphlets Online (Christine Fowler)

The Use and Impact of Digital Resources in the Humanities (Katherine Eccles, Oxford Internet Institute)

The John Johnson Collection (David Tomkins)

Significant feedback was generated from both the workshops and the conference discussions. The most significant points are summarised in Appendix A of this report.

The authors commissioned by IJDDiP to write the research guides for the microsites are as follows:

Microsite contributors

British Electoral History – Dr. Philip Salmon (History of Parliament Project)

History of Ireland and its Relations with Britain – Jonathan Wright (Queen's University, Belfast)

History of Crime and Punishment in Nineteenth-Century Britain – Prof. Barry Godfrey (Keele University)

History of Healthcare in Britain – Prof. John Stewart (Glasgow Caledonian University)

History of British News Media – Dr. Emma Hanna (University of Greenwich)

The index to the microsites, or 'Themes in Historical Research' as we have called them on the public website, is located at http://www.intute.ac.uk/themes/historical/.

An index of JISC-funded digitisation projects is hosted on the Intute website at: http://www.intute.ac.uk/jiscdigitisations/, although the British Libraries Newspapers 1600-1900 project is at present excluded from the list as it has no effective single project URL.

6. Outcomes

It is not easy to accurately measure the impact the IJDDiP has had upon the historical research community, although such feedback as we have received from the conferences and workshops has been universally positive. It is certainly true that more people have already discovered and used the JISC-funded digitisation project outputs as a result of IJDDiP than would otherwise have been the case, especially in instances where we have highlighted relevant materials in collections that would not have been obviously relevant to particular research fields from titles alone. The project has also undoubtedly got researchers thinking about the some of the issues raised by digitisation – not just the academic ones such as the effects of mass digitisation on the way research is conducted, but also problems of sustainability and access.

In terms of meeting its initial aims and objective, IJDDiP has been largely successful, although some of the measures of success proved rather ambitious given the scope and timescale of the project.

The decision to structure dissemination around research themes was a sound one, and the precise themes chosen have (so far as can yet be determined) proven reasonable. The notion that most researchers are primarily concerned with their own, often quite narrow, fields of research has been borne out by the feedback we have received and in conversation. By emphasizing how the content of the digitisation projects (or at least certain collections) is applicable to research themes, we have been able to engage members of the research community in a way that would have been difficult if marketing the projects as individual 'whole' resources. The focus on research themes has arguably helped IJDDiP get the JISC projects, as well as digitisation more broadly, embedded in the actual academic substance of relevant conferences, and helped to attract researchers to the workshops. As one of the workshop delegates said, unprompted, "It's a good idea to package things together for researchers into specific packages".

The five research-themed microsites have not yet been publicly accessible for long enough for their success to be meaningfully measured, but the chosen themes matched real research interests well enough for there to be no problems commissioning outside experts to write the research guides.

We have met the objective of presenting panels of speakers at three academic conferences. Each panel presented a wide range of interesting research that highlighted the ways in which digital collections had helped achieve a research goal that would not have been achievable without. The precise collections referenced already included several of the new JISC-funded resources, despite them having only very recently been published. Highlights included James Gregory's paper on how digital collections are changing the way in which biographies are researched, Adrian Bingham's excellent and very balanced consideration of the way in which digitising newspapers affects research for good or ill, and Nick Haye's captivating presentation on media constructions of urban identity, which made extensive use of early film footage of Nottingham, taken from the InView collection.

I was particularly encouraged by the lively discussions that followed all three of the IJDDiP panels, which drew comments, questions, and feedback from a large portion of delegates. Some of the more pertinent responses are highlighted in this report.

The initial aim of reaching 200 conference delegates with the three panels proved to be over-ambitious, with the actual number of people at our sessions totalling closer to 110. We managed to get a plenary session at the relatively small 'Languages of Politics' conference, but had to make do with parallel sessions at the other two conferences. That said, our panels drew more delegates than any of the competing sessions, illustrating the interest that many historians have in digitised content and its use, as well as the popularity of the speakers. Even if we had managed to get panels accepted at the really large annual conferences I am doubtful whether we would have achieved a significantly larger audience, as such conferences ordinarily run a greater number of parallel sessions, and unfortunately the IJDDiP project manager is not such a distinguished historian as to be offered keynote presentations.

The two IJDDiP workshops were demonstrably successful, both meeting the objective of attracting at least 15 applicants, although unfortunately some foul weather put a few people off from attending the first session on the day. Every single attendee who filled in the feedback form said that the organisation and practical arrangements were very good, and the feedback relating to the JISC Digitisation projects themselves was also very positive. A number of attendees mentioned that it was very useful to have the time to 'play around with' and 'explore' the digitisation projects, besides hearing about them from the speakers.

In the initial IJDDiP evaluation plan it was suggested that a measure of success of the Digitisation Programme would be a high proportion of workshop attendees reporting that the projects would have an impact on how they conducted their research. 77% of respondents said that the digitisations funded by the programme would have 'very much' of an impact. Those who weren't so enthusiastic were not critical of the content that was available, but rather reported that there just wasn't anything that fitted their period or particular field of interest. Perhaps surprisingly, a general finding from the workshops and conferences was that many academics felt the digitisation projects would have a bigger impact on their teaching than on their research, possibly because of the very specific nature of the sources that they needed to use for their research.

7. Conclusions

Researchers are enthusiastic about the large-scale digitisation of primary source materials. This is not surprising. As one of the workshop attendees put it, these kinds of digitisation are "crucial. They reduce the cost of research and they extend its scope". Whilst the responses from those who attended the workshops suggested that the JISC Digitisation Programme was already well-known to them, the conference delegates were not so aware of the programme or many of the projects.

From speaking to historians it is evident that before long, word of very large-scale digitisation projects spreads. Nobody that we came across was ignorant of the British Library Newspaper collections, for instance. Likewise, all researchers in clearly-defined fields such as medical history quickly become aware of PubMed, and through it hosted content such as the Medical Journal Backfiles. It is not so clear, however, that news of smaller-scale digitisation projects penetrates the research community quickly or effectively. Where it is not evident that a digitised collection would be relevant to a particular research interest from its title, there is little to suggest that researchers 'look up from what they are doing' to try it out. It is fair to say, given that most researchers have no shortage of material to look through in the first place, that they are not always proactive at seeking out new online resources.

Therefore, if the JISC is to encourage researchers to rapidly adopt new digitised content, it needs to take on some of the burden of dissemination and do more to point to what is most relevant to them.

The approach taken to dissemination by IJDDiP, involving traditional academic channels of communication such as workshops, conferences and (not entirely successfully) journals, may be summarised as reasonably effective, but not cheap. It takes significant time and organisation to arrange conference panels and workshops, and the number of people that can be reached *directly* is relatively small (although specific research communities usually *are* small). These dissemination mechanisms can of course have a secondary impact. Academics do talk to one another, and this is often the way that people find out about new resources. As one of the workshop delegates said, "I will

be alerting colleagues to the new resources; legitimate resources are useful to know about". This secondary level of communication is difficult to measure, however.

One of the positive aspects of the approach taken by IJDDiP is that it does become possible to alert particular research communities to relevant content in digital collections that are not obviously intended for them. If one is seeking to maximise the academic use of digitised content, then this is a good thing. More traditional marketing mechanisms such as leaflets may be cheaper to produce and distribute, but they are not so easy to adapt to appeal to different research communities, or explain what aspects of a given digitisation might be of interest to them. The researcher 'market' is a highly fractured one, consisting of innumerable individuals and small groups with specialised interests. Trying to reach a large portion of it via a single mechanism is not easy.

Something to bear in mind for future digitisation projects is that they need to clearly articulate the range of research interests that they can serve.

8. Implications

It would be quite possible to repeat much of the work that IJDDiP has undertaken for future digitisation projects. Indeed, this would be an effective way to reach parts of the research community which might otherwise miss the new content, or at least not be in the first wave of users.

The conferences that were contacted regarding hosting panels were mostly very enthusiastic about the idea, and there is at present a genuine appetite amongst the historical research community both to hear about digitised content and the way it is being used, and to consider the effect that digitisation is having on history as a discipline.

Given the number of mailing lists and departments that we contacted about the workshops, we were a little surprised that the number of people applying to attend was not higher than it was, and many of the attendees were already more familiar with the digitisation landscape than was the case for the research community at large. These might therefore not be such cost effective mechanisms for dissemination, although they did generate a wealth of feedback.

The websites created by the project were only just going live as this report was being written, so it is not possible as yet to judge their success, although they will of course provide a more lasting source of reference than the events. It would be worth returning to these websites at some point to supplement this report.

Regarding the publication of scholarly peer reviews of digitisation projects in academic journals, this may be worthy of further study. The time is ripe for scholarly journals to start considering electronic resources on the same basis as published print monographs, but there is some confusion as to how this should best be implemented. A simple guide to how to go about reviewing digital resources, with examples of what best practice there currently is, might go a long way to influencing the policies of journal editorial boards.

IJDDiP has also exposed a desire amongst researchers to be able to cross-search multiple digitisation projects. With the proliferation of such projects it becomes harder for researchers to remember all those that might be relevant to their needs, and more time-consuming and frustrating for them to visit many different web sites and use many disparate search engines to retrieve relevant information. The development of such an effective and reliable meta-search engine would of course pose technical and methodological challenges.

9. Recommendations

On the basis of the work undertaken in the IJDDiP project, we would recommend that the JISC considers the following:

- Any future projects replicating the work of IJDDiP should be started at least eight months before the intended release of the digitised content, to accommodate the long lead-times required by large academic conferences.

- Publicity for future digitisation projects should clearly articulate the range of research interests that they can effectively serve

- The email lists of university departments and scholarly societies are an effective and cheap way to reach researchers. University librarians and society secretaries are usually willing to forward such information to their lists.

- Best practice guidelines for reviewing digital resources might help and encourage the editors of academic journals to commission more such reviews

- Publishers of new electronic resources and digitisations should write to relevant scholarly journals to inform the editors of their publication.

- There is demand amongst researchers for sophisticated tools that can cross-search multiple digital collections

- Popular subjects for future digitisation work amongst historians include:
    - Additional newspaper sources, particularly local newspapers
    - Government records and papers
    - Early primary materials, from the medieval and early-modern periods

10.   Appendix A – Feedback Relating to the JISC Digitisation Programme

During the course of the IJDDiP project we obtained feedback about the JISC-funded digitisation projects and ideas and concerns for the future of the JISC Digitisation Programme. Whilst some of this feedback was formal – i.e. the feedback forms we asked the workshop delegates to submit, much was semi-formal or informal, primarily from group discussions in the workshops and after the conference papers. Some of the feedback clearly related to the individual interests of particular delegates or attendees, whilst other comments were heard again and again from various people. This appendix summarizes some of the more significant and useful pieces of feedback.

10.1 The current JISC-funded digitisation projects

The comments that we received about the digitisation projects were almost invariably positive. Workshop attendees were particularly (and unexpectedly) enthused as to how they could use the digitised content for their undergraduate teaching, although there were also several remarks relating to research:

- "I am currently researching aspects of 'Empire' and visual culture, and various of the JISC's outputs have obvious value for this"
- "Finding the Cabinet Papers online will have a significant impact as what I am interested in would never come up on a normal search engine."
- "They will facilitate interdisciplinary links – John Johnson and the Great War Archive are particularly useful for cultural history"
- "These kinds of resources are crucial. They reduce the cost of research and extend its scope."
- "The Cabinet Papers will save me a lot of time and allow me to be more efficient when I get to the National Archives"
- "I am impressed by the scale and interlinking of projects, finding things in unexpected places. I have been looking for Spanish influenza and found material in both the cartoons project and the cabinet files"
- "I will be alerting my colleagues to these new resources; legitimate resources are useful to know about"
- "I will be using these resources for teaching and for additional and supporting research. They are also good for finding visual material for presentations. As more information becomes available it will become an increasingly central method of research."
- "I will use the digitisation projects extensively – to research archives and provide a taster for resources – but they are not a substitute for visiting and seeing physical objects where possible"
- "These resources will be great for supporting teaching and as sources for dissertations"

80% of workshop attendees stated that access to digital resources such as those in the JISC Digitization Programme was important or very important for their research. The less positive respondents all felt that whilst there was little digital content relevant to their work at present, they were likely to make more use of such content in future:

-
    "It [digitised content] is not essential for my current research. However it is useful for finding additional, supporting, and interesting information. It would be very useful if more of the information I needed was digitised."

The John Johnson Collection, the First World War Digital Archive, and the British Library Newspaper Collections were the most frequently singled out for praise, but this may be because two of the three were introduced in depth during the workshop, whilst the Newspaper Collections are of such broad application.

One of the conference speakers did complain about the InView interface not being especially user-friendly, although that site was still in development at the time. Frustration was also voiced by a couple of medievalists as there was nothing for their own period amongst the digitisation projects.

10.2 Design Issues

As far as the design of digitisation interfaces was concerned, the same general ideas and opinions kept arising, with relatively limited contradiction (although there is clearly a fine balancing act between having a clear and simple interface and yet still allowing all the advanced tools that many respondents asked for). Comments included:

- A lack of standardisation between search engine interfaces makes it hard to know how to get the best out of a collection, and makes searching many different collections difficult.
- It is essential to be able to use sophisticated advanced search interfaces to find and filter results. Faceted browsing is useful.
- The user should be able to search across multiple databases; they shouldn't have to visit every digitisation separately to find things.
- It's good to have content 'pushed' to the front page, to provide examples of the kinds of things in the collection. This also helps to engage students.
- Don't make the content seem more limited than it really is.
- The website should never lead you to a dead end – everything should lead to something else, "lead people on in their quest".
- The interface itself should look simple. The hard work should be done behind the scenes.
- Stable URLs are vital.
- Keyword searching is not always reliable, "sometimes missing things that you know to be there". [Perhaps some kind of fuzzy search mechanism might help with this kind of problem?]
- It's important when you look at material to see it in its context (on the page). [i.e. one should be able to see a newspaper article as it was originally printed, with the other articles and pictures around it. This came up a lot regarding digitised newspapers]

10.3 Metadata

Not all researchers are familiar with the term 'metadata', but all of those that we spoke to during IJDDiP wanted more of it. "You can never have too much metadata" as one of the workshop attendees put it. Other comments we received included:

- It should always be absolutely clear what the user is looking at (in terms of content – provenance of material, etc.). The importance of provenance metadata was raised on a number of occasions.
- Associating people with content is very useful, especially when dealing with material like pamphlets
- Copyright clarification is very useful
- It's important to get an idea of context – who a publication is aimed at, the original market for it, etc.
- JISC should ensure that everything has proper metadata, so that all this content can be linked in the future

10.4 Digital Literacy

Although most of the people that IJDDiP engaged with seemed comfortable when presented with digital collections that they had not previously encountered, many expressed concerns about the skills of scholars in general, and students in particular. This encompassed not just how to come up with good search terms, but also how to integrate 'digital research' into scholarship. There was concern regarding people's ignorance of the technicalities of how search engines actually work.

- There is a need for people to learn better searching techniques
- Many people still need to learn how to reference electronic resources, especially non-textual materials such as content from iTunes
- People often make false assumptions of comprehensiveness when using electronic databases. The coverage of any given digitisation needs to be made very clear

- The mechanics of any given search engine should be clearly and explicitly explained on the website where it is used

10.5 Dissemination Channels

We asked workshop attendees directly about how they thought JISC could best disseminate news of new digitisation projects in the future. Unfortunately, there was little consensus on the matter.

Suggestions made by a number of workshop attendees:

- A central portal, with a comprehensive search engine
- Workshops giving people time to explore the new resources (e.g. what we were doing in this project)
- The JISC website itself
- Using departmental and scholarly society mailing lists to inform people and link to newly digitised content

Suggestions made by only one or two people:

- Library courses
- Promotion in subject magazines, the TES, the Guardian Education section, and so forth
- Presence in library catalogues
- Encouraging people to put URLs as well as conventional references in bibliographies

A couple of people mentioned the role of librarians specifically in this context, explaining that whilst many institutions expected the librarians to introduce electronic resources to students *en masse*, they rarely had the opportunity to perform a similar service for academics, at least in part due to the fact that every researcher had very different needs from the rest.

10.6 Future Concerns

The same concerns regarding the future of the Digitisation Programme (and digitised collections more generally) cropped up in all of the conference discussions, and were also voiced in the workshop discussion groups. These basically boiled down to two major issues:

- Access – a number of people we spoke to felt passionately that digitised resources should be available for free, and guaranteed to stay free.
- Sustainability – a surprising number of scholars voiced concerns about how the digitisation projects would be sustained in the future, including concerns about technological obsolescence

Beyond these concerns, a couple of ideas were expressed that JISC might wish to consider:

- Three-dimensional image manipulation could be useful. There was, however, only one notable (and vocal) champion of this. Historians are probably not on the whole likely to be the biggest beneficiaries of such technology
- Some scepticism was voiced regarding 'web-twoish' commenting systems on a site's content – "given that website maintenance is an issue for finite projects and academics tend to comment on things in their own spaces" [i.e. there is a risk that web pages fill up with spam rather than real academic content, as project staff do not have the resources to moderate them].

10.7 Future Content

Not surprisingly, when asked what sort of materials they would like to see digitised in the future, most researchers immediately nominated whatever primary sources were of most use to their own particular focus of research. Some tentative generalisations can be made, however:

- Newspaper content – such content is so widely used by many different types of historian that it is assured wide usage, even (perhaps especially) if the newspapers are local in scope
- Government records and papers – Again, such records are used by a broad base of historians
- Early materials – several people complained that the earlier back one goes in time, the fewer digitised materials are available, with medieval and early modern content especially thin on the ground. This is despite the often fragile condition of the original documents and the benefits to their preservation that would arise from creating good digital facsimiles.

Some conference delegates made strong cases for very particular content to be digitised, including Wordsworth's manuscripts housed at Dove Cottage, and the 'Laity's Directory and Catholic Directories.

One matter upon which all the researchers we spoke to were agreed was the JISC's Digitisation Programme was a thoroughly good thing and should continue doing what it has set out to do.

11. Appendix B – Author's notes for conference presentations

This section reproduces the papers and notes used by seven of the nine presenters at the three conferences at which IJDDiP fielded candidates. One of the presenters is currently preparing his paper for publication, so it has not been included in this publicly-accessible appendix. Another presenter felt that her notes and slides were too rough for publication, so they have been omitted.

Many of the speakers gave their presentations from notes, or based their talks around small slide sets. Whilst these materials have been reproduced here where possible, it should be remembered that these were never envisaged as public documents but rather used as aide-mémoires during lively talks and discussions. The presentations and subsequent discussion sessions were not themselves recorded.

I myself presented a set of slides introducing the new JISC digitisation projects at the start of each panel. Some of the information, such as the URLs have changed since the slides were presented. I have reproduced the final version of these slides below.

Slide 1

Slide 2

Slide 3

Slide 4

Slide 5

Slide 6

Slide 7

intute

British Cartoon Archive Digitisation Project

- This project will add the 15,000-image Carl Giles Collection to the existing University of Kent Cartoon Archive

http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/   (open access)

JISC

Slide 8

intute

British Newspapers 1620-1900

- "1.1 million pages are being digitised from 18th and 19th century news, building on previous projects to enable access to a virtual library containing some 4 million digitised pages of important national, regional and local newspapers."
- This latest project by The British Library to digitise their vast British newspaper collections concentrates on regional and local titles, and "will complete the geographic coverage of areas that were under-represented in the earlier projects."

http://www.bl.uk/britishnewspapers (access via ATHENS)

JISC

Slide 9

intute

Cabinet Papers 1915-1978

- "Over half a million images to be digitised from microfilms to create an online resource with access to the full-text Cabinet papers from 1915-1978, plus a contextualisation package. These collections of minutes and memoranda, which cover both peace and wartime, constitute a fascinating record of the way in which the British government grappled with events of the 20th century."

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/

JISC

Slide 10

intute

Independent Radio News Archives

- "The Independent Radio News/London Broadcasting Company radio archive consists of 7,000 reel-to-reel tapes in a collection that runs from 1973 to the mid-1990s. It is the most important commercial radio archive in the UK and provides a unique audio history of the period."
  - live reporting of UK election results from five general elections
  - the Falklands War
  - political and current affairs analysis
  - the end of apartheid in South Africa

http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/imcr/cbhr_irn.html

JISC

Slide 11

intute

East London Theatre Archive

- "The East London Theatre Archive will create an invaluable database of performing arts resources, from playbills and programmes to press cuttings and photographs. By creating around 15,000 digital objects, taken from East London theatres, the project will preserve unique endangered collections and make them accessible to an academic audience."
- images, papers, and media clips sourced from:
  - the Theatre Museum
  - Lift Living Archive
  - Theatre Royal Stratford East
  - Hoxton Hall
  - Wilton's Music Hall
  - Half Moon Young People's Theatre
  - Hackney Empire

http://www.elta-project.org/home.html

JISC

Slide 12

intute

Electronic Ephemera: Digitised Selections from the John Johnson Collection

- The Bodleian Library's John Johnson Collection contains over 1.5 million items of ephemera dating from 1508 to 1939
- More than 65,000 items are being digitised from the following areas of the collection:
  - 19th-Century entertainment material
  - Booktrade material
  - Noteheadings and popular prints
  - Crime, murders, and executions
  - Advertising
- Accessible via ProQuest

http://johnjohnson.chadwyck.co.uk/marketing.do

JISC

Slide 13

intute

First World War Poetry Digital Archive

- Builds on Oxford's long standing Wilfred Owen online archive, this project presents a multimedia digital archive of images, text, audio and video of primary material from five other major British poets of the First World War
  - has included the imaging and cataloguing of a variety of objects contributed by member of the public, including unique letters, photographs, and other contextual materials from the war

http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/   (open access)

JISC

Slide 14

intute

Freeze Frame – Historic Polar Images

- "This project will develop a repository of freely available visual and textual resources to support learning, teaching and research into topics relating to the history of Arctic and Antarctic exploration and science. It will provide access to hidden collections for use at all educational levels."
  - over 20,000 images relating to polar exploration from the period 1845-1960

http://www.freezeframe.ac.uk/home/home
(open access)

JISC

Slide 15

Historic Boundaries of Britain

- "This project will create a comprehensive digital library of historic administrative boundaries for Britain through a combination of scanning historical maps and creating vector boundaries for selected geographies... The central focus is on boundaries for parliamentary constituencies, and these will be used as a framework for presenting British election statistics for 1832-1954"
  - The content of this project is being added to the long-standing 'Visions of Britain through Time' website

  http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/

  (open access)

Slide 16

InView : Moving Images in the Public Sphere

- "Will deliver 600 hours of unique moving image materials and digitised contextual documents to educational communities and the public across the UK"
  - public record films
  - parliamentary coverage
  - national news broadcasts
  - campaigning films
- Collaboration between National Archives and BFI

  http://www.bfi.org.uk/inview/

Slide 17

Pre-Raphaelite Resource Site

- Digitising the Pre-Raphaelite art collections of Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, over 3,000 items in total
- Includes letters and notebooks as well as sketches and finished artworks.

  http://bmag.org.uk/collections/pre-raphaelite-collection

  (open access)

Slide 18

UK Theses Digitisation Project

- This project is kick-starting the British Library's EThOS service (Electronic Theses Online System) by funding the digitisation of over 20,000 UK postgraduate theses.

  http://www.ethos.ac.uk/001_EThOSnet_Home.html

  (open access)

Slide 19

Welsh Journals Online

- "All academically significant Welsh periodicals published since 1900 are being digitised by the National Library of Wales, to provide, for the first time, a substantial corpus of material in the Welsh language freely available online, in perpetuity, to readers in all parts of the world... These materials cover a very wide range of subject areas, including humanities, social sciences, science and technology."
  - Although approximately 60% of content is in English

  (open access)

Slide 20

Associated Projects

- JISC are now funding several associated and follow-on projects from the sixteen phase 2 digitisations
- More details at:

  http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/digitisation

Slide 21

11.1 Languages of Politics: Mapping Britain's Long Nineteenth Century, Durham

James Gregory (University of Bradford), **'Digitally trawling "that great ocean of material".**
Researching the Cowper-Temples and other Eminent Victorians in a Digital Age'

Dr. Gregory presented a full academic paper to the conference, reproduced below.

We live in revolutionary times as historians, not because of intellectual paradigm shifts or because we are in the midst of any heated historiographic conflict, but because of the deluge of primary material in an accessible form and quantity undreamt of by pioneers of Victorian Studies, and scholars of the 'long nineteenth century', forty years ago.[1] We move out of the age of print and microfilm, into the digital age.[2] The digitisation of the outpouring of the eighteenth-century press, of nineteenth-century national and provincial newspapers, journals catering to a variety of specialist audiences (sportsmen, philanthropists, religious sectarians, aesthetes, and the celebrity obsessed, etc), of the State itself or national senate through parliamentary debates and official publications,[3] political cartoons, and pamphlets penned by anxious or excited Victorians – authors anonymous, obscure or famous – is creating a new form of archive.[4] As one scholar has suggested, the 'golden stream' of Victorian periodicals has gone platinum.[5] Predictions of significant scholarship based on primary material in wholly digitised form no longer seem like science fiction, and if we do wish to talk of a paradigm shift, it may be a transition from 'a culture of scarcity to a culture of abundance'.[6]

We know that this abundance is not equally available to all. As Julia Thomas has written, 'digital resources only fulfil the function of resources if others know about and use them'.[7] In some cases, commercial imperatives create

---

[1] This is quite apart from the material which has been available via Google Scholar, Google Books, and Internet Search engines in general. In addition, scholarship has been assisted by the existence of a variety of online reference sources such as the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, and bibliographic databases, such as the Royal Historical Society Bibliography, and by the proliferation of e.journals, via Jstor and other providers.

[2] I include, under the head of microfilm, microfiche and microcard formats.

[3] On the State as publisher, see O. Frankel, 'Blue Books and the Victorian Reader', *Victorian Studies*, winter 2004, pp.308-318.

[4] ProQuest's *British Periodicals and Periodicals Archive Online*, Chadwyck-Healey's *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) and *British Periodicals* collection, Thomson Gale's *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* (ECCO), Thomson Gale's *19th Century UK Periodicals* (New Readerships, and Empire collections), the British Library/ Gale *19th Century Newspapers*, the *Internet Library of Early Journals* (ILEJ), *Nineteenth Century Serials Edition* (*NCSE*) which was initiated with AHRB funds in 2004, the House of Commons' Hansard digitisation project. There is also the Gerritsen Collection of *Women's History Online*. Another relevant collection for the nineteenth century, is Gale's *The Making of the Modern World*. The monopoly 'information industry' of Bell & Howell (owners of Chadwyck-Healey), Gale Thomson, Reed Elsevier and EBSCO, is discussed in R. Rosenzweig, 'The Road to Xanadu: Public and Private Pathways on the History Web', *Journal of American History* 88: 2 (September 2001), pp.548-579.

[5] M.W. Turner, 'Time, Periodicals, and Literary Studies', *Victorian Periodicals Review* winter 2006, 39:4, pp. 309-316 [p.310].

[6] See N.C. Burckel, Inaugural Address, Society of American Archivists, 'Archivists Facing the Millennium: Preparing for an Unknown—but not Unknowable—Future', 31 August 1996, at: http://www.archivists.org/governance/presidential/burckel.asp (accessed 19 March 2009), on the realisation of the dream of instant access; R. Rosenzweig, 'Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era', *American Historical Review*, 108: 3 (June 2003), pp.735-762 [p.739]. Note that in the digitisation of information for historical research, the Internet has rapidly replaced the CD-ROM – a decade ago heralded as the future of electronic hypertext, see R. Rosenzweig, '"So, What's Next for Clio?" CD-ROM and Historians', *Journal of American History* 81: 4 (March 1995), pp.1621-1640.

[7] J. Thomas, 'Digital Transformations', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 13: 1 (spring 2008) pp.101-107 [105].

restrictions and expensive databases and digital repositories – existing in a gated, private web rather than the public – have imposed further financial burdens on university libraries.[8]

But in many cases, the texts made available to the researcher (and student) are more accessible than they were originally.[9] They are certainly more accessible when, unlike a university's special collection, the virtual archive is constantly open, and simultaneously to multiple users.[10] It is as if we have been given keys to the stacks in Colindale, the Bodleian or the British Library and enabled, not merely to browse at will, but also to alight on relevant material without even checking a title on the spine of the books. And as Patrick Leary says, 'fortuitous electronic connections, and the information that circulates through them, are emerging as hallmarks of humanities scholarship in the digital age'.[11] We have all had the 'eureka moments' he refers to, and experienced the 'serendipity of unexpected connections' on 'online fishing expeditions'.

Every year brings new digitised material, as varied as the esoterica in the Harry Price Library, collections organised around imperial themes, complete runs of Irish, French, North American, and antipodean newspapers, or Victorian medical journals and parliamentary debates.[12] Through the Google search engine, I recently stumbled across a virtual Bodleian of nineteenth-century memoirs, biographies, religious controversy, and journalism in facsimile via *www.archive.org*[13] this would be an incredible resource if one could search through full texts simultaneously.[14]

The labour of the lone academic has been minimised in many ways – no longer, necessarily, the ordeal of the Colindale search-rooms (which will be closed soon) – but perhaps my sense of the mixed blessings of the pace of research thereby being sped up (in a disorienting way), will be shared by others.[15] If material is now, to some extent, easier to uncover and read, then some of the effort of being an academic is reduced, while expectations are perhaps higher. We become impatient at the slow downloading of material when it would take considerably longer to appear

---

[8] There are implications in terms of removal of material to remote storage too, along with incomplete access as guest users, see S. Mitchell, 'Victorian Journalism in Plenty', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 37 (2009), pp.311-321 [p.316]. In addition to the academia-centred anxieties about a 'digital divide', of course, there is the issue of the 'technological entry fee', i.e., computer and internet access, see Roy Rosenzweig, 'Crashing the System?: Hypertext and Scholarship on American Culture', *American Quarterly* 51: 2 (1999), pp.237-246 [242]; see also Rosenzweig, 'The Road to Xanadu: Public and Private Pathways on the History Web', *Journal of American History* 88: 2 (September 2001), pp.548-579, on the 'deep web', the 'public web' and the 'private web' See Rosenzweig, 'Digital Archives are a Gift of Wisdom to Be Used Wisely', *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 24 June 2005 51: 42, p. B20, published by the Center for History and New Media at: http://chnm.gmu.ed/resources/essays/d/32 (accessed 26 March 2009), for the alarming quote from a Thomson official, 'We own the 18th century'.

[9] The texts include images, in the case of graphic newspapers such as *The Graphic*, and *The Penny Illustarted Paper* (and the *Illustrated London News* is to be digitised, according to an announcement in 2008). Google Images has also proved to be a valuable resource, especially with databases such as the National Portrait Gallery's, for locating nineteenth-century portraiture in various media. Commercial sites for the sale of cartoons and reproductions of art work, also provide resources for the historian of the nineteenth century. Various British Library projects have digitised printed images, and the University of Kent hosts a major cartoon database.

[10] For a thoughtful discussion of the digital archive in terms of an 'enhancement tool', see Thomas, 'Digital Transformations', p.107.

[11] See P. Leary, 'Googling the Victorians', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 10:1 (spring 2005), pp.72-86, for an insightful essay.

[12] See www.IrishNewspaperArchives.com, www.millbanksystems.com,

[13] The Internet Archive was initiated by Brewster Kahle, and reached an agreement with ten international libraries to digitise a million titles, including many nineteenth century texts.

[14] Julia Thomas highlights the inability to search across multiple databases, interoperability, as one of the factors preventing an embodiment of Victorian culture, see Thomas, 'Digital Transformations', p.105, on the arbitrary and fragmentary ways in which the Victorian archive is presented by these digital databases.

[15] The demise of the lone scholar in the archive, after almost a millennia, has been the subject of comment, not surprisingly, in essays on the impact of digital technologies, see G. Everett, 'Electronic Resources for Victorian Researchers – 2005 and Beyond', *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2005) 33, pp. 601-614.

if we ordered it up from the stacks – we find new things to be frustrated about. No longer is the stone arduously hacked out by us as lone masons in the quarry of history: it has been skilfully blasted out of the rock face by others and delivered to us in expertly dressed blocks. Expectations – researchers, readers and reviewers – have consequently been raised. As the Oxford Internet Institute's online survey asked users recently, has this new resource enhanced productivity?[16] More than ever, it is what we do with our (less arduously acquired) material that counts. Having access to a 'universal library' does not mean we write more insightfully than in the past.

Those more fluent than me in textual theories and cyberspace technology, especially those in an English literature background, have tussled with the methodological, ontological and epistemological implications of the 'new age of virtuality and knowledge work' (to quote Dino Felluga).[17] Perhaps my *use* of this digitised material is no more sophisticated than it would be, with old-fashioned methods: I admit to being fairly digital illiterate. But in my first book (2007) and second (published this year), I have been enormously assisted by digital archives. When I worked on my Ph.D. (-2002), I stumbled on a mass of British material in the free-access *Making of America* site, and, because I was interested in fictional representations of a particular type of radical – the dietetic heretic – e-text novels from *Project Gutenberg*, *Early American Fiction* and *Victorian Women Writers*, were wonderful resources.[18]

But I want to speak about current research and, in talking about the use of digitised collections, pay a tribute to the efforts of many institutions and individuals who have provided the researcher in political history, with riches. I have been working on a dual biography of the junior minister William Cowper-Temple, later Lord Mount-Temple, immortalised by his clause amending the education act of 1871, and remembered, with his second wife Georgina, for friendships with such luminaries of Victorian culture as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Ruskin and George MacDonald.

---

[16] The Oxford Internet Institute and Joint Information Systems Committee created the survey (February-March 2009), http://survey.oii.ox.ac.uk/Collector/Survey.ashx?Name=Use_of_Digital_Resources, in order to study the impact of digital resources in the humanities.

[17] D.F. Felluga, 'The Victorian Archive and the Disappearance of the Book', *Victorian Studies*, winter 2006 48: 2, pp.305-319 [p.306].
    In the field of Victorian Stduies, see also, in addition to Mitchell's essay cited above, J. McGann, 'Culture and Technology: The Way We Live Now, What is to Be Done', *New Literary History* 36 (2005), pp.71-82; R. Pearson, 'Etexts and Archives', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 13:1 (spring 2008); J. Thomas, 'Digital Transformations', pp.101-107; P. Leary, 'Victorian Studies in the digital age', ch.13 in M. Taylor and M. Wolff, eds, *The Victorians since 1901. Histories, representations and revisions* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), and Leary, 'The digital revolution', http://victorianresearch.org/ (accessed 24 March 2009).
    For a sense of debates around digitisation, see the various discussions, and conference postings, on the H-Net Discussion Networks over the last five years.
    One point raised by Roy Rosenzweig, 'in a world where all sources were digitized and universally accessible, arguments could be more rigorously tested', has obvious relevance, see his essay, 'Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era', p.760.

[18] The databases used in 'The Vegetarian Movement in Britain *c*.1840-1901. A study of its development, personnel and wider connections', 2 vols (Ph.D., University of Southampton, 2002) were: Project Gutenberg, Early American Fiction, Victorian Women Writers, Literature Online (LION). I also came across the British Library's pilot project on newspaper digitisation, and used the British Library's digitised *Penny Illustrated Paper*.
    Of course, like many others, though happy to acknowledge my debt to these databases in bibliography and acknowledgments, one cites the texts as if they were the originals, rather than clutter up the footnotes with the paraphernalia of html. See Leary, 'Googling the Victorians', for an observation about what it means to say we have 'consulted' a text, in this circumstance, and see the discussion in November 2008, on the arts-humanities.net: Digital Arts and Humanities forum, about shutting websites down, to make academics appreciate their content:
    http://www.arts-humanities.net/chart/forum/shut_all_our_websites_down

With mixed feelings I discovered, last December, lurking in the *www.archive.org* under an incorrect title, his widow's privately-published memoirs. I had previously had to rely on my notes, completed over several visits to the British Library: Now I have my own searchable e-version. I had not, until then, even been aware of the vast *archive.org* project. The more famous Google Book digitisation (announced December 2004), despite its deficiencies (in descriptive metadata and snippet restrictions), has proved similarly invaluable to me in studying my subjects' 'private lives'. Thus, for instance, through it, I located a snippet from, and within months an entire version of, a volume of poems by Cowper-Temple's sister-in-law, which contained a revealing eulogy to Georgina.[19]

A biographer wants to inhabit his subject's thought world, and digitised collections allow the high political historian, with greater ease, to dip into the ephemeral literature of 'high culture' – via virtual Knowsleys (and St Deiniol's) at our fingertips. For a politician and social reformer like Cowper-Temple, this means, among other things, looking at essays in the quarterlies or pamphlets which he – like other members of the elite – read. Often the allusive comment in private papers (as in published works) can be rapidly pinned down through these, and other electronic resources, such as Google Book and Google Scholar (announced to the public in November 2004).

My publisher decided, picking up on my frequent use of 'high politics' in the manuscript, to add this to my book's subtitle. Having wondered how frequently the phrase was used in the period, Chadwyck-Healey's *Nineteenth-Century* collection and the British Library / Gale newspapers archive uncovered evidence about when, and in what contexts, the term 'low politics' appeared in journalism, in no time. But there is the danger that the impressionistic, rapid search becomes the assured textual or footnote reference – a danger others have stressed.[20] Nevertheless, in studying the usage of 'keywords', we transcend the informed hunch or chance of pre-digital lexicography.[21]

How much easier it is to trace the reception of political and constitutional writings, how less arduous to adopt an intertextual approach, when we can flit between texts on our screen. Patrick Leary has pointed out, too, the variety and disparateness of texts produced via Google Book Search, its very randomness, has its advantages, in unearthing the unexpected.[22] But Leary has also identified a new danger in the 'offline penumbra' – material not accessible online – which will cease to exist, except for the specialist.[23]

The world beyond *The Times*, *Illustrated London News*, and *Punch*, is more open to us; though as I say this, I am thankful that two of these venerable titles are digitised so that one is now permitted to alight on the passing, un-

---

[19] In December 2004, Google announced its digitisation plan, in partnership with the Universities of Oxford, Harvard, Stanford, and Michigan, and the New York Public Library. For British historians, this opens access to a wealth of often obscure British works, such as the poetry and vegetarian propaganda, for instance, of James Elmzlie Duncan, the Chartist poet, whose work *Flowers and Fruits; or Poetry, Philosophy, and Science* is available; it seems, only in the New York Public Library copy.

[20] Mitchell, 'Victorian Journalism in Plenty', p.317 writes of the loss of context, the absence of serendipity and the general impression, and the loss of the distinctiveness of the journal, when digitised searches home in only on the 'hit' text.

[21] A sophisticated approach is 'text mining', which can be used for a quantitative study of texts, or 'employed to enhance an analysis of even a single text' according to Torsten Reimer, blogging 2 August 2007, see http://www.arts-humanities.net/blog/torsten_reimer/text_mining (accessed 26 March 2009). See also D.J. Cohen, 'From Babel to Knowledge: Data Mining Large Digital Collections', D-Lib Magazine 12: 3 (March 2006), pp.6-19, reprinted by the Center for History and New media, at: http://chnm.gmu.edu/resources/essays/d/40 (accessed 26 March 2009).

[22] P. Leary, 'Googling the Victorians'. As critics have pointed out, the incomplete bibliographic metadata – sometimes the impossibility of identifying volume and issue, and the difficulty in getting an accurate sense of the 'hit' from the snippet – are flaws. The ability, in full-text books, to see the title pages, helps correct some of the inaccuracies of cataloguing.

[23] See also Rosenweig, 'The Road to Xanadu', pp.548-579: 'Will digitization create a new historical canon in which historians resort much more regularly to works that can be found and searched easily online rather than sought out in more remote repositories…Could we arrive at a future in which, if it is not on the Web, maybe it didn't happen?'

indexed reference. There is no excuse now, to be dependent on a handful of daily or weekly newspapers[24] and quarterly journals when studying personalities and events; though one should always be sensitive to the contemporary reputation of such sources, and not ignore the old authorities simply because rarer sources, such as *The Satirist*, *Judy*, *Tomahawk*, are now more easily available.[25] Major or significant nineteenth-century newspapers such as the *Morning Chronicle* and *John Bull* can now have the place they deserve in scholarship. Researching text and image – through such titles as *Penny Illustrated*, *Graphic*, and the illustrated satirical journals – is more easily carried out. Themes such as the standing of the Lords or Commons, the fluctuating reputation of the Crown, the treatment of British fascination with foreign politics, can be studied with rather less effort by our undergraduates.

I am interested, as a biographer, in the contemporary and posthumous *reputation* of my subject. Again, keyword searches through a variety of collections, located the snide (or appreciative) aside about William Cowper-Temple in texts which I would not have thought to look at. Many of these references were in titles which I would only have been able to hunt through, laboriously, in the British Library or major research libraries.

Public gossip, and the expression of reputation through anecdote, becomes easier to access through a critical mass of digitised newspapers and other forms of journalism. In my research on Cowper-Temple, I found gossip sent by London correspondents, MPs or otherwise, to provincial papers. I effortlessly traced the spread of rumour about my two subjects' public and private lives – even as far as the *New Zealand Observer* or the *Brooklyn Eagle*.[26] Digitisation allows one to trace the conversation, as it were, between newspapers, and even across continents. Reviews in the newspapers and periodicals allowed me, quite easily, to build up an essay on the reception of Cowper-Temple's and Sir Henry Bulwer's work in crafting the official biography of Cowper-Temple's stepfather, Lord Palmerston. Newspaper reviews of official publications enriched my understanding of the critical response to official inquiries or legislation which involved Cowper-Temple.[27]

Digitisation also allowed me to find numerous press references to Cowper-Temple's embarrassing physical (and perhaps temperamental) resemblance to his stepfather, thus showing wider knowledge of high society gossip about his parentage. Another advantage of newspaper databases, certainly for the biographer, is that the recreation of such a high political figure's social life becomes, where we lack detailed diaries and engagement books, easier when we can study their comings and goings through such virtual newspaper files. Dating letters and memoranda, or identifying individuals and events, becomes easier. Others will have a more sophisticated take on the methodological

---

[24] The newspaper databases also include separate, subscription access archives for the *Manchester Guardian*, *Observer*, and *Scotsman*.

[25] The British Library Newspapers collection press release explained the principles behind this British Library/ Gale project, that the 48 titles selected by the British Library 'best represent' the period, through national and regional titles, with titles from established towns and new industrial powerhouses, and from the non-English nations, titles that 'helped lead particular political or social movements such as Reform, Chartism, and Home Rule', and penny papers for the working and lower middle classes, see E. King, The Serials Librarian 49: ½ (2005), pp.165-181, and E. King, 'Digitisation of British Newspapers 1800-1900', *19th Century British Library Newspapers* (Detroit: Gale Cengage Learning, 2007). The *Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals 1800-1900* – with printed and online versions – has greatly enhanced our understanding of the range of periodical literature: currently it lists over 50,000. There is also the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* (1966-1989).

[26] *Papers Past*, over a million pages of digitised New Zealand newspapers and periodicals, 1839-1920, see http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast
See *The New Zealand Observer*, 29 December 1888, for an anecdote about William Cowper-Temple, then ennobled as Lord Mount Temple, accosting a lady of the street in order to rescue her, only to find it was an eccentric aristocrat. The digitized *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* is accessible via *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Online*, a project produced by Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Collection and funded by the Library and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

[27] For the treatment of official publications in periodical and pamphlets, see Frankel, 'Blue Books', p.309.

opportunities of digitised resources: the capacity for content analysis, or the ability to discover lost journalism by major political figures by searching for pet phrases and turns of speech, or the recovery of political parody and plagiarism.

Is a switch from analogue to digital, from print to the 'simulacrum of print' regrettable? One should not make a fetish of the 'hardcopy artefact' where reproduction has been so faithful.[28] Sometimes, as in cleaned up copies of texts – the facsimiles produced in hardcopy by, for instance, Pickering and Chatto, we read text more legible now than in its original form. The fact is that our tactile, visual and olfactory sensations when encountering archival texts are not quite the same as they would have been when these were originally created. Even in the lighting of an archival room, we are not recreating original reading experiences. But Richard Pearson's comment that the e-text and hyper-text are probably 'less neutral than its printed paper counterpart' is true: and though we speak of 'surfing' the internet, one cannot 'surf' a digital newspaper as one would an admittedly cumbersome and crumbling bound copy in Colindale.[29] Nor is reading an e-book as easy as reading a book.[30]

I began with the clichéd metaphor of flood. I fear, as someone constitutionally drawn to detail (and footnote fetishism), that a deluge will overwhelm us – the problem compounded as we move into 'a medium that undercuts fixity' and encourages us to constantly amend the text.[31] Lytton Strachey famously wrote of the impossibility of writing about the Victorians because we knew too much: I'm not the first to reflect on the difference a *digital* bucket – dipped in with the aid of fuzzy logic or Boolean operators – makes.[32] In entering a virtual 'long nineteenth

---

[28] Although the loss of 'materiality' has been debated among scholars, see the theme of the conference, '(De)materialising the early modern text: Early English Books Online in Teaching and Research', School of English and Creative Studies, Bath Spa University, 8-9 September 2005, which related *EEBO* to the 'renewed attention to the materiality of the early modern text' and to the history of printing and publishing. For a useful discussion, see M. Manoff, 'The Materiality of Digital Collections: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives', *Libraries and the Academy* 6:3 (2006), pp.311-325, which stresses the new emphasis on the material instantiation of apparently immaterial digital material, and also discusses the loss of meaning which is involved in the translation of text from one format to another. Manoff, p. 316, cites the migration across different formats, of texts which became the basis of the digitised *EEBO*, from original publications, through microfilm in 1938, to digitised images of the texts in 1998, and then keyed-in text.

   One of the leading theorists on electronic textuality, N. Katherine Hayles, has observed, 'changing the navigational apparatus of a work changes the work…One of the insights of electronic textuality makes inescapably clear is that navigational functionalities are not merely ways to access the work but part of a work's signifying structure', Translating Media: Why We Should Rethink Textuality, *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 16:2 (2003), pp.263-290 [p.264]. Hayles argues that a text is not 'an inert, nonreactive substance that can be poured from container to container without affecting its essential nature' (p.267). She does keep the distinction, p.278 between 'conceptual content' and physical embodiments', but is prepared to accept a situation where 'a text would remain relatively constant over many documents, assuming that debate agreed that the physical differences between the documents were not important as signifiying components' (p.278).

[29] Pearson, 'Etexts and Archives', p.90.

[30] See D.A. Bell, 'The Bookless Future: What the Internet is Doing to Scholarship', *New Republic* 2 May 2005, p.7, reprinted by the Center for History and New Media, http://chmn.gmu.edu/resources/essays/d/28 (accessed 26 March 2009), on the unpleasantness of reading on the screen: 'reading has remained subordinate to the computer's other uses', and also on the pitfalls of 'research-driven reading' rather than confronting the whole text. He asks, 'Will traditional reading – the slow, serious reading of entire texts – sink from sight in an ocean of hypertext searching'. See too, C. Warwick, 'Print Scholarship and Digital Resources', ch.25 in *A Companion to Digital Humanities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

[31] The complaint about the Internet ushering in, or exacerbating an environment of too much information, has become a cliché. See D. Shenk, *Data Smog: Surviving the Information Glut*, reviewed in R. Rosenzweig, 'Live Free or Die? Death, Life, Survival, and Sobriety on the Information Superhighway*', American Quarterly* 51: 1 (March 1999), pp.160-174. On the lack of fixity, see the essay by Roy Rosenzweig, 'Crashing the System?': Hypertext and Scholarship on American Culture', *American Quarterly* 51: 2 (1999), pp. 237-246 [239].

[32] In my search for a metaphor to express the transformation opened up by digital resources for the biographer, I googled to locate the actual words used by Strachey in relation to the 'little buckets' dipped into the water,

---

century' we push away the temporal or spatial barriers which simplified, as they constrained, the lone researcher's task.[33] And like children given the free run not of one sweet shop but streets of confectioners, will an abundance of good things lead to overindulgence?

Bibliography

Internet Search engines
    Google Scholar
    Google Books

Internet Archive
    http://www.archive.org/index.php

Project Gutenberg
Early American Fiction
Victorian Women Writers
Literature Online (LION)

Hansard Parliamentary Debates
    http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/

Thomson Gale   *Times Digital Archive*
     Manchester Guardian
     The Observer
     Scotsman

ProQuest/   *British Periodicals and Periodicals Archive Online*,
Chadwyck-Healey   *Early English Books Online* (EEBO)
     British Periodicals
     Nineteenth Century General Collection.
     C19, The Nineteenth Century Index
     Literature Online (LION)

Thomson Gale   *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* (ECCO),
Thomson Gale   *19th Century UK Periodicals* (New Readerships, and Empire collections),
British Library/ Gale   *19th Century Newspapers*,
     Internet Library of Early Journals (ILEJ),
     Nineteenth Century Serials Edition (NCSE)
House of Commons' Hansard digitisation project.

Gerritsen Collection of *Women's History Online*
     http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/home.do

Thomson Gale   *The Making of the Modern World.*

Papers Past, over a million pages of digitised New Zealand newspapers and periodicals, 1839-1920, see
     http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast

Brooklyn Daily Eagle Online.

www.IrishNewspaperArchives.com, www.millbanksystems.com,

The Oxford Internet Institute and Joint Information Systems Committee (February-March 2009),
     http://survey.oii.ox.ac.uk/Collector/Survey.ashx?Name=Use_of_Digital_Resources

JISC *19th Century Pamphlets online* project.

Eminent Victorians, and came across Patrick Leary's essay, 'Googling the Victorians', originally published in *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 2007.

[33]   L. Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, 'ignorance, which simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits, with a placid perfection unattainable by the highest art'.

See: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/digitisation/pamphlets (accessed 12 February 2009).

H-Net Discussion Networks

Bell, D.A.,	'The Bookless Future: What the Internet is Doing to Scholarship', *New Republic* 2 May 2005, p.7, reprinted by the Center for History and New Media, http://chmn.gmu.edu/resources/essays/d/28 (accessed 26 March 2009).
Burckel, N.C.,	Inaugural Address, Society of American Archivists, 'Archivists Facing the Millennium: Preparing for an Unknown—but not Unknowable—Future', 31 August 1996, at: http://www.archivists.org/governance/presidential/burckel.asp (accessed 19 March 2009).
Cohen, D.J.,	'From Babel to Knowledge: Data Mining Large Digital Collections', D-Lib Magazine 12: 3 (March 2006), pp.6-19, reprinted by the Center for History and New media, at: http://chnm.gmu.edu/resources/essays/d/40 (accessed 26 March 2009).
Everett, G.,	'Electronic Resources for Victorian Researchers – 2005 and Beyond', *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2005) 33, pp. 601-614.
Felluga, D.F.,	'The Victorian Archive and the Disappearance of the Book', *Victorian Studies*, winter 2006 48: 2, pp.305-319.
Frankel, O.,	'Blue Books and the Victorian Reader', *Victorian Studies*, winter 2004, pp.308- 318.
Katherine Hayles, N.,	'Translating Media: Why We Should Rethink Textuality', *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 16:2 (2003), pp.263-290
King, E.,	'Digitisation of British Newspapers 1800-1900', *19th Century British Library Newspapers* (Detroit: Gale Cengage Learning, 2007).
King, E.,	*The Serials Librarian* 49: 1 / 2 (2005), pp.165-181.
Leary, P.,	'Victorian Studies in the digital age', ch.13 in M. Taylor and M. Wolff, eds, *The Victorians since 1901. Histories, representations and revisions* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004).
Leary, P.,	'Googling the Victorians', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 10:1 (spring 2005), pp.72-86.
Leary, P.,	'The digital revolution', http://victorianresearch.org/ (accessed 24 March 2009).
Manoff, M.,	'The Materiality of Digital Collections: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives', *Libraries and the Academy* 6:3 (2006), pp.311-325.
McGann, J.,	'Culture and Technology: The Way We Live Now, What is to Be Done', *New Literary History* 36 (2005), pp.71-82.
Mitchell, S.,	'Victorian Journalism in Plenty', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 37 (2009), pp.311-321.
Pearson, R.,	'Etexts and Archives', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 13:1 (spring 2008), pp.88-93.
R. Rosenzweig,	'"So, What's Next for Clio?" CD-ROM and Historians', *Journal of American History* 81: 4 (March 1995), pp.1621-1640.
Rosenzweig, R.,	'Crashing the System?: Hypertext and Scholarship on American Culture', *American Quarterly* 51: 2 (1999), pp.237-246.
Rosenzweig, R.,	'Live Free or Die? Death, Life, Survival, and Sobriety on the Information Superhighway', *American Quarterly* 51: 1 (March 1999), pp.160-174.
Rosenzweig, R.,	'The Road to Xanadu: Public and Private Pathways on the History Web', *Journal of American History* 88: 2 (September 2001), pp.548-579.
Rosenzweig, R.,	'Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era', *American Historical Review*, 108: 3 (June 2003), pp.735-762.
Rosenzweig, R.,	'Digital Archives are a Gift of Wisdom to Be Used Wisely', *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 24 June 2005 51: 42, p. B20, published by the Center for History and New Media at: http://chnm.gmu.ed/resources/essays/d/32 (accessed 26 March 2009).
Thomas II, W.G.,	'Computing and the Historical Imagination, ch. 5 in Schreibman, R. Siemens, J. Unsworth, eds, *A Companion to Digital Humanities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).
Thomas, J.,	'Digital Transformations', pp.101-107.
Turner, M.W.,	'Time, Periodicals, and Literary Studies', *Victorian Periodicals Review* winter 2006, 39:4, pp. 309-316.
Warwick, C.,	'Print Scholarship and Digital Resources', ch.25 in *A Companion to Digital Humanities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals 1800-1900
Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals (1966-1989).

The Project Plan document, 28 November 2007.
G. Young, *19th Century Pamphlets Online: digitisation scoping study* (JISC, 2006).

'(De)materialising the early modern text: Early English Books Online in Teaching and Research', School of English and Creative Studies, Bath Spa University, 8-9 September 2005.

Philip Salmon (History of Parliament Project), "Whence, where, wither: Digitisation and the writing of political history"

Much of Dr. Salmon's paper is in notes form. The text he worked from is reproduced below.

Over the last ten years or so, there's been an amazing but in some ways silent revolution going on in the discipline of political history.

The way political historians approach their topics, conceptualise their themes and most critically, I think, actually carry out their historical reseach, has changed remarkably, and of course continues to change.

It's been almost ten years now since I actually physically and laboriously went through an original copy of *The Times*, like this one here from the 1830s, searching for information on a particular issue.

It's been about 3 years now since I sat in the underground Bodleian stacks, going through the parliamentary paper volumes, looking for data in the returns, select committee reports, or bills. And more recently, of course, the *Commons Journals*, local newspapers, statutes, political pamphlets, and now even *Hansard* itself have become available online.

I'd be the last person to say that this has not been a hugely welcome development, which has made the kind of historical research we do at the *History of Parliament* so much quicker (so much easier) and far more wide-ranging.

The volumes currently being published, on the 1820-32 period, have taken almost 20 years to complete, but a huge chuck of that time was spent on pre-digital research activity, sitting in Colindale for days on end finding reports of elections and political meetings in newspapers, searching through committee evidence or petitions for references to polling or bribery, ordering up and reading obscure biographies or political treatises, which can be now be searched at the click of a button on google books,

One obvious upshot of this is that the way we value and rate primary research - the amount of credit for example that a PhD student will get for actually finding something new - has changed dramatically. The ease with which information can be retrieved and teased out has made the business of locating it almost routine - its what you do with it which has now become more important, and a whole new layer of analysis - from databases to linguistic scrutiny - have now moved in to fill void.

Some of the changes though, which these digitised collections have brought about, are I think less obvious, particularly for those researchers who have only used these new types of resources and (for quite understandable reasons) have never spent much time wading their way through the originals.

What I'd like to do in this talk is focus on 3 areas, in particular, where differences exist between digital collections and original documents which are of huge significance for the writing of political history.

1. Technical process of digitisation:

Accuracy of the scanned product: in part. OCR and ICR - support the search interfaces.

Earlier versions - usually showed ocr text + images.

BOPCRIS trial - Dundalk elections - very haphazard - no OCR is 100% accurate.

Reasons for this: technical - quality of originals - missing pages (1/3 the 1831 boundary reports, covering the north west, are missing from Proquest Parliamentary Papers), presumably because the original fiche was lost / destroyed.

Tiny and unusual fonts - fs and s's - spelling and key names not yet standardised. Look for Brighton elections, misses Brigthelmstone. Search terms used by researcher will not show everything relevant. Relying on it (as I've done) for completeness can lead to all sorts of oversights and even errors, as I've found to my cost.

2. Related issue, is when you know exactly what paper you're after, a return on page 23 of volume 7 from 1850, for example, it can take quite a while to find it. Real problem here of different pagination / systems of referencing.

If we pause to consider how most PP were compiled, you'll see the fundamental problem. Printing of papers - organised by clerks - done by Spottiswodes, Hansards or Nicholls in c19th. Usually in date order. Each numbered separately. But also numbered by hand (according to clerks instructions) after binding.

Problems with locating beginning and ends, jumping around in volumes, finding pages etc. BOPCRIS and Proquest different systems.

3. Third, most fundamentally = digitised research changes way we physically read and visually process written documents themselves.

Using search tools based on words and phrases reveals all sorts of data - and on a much bigger scale - than has ever before been possible. This is a major benefit which has led to all sorts of new and previous inimaginable insights.

But this is all word based - and it's no coincidence that we're at a conference about the Languages of Politics. This = increasingly the main focus of inquiry over the last 15 years, in areas including public speaking, devpt. of ideology, political discourse, propaganda, multiple identities, private and public voices etc.

If you think about way orig. docs. produced tho. - there are layers of meaning which are completely missing from this type of search. Topics in vols. often reflect a coherency that is not obvious from terminology - reports are product of motions for papers on broader themes affecting parliament at a given moment in time - poor law papers, related returns on emigration, mortgaging of parish property - old franchises - related papers on education, market tolls, apprenticeships etc.

Reading the originals, in the very strict order they were bound together on the orders of the clerks, highlights these broader conceptual links and presents a very different view of politics. It also lets the reader stumble across things that are not obvious. Most of my book on the reform act was produced this way - and if I'd gone looking for things, using search tools, I would have missed all sorts of themes and inter-connections which I'd never thought about.

This is not say that any one method of analysing text is intrinsically better or worse than the other, although I do think that simple word-based searches sometimes risk atomising our understanding of political developments.

But what does need to be recognised - is that print based forms of media physically look, feel and communicate their data very differently to their on-screen screen equivalents. Pulling the original packaging apart and presenting the info in a digital format does, I think, remove us one more step away from the original context in which the originals were produced and intended to be used.

So where does this leave us?

Not a luddite lament.

Simply being aware of these key differences - making an effort to spend time with the originals - will help maintain a sense of perspective in terms of the benefits and limits of using the many existing digitised collections now available.

Having said that, with so many collections now out there, maybe the next phase of resource development might begin to focus on the construction of more conceptual architecture and more complex interfaces for engaging with the material, which take us close to the original way the documents were intended to be read.

Finally, I think we need more electronic sources which provide a more filtered gateway into collections and start to build conceptual links between the various political history resources available online. The new 1832-45 project aims to do something here, by bringing links to an MPs speeches, votes, committee work, election campaigning and his archives and a bibliography all together in one place. The same sort of thing is being done for each of the constituencies after 1832. If anyone would like to contribute to this project, by writing short biographies or constituency accounts, I'd be delighted to hear from you.

Kathryn Eccles (Oxford Internet Institute), "JISC Usage and Impact Study Historians and Digital Resources"

Dr. Eccles gave a slide presentation outlining some of the findings of her JISC-sponsored project into how historians make use of large-scale digitisation projects.

Slide 1

slide 2

Slide 3

slide 4

Slide 5

slide 6

Slide 7

Slide 8

Slide 9

Slide 10

Slide 11

Slide 12

Slide 13

Slide 14

Find out more:

Find out more at the Project websites:

1. Histpop: http://www.histpop.org
2. British Library C19th Newspapers:
   http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/news/newspdigproj/paperdig
   it.html
3. British Library Archival Sounds: http://sounds.bl.uk/
4. BOPCRIS: http://www.parl18c.soton.ac.uk/parl18c/digbib/home
5. Medical backfiles: http://library.wellcome.ac.uk/backfiles/

Impact of Digital Resources on Teaching

- Digitised resources enhance undergraduate access to primary sources
- Quality of undergraduate dissertation work improved by early contact with digitised primary sources

'Histpop made it possible to do a completely different project'

- Use of primary sources helps to combat problems with plagiarism

11.2 Power and History, 29th Irish Conference of Historians, Limerick

John Garrard (University of Salford), **'Nineteenth-century urban power and the opportunities and problems presented by a digitised local press'. This presentation was based on the text reproduced below:**

Urban Historians and Digitalised Local Newspapers

John Garrard,
School of ESPaCH, Salford University

Argument

As one who is part-historian and part-political scientist, my interest, so far as urban history has been concerned, has focused primarily upon power in its broadest sense. Thus I have been concerned with the following: 1) Not just power (the ability to achieve intended effects or to prevent others achieving theirs) in the *political* but also in the *economic* and *socio-cultural* sectors; 2) What sorts of people were '*in power*' and had *access to formal powers* and the *levers which activated them* (office holders); 3) Who had the ability to achieve intended effects *in situations of conflict or contention* over *overt* issues; 4) Who had the ability to control or influence the *political* (or for that matter the *economic* and *social*) *agenda*. The latter ability might be exercised *either*:

> a) by appearing so formidable as to render the raising of issues pointless (a '*reputation for power*') *or*

> b) by somehow impacting upon *how people thought about their lives and interests*, thereby influencing whether problems became issues in the first place: for example, - e.g. notions of 'bourgeois hegemony', patriarchy, and more recently political correctness.

My main interests have been in the industrial towns of North-west England, first between around 1830 and 1880[1]; and more recently up to 1918.

My central and perhaps not very surprising contention has always been that the situation, partly because of the urban and industrial context in which it was located, was far more complex and more negotiated than a simple analysis of what sorts of people were in power, or even contemporary national and local patterns of hierarchy, might suggest. Even when official political elites (and my primary interest has always been in the political/municipal sector whilst also being aware of the key importance of the economic and socio-cultural sectors) were at their most well-resourced in political, social and economic terms (ie where political leaders were primarily drawn from the ranks of social and economic leaders), the actual distribution of power in any given place or time depended upon the nature of and interactions between several variables, of which economic and social resources were only one.

This combination of leaderships (Dahl's 'cumulative inequalities of political resources'[2]) was certainly important. Particularly within urban communities imbued with notions of hierarchy and ideas about minimum government, the social and economic sectors, even or far more than today, were locations where real power was to be had. For example, the role of the substantial factory owner and factory-owning family, particularly within northern Lancashire towns and industrial villages, was certainly formidable: he was not just a highly personal employer of long-term labour, but also the owner of multiple factory houses, a central source of finance and initiator for the building of local

---

[1] *Leadership and Power in 19th Century Towns: Bolton, Rochdale and Salford c 1830-80* (MUP 1983).
[2] R. H. Dahl, *Who Governs* (New haven, Conn. 1961), and *Modern Political Analysis*(New jersey 1963) ; for other key readings and arguments about power, see P. Bachrach and M. S. Baratz, 'Decisions and Non-decisions: an analytical framework', *American Political Science Review,* 57, 3; S. Lukes, *Power: a Radical View* (London 1975; and very many others.

churches and chapels, leisure facilities and occasions, political, charitable and other activity. Thereby he, his family and the network of other families to whom they were linked via marriage, financial, religious, political and other connection, might well dominate the lives of those whom they employed to a point where in Patrick Joyce's phrase 'the factory got under the skin of life'[3] – in much the same way as the estate owner in more rural circumstances. Partly as the result, local charities might also become the centre of great power; they controlled much that would now be called welfare, had the ability to make policy, to give or withhold aid, and thereby to attempt to procure changes in character and habits from recipients. In the right circumstances, social and economic leaders had priority access to municipal and local parliamentary recruitment if they desired it.

Yet, in the real world, the allocation of urban power was necessarily more complicated and negotiated than this, just as some[4] have suggested it was even in the rural setting. Separately and together, that allocation was conditioned by a number of other factors besides relative economic and social weight. These included:

1. The changing pressures of private business: businessmen, especially before the emergence of trained professional management, really were busy, and often were unwilling to 'take on the duties and burdens' of municipal or other office, or to stay holding them very long if they did. They might well have only limited time and ability to achieve command over policy detail – placing increasing power in the hands of professional officers, doubly so as the scope of municipal policy expanded and became ever more complex. Thus expertise came to sit alongside economic and social substance as a determinant of who had effective power.

2. The changing nature of the local political system and the number of entry points it provided for those outside the formal political circle. The classic example here was often the pre-Incorporation local political system (the ones I am familiar with are those of Rochdale and Salford before 1844 and 1856 respectively) and the access to under-regulated outsiders, quite often working class, provided by town and parish meetings that might effectively be open to almost anyone deciding to turn up.

3. The level of unity or party and religious conflict amongst local elites, and the groups from which they were drawn; and the consequent degree of temptation to appeal outside local legislative walls to the wider public, normally within the legally-constituted electorate, but also, especially prior to the 1850s, beyond and below it. Even wealthy local politicians could prove remarkably political in the right competitive circumstances.

4. The level of mobilisation of groups within the local population, and their interest, or not, in local policy-making – whether it be municipal, Poor Law or Education Board.

5. The policy-making area concerned: its level of complexity and technicality, and the amount of 'hard' expertise required to understand it; the character and immediacy of its impact on groups within local populations; the extent to which it impacted upon, and required consents from, the world beyond municipal borders. This latter world included two actors in particular: a) central government and (not at all the same thing) Parliament – the immense hazards involved, for example, in piloting local Improvement Bills through parliamentary private bill committees; b) neighbouring local authorities and other adjacent interests and groups who often had effective power of veto whenever local authorities ventured beyond their boundaries, as they were increasingly forced to do, in quest of water, financial resources, and contiguous and dependent territory.

---

[3] Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: the Culture of the Factory in Late-Victorian England* (Brighton 1980)
[4] For example, Frank O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties: the Unreformed Electorate of Hanoverian England 1734—1832* (Oxford 1990).

The general picture to emerge from the interaction of these various factors is not surprisingly complex. On the one hand, the often extensive overlap between economic, social and political leadership up to around 1880, and beyond in many towns, certainly helped those 'in power'. It permitted extensive degrees of agenda control and policy vetoes in key areas affecting the interests of council members and those socio-economic groups from which they were often extensively drawn: for example, the torpor of most local authorities in the face of smoke pollution, even its perception as a problem; the inbuilt advantage given to large consumers in gas pricing policy. Such socio-economic substance also offered enhanced political clout in any area where consents were required for things municipalities wished to do, and negotiation was needed. Economic/social/political leaders were good at negotiating with unelected members of their own kind.

On the other hand, the exercise of power was often fairly conditional, surprisingly populist and pluralistic; and even highly inhibited; doubly so where municipalities were obliged to go outside municipal boundaries, as they increasingly were – for powers (to Parliament, and central government, especially Local Government Board after 1871), and for access to resources (e.g. water supplies and revenue), transport co-operation, absorption (border expansion). Negotiation was often a central fact of life even for well-resourced political elites.

Furthermore, after 1880, the growing separation of political from economic and social leadership, and the emergence of far less generously propertied municipal elites, coincided with further complex changes in patterns of power, again partly resting upon interactions between the variables above. At one level, the changing patterns might seem predictable in the wake of separating leaderships. It was certainly true that the growing separation between social, economic and political leadership coincided with some loss of control over the political agenda by economic elites in areas like smoke pollution. And this as certainly partly caused by this separation, though rather more relevant were splits within socio-economic elites themselves: key reformers were often key social and economic leaders, this being what gave them visibility and clout in areas often distinguished by public apathy. Meanwhile, the separation of leaderships coincided with, and was partly enhanced by, an expansion of the political sector of power and the significant shrinkage in the areas covered by social and economic sectors; for example, as municipalities, education boards and even Poor Law guardians expanded into areas formally covered by charities. These factors included the ever-expanding scope of municipal activity, the equally extensive need for expertise, and the increasingly long-term nature of policy-making and the consequent distance between its initiation and the point where it impacted upon groups within the community.

Furthermore, separation coincided with far greater uncertainty and inhibition for municipal elites when municipal needs took them *beyond* municipal boundaries – as was increasingly the case as they sought water supplies, co-operation over public transport, space for housing, expanded tax bases, and control over areas which often used their facilities but paid nothing for them (boundary expansion). Yet, while this uncertainty was somewhat consequent upon separation and the increasing leakage of large businessmen from municipal councils, much more relevant was the changing character of the urban environment and the ever-growing need for consents from a Local Government Board that was often very susceptible to cries from parochial propertied interests, large and small.[5]

Meanwhile, although the situation greatly varied according to policy area, separation also coincided with a significant *growth* in the power of municipal elites in relation to groups *within* municipal boundaries. This was mainly consequent upon declining conflict amongst municipal elites; a decline in the political entry points available to dissatisfied groups; the growing scope and complexity of municipal policy-making and the increasing gap in time between initial decisions and actual application; and the increasing use by local authorities of Local Government Board Provisional Orders rather than Improvement Bills, when seeking new powers.

---

[5] Christine Bellamy, *Administering Central Local relations 1871-1919: The Local Government Board and its Fiscal and Cultural Context* (Manchester 1988).

Sources

As in most urban history, perhaps more than most, this research has rested heavily upon the massive resources of the *local press up to 1914.* Unlike national and rural elites, local urban leaders left little behind them in terms of private sources: often close neighbours, they rarely needed to write to each other; even where they did, they rarely had the houses or perhaps too the sense of dynasty, that would have enabled or motivated them to create and preserve sets of 'family papers', in the way that landed families were apt to do. The main source of qualitative information therefore has been the 2 or 3 massively reporting local newspapers available in any industrial town, often from the 1820s, even more from mid-1850s. Though they present all sorts of problems for historians (their partisanship, closeness to local power structures, and their public rather than private nature), they are vast mines of immensely valuable information. At their verbatim best, they permit historians to occupy the role of unobserved observers on all sorts of public and semi-public occasions: however public newspapers might be as historical sources, and however public the events they reported, there is always one person who participants in these occasions could not know is listening in: the historian, who listens and watches from vantage points they could not imagine. The latter can be an unobserved observer:

> At meetings of all kinds: councils, local parties, pressure groups, charities, trades councils, co-ops, some friendly societies and indeed a lot of civil society generally. Local newspaper reportage sometimes extends a long way down the respectable social spectrum, even as early as the 1830s.

> At processes of negotiation within the locality, with interests in neighbouring areas, still more within and around the Private Bill Committees of Parliament over the terms of local Improvement Bills.

> At urban ritual: the local celebration of coronations and jubilees, town hall openings, municipal anniversaries, mayoral processions. As the result, the historian is given the chance to watch the urban hierarchy and respectable social structure ceremonially walking down the street, and to witness changes in that structure (who's included and who isn't) over extended periods of time. For example, comparing who processed at local celebrations of Victoria's Coronation with those involved in her subsequent Jubilees.

At their rather frequent best, local weekly newspapers stand as cardinal illustrations of Bob Morris's claim that .1800-1914 (especially from around1830 to1900) is the 'historian's century'. However, their greatest problems, perhaps until recently, have been: firstly their increasingly rapid deterioration and growing unreadability (not just in their original but also increasingly in their microfilmed forms); secondly, the competition that the microfilmed versions impose on historians for ancient microfilm readers in local libraries with the multiple participants in the family history industry. (only a few urban historians have the time and opportunity for frequent visits to the British Museum Newspaper Library in London); thirdly, their haphazard organisation, particularly in the early years, and the rarity of any sort of indexing.

These handicaps make their digitalisation, and free distribution by the British Library around British university libraries a splendid prospect. This allows greatly enhanced readability, immunity from decay, and easy availability. It also creates the opportunity to search for topics and themes, and a consequent ability to trace the emergence of issues and slackening of agenda control over time in areas like smoke pollution – partly by tracing change from minimal to frequent mention and occurrence. Alongside this is the fact that one can still also trawl through edition by edition in the traditional way – a crucial need, given that insight into this urban 'foreign country' can come from very unexpected places, and because one cannot know what words will be worth searching for until one achieves familiarity with contemporary terminology, the idiosyncrasies of particular papers and with how local newspapers changed over time.

As far as I can see, there are no problems and many advantages with using digitalised local newspapers, apart from one crucial and so far regrettable fact: the vast majority of local weekly newspapers, unlike the provincial and London daily and Sunday press, are not yet available in digital form. This is a great pity and an urgent need since, unlike large amounts of most dailies, each local newspaper is unique, and provides a unique view of local urban life, which, at least until around 1918, varies intensely from one urban locality to another.

John Garrard, School of English, Sociology, Politics and Contemporary History, University of Salford; 11 June 2009
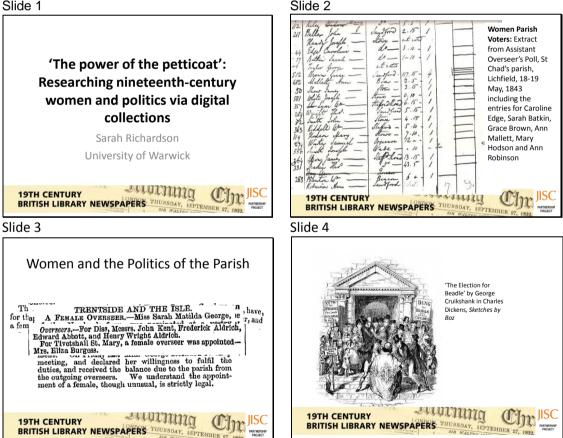
Toni Weller (DeMontfort University), 'History in the Information Age : A Mutable Past and Present?'

Dr. Weller's presentation was based upon of a series of slides with notes, which she requested were not published.

Sarah Richardson (University of Warwick), '"The Power of the Petticoat": Researching nineteenth-century women and politics via digital collections'

Dr. Richardson gave a full academic paper with illustrative slides.

Slide 1

Slide 2

Women Parish Voters: Extract from Assistant Overseer's Poll, St Chad's parish, Lichfield, 18-19 May, 1843 including the entries for Caroline Edge, Sarah Batkin, Grace Brown, Ann Mallett, Mary Hodson and Ann Robinson

Slide 3

Women and the Politics of the Parish

Slide 4

'The Election for Beadle' by George Cruikshank in Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*

This is a paper that focuses on sources. My research on middle-class women and politics in the early nineteenth century has challenged many of the established narratives of nineteenth-century politics that have assigned women a peripheral role. To some extent this has been due to a narrow definition of politics and political culture – a definition that excludes women. However, there is also a problem with the source material. It has been argued that women's voices are absent from sources such as newspapers, pamphlets and parliamentary papers. But is this an accurate reflection either of their

presence in the sources or their participation in the political life of the nation in the nineteenth century? The recent digitisation of nineteenth-century newspapers, pamphlets and official publications has aided researchers in locating and assessing women's role in politics in this period resulting in a more nuanced interpretation of the roles that women played in the public sphere. My research considers women's contribution to political life in a number of different sites: within the home, the community, parliamentary politics and in the international arena. Today, I want to consider just one of these areas –the politics of the parish – and illustrate how the advent of digitised publications has changed the interpretation of women's role in local politics.

As Minister for the Poor Law Board in 1868, George Goschen aptly described nineteenth-century British local government as 'a chaos as regards Authorities, a chaos as regards rates, and a worse chaos than all as regards areas'. The already baffling and complex structure of local governance that had emerged in the early modern period was compounded by additional bodies established in the nineteenth century. The new institutions often did not replace the older organisations but stood alongside them producing a multiplicity of competing groups. The bodies often possessed overlapping powers, many of which were discretionary, and each had a different electorate and form of government. Local government electoral processes frequently depended upon custom and local precedent rather than regulation from the centre. For middle-class (and sometimes poor) women however, this chaotic and confused structure produced opportunities for them to participate and to exercise authority in the local context. The customary nature of the community franchise resulted in a participatory local government system was described by Beatrice and Sidney Webb as 'an anarchy of local autonomy'. Mark Goldie has gone so far as to claim that 'the holding of the parliamentary franchise was not regarded as the pre-eminent criterion of citizenship.' He argues instead it was rate-payer's ^{contribution}s at the village or township level, whether as voters or officeholders that conveyed a sense of representative self-government. Likewise Steve Hindle has recently referred to 'the diffused and extensive nature of social and political space through which power was transmitted' in the parish vestry. The civil parish remained as the primary unit of local government until the reforms of 1889 and 1894. By mid century there were over fifteen thousand parishes compared with only one thousand of all the other local government institutions put together. It remained as the first point for the assessment of the poor rate upon which many other assessments were modelled. The main parish officers were the churchwardens, overseers of the poor, surveyors of the highways and constables. There were also a number of elected parish servants which often included sextons, parish or vestry clerks, beadles, scavengers and the master and mistress of the workhouse. The election and appointment of these parish officers was one of the vestry's most fundamental and fiercely guarded rights with fines often being levied against those who refused to serve. The offices were often automatically rotated between householders which meant that the potential pool of office holders was very wide indeed. In addition, all parishioners had rights to attend parish and rate-payers meetings to discuss the administration of local affairs. David Eastwood has estimated that around 400,000 people were attending such meetings by the turn of the nineteenth century.

Although this view of parish government as a model of participatory local self-government is not universally accepted it is clear that the potential existed for a large number of residents to contribute to the government of their local community. But did this process include women?

Two cases before the King's Bench in the eighteenth century (Olive versus Ingram and Rex versus Stubbs) confirmed the right of women both to vote in local parish elections and to hold office. The recourse to legal action by opponents of women's participation in parish government in fact strengthened their position. Women were able to take advantage of the often confused patchwork of local jurisdictions and to play a role in community governance, thus receiving 'an education in citizenship through local government'. Although parish government generally became more exclusive in the early nineteenth century, women's eligibility to attend meetings, to vote and to hold office continued. The Sturges Bourne reforms of vestry government in 1818 and 1819 permitted a weighted

franchise of ratepayers to establish select vestries however the legislation did not specifically exclude women from the electorate allowing local custom to prevail.

This emphasis on local custom means that it is difficult to ascertain the extent of women's participation in parish government in the nineteenth century and this is where access to digitised resources has been extraordinarily valuable.

So why have digitised collections transformed the study of women and power in the early nineteenth century? Firstly, collections such as the British Library's Nineteenth-century newspapers digitisation project provide extensive coverage both across England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland and across the political spectrum. The 48 titles selected comprise 2.2 million pages in total and includes 17 national and 29 regional newspapers. Newspaper reports are often the only printed record remaining of women's presence in parish government. Local parish vestry archives are sparse especially for the early nineteenth-century. Secondly, the comprehensive search tool, including fuzzy matching enables swift and effective searching. Newspapers are a notoriously difficult source to analyse in their paper or microfilm format. Searching for slivers of non-standard information, such as the election of a female local officer or women's participation as voters in vestry elections would be a virtually impossible task if done manually. Thirdly, newspapers offer a variety of content which may be searched or browsed separately. Thus announcements often appear in the classified advertisements as well as in the editorial sections. My research using online newspapers has revealed a wealth of information about women's participation in politics at all levels. It is these fragmentary and disconnected pieces of evidence which may then be matched up with other archival records such as the census, official reports, local sources such as this parish poll book from the 1840s.

So what was uncovered by the analysis of the digitised newspapers (slide). Some parishes, for example Chelsea claimed that there was no precedent for female voting, and therefore excluded women by resolution asserting 'the ladies and gentlewomen, widows and maidens, who pay and stand charged have not a right to vote in this election, there being no precedent in this parish for the same.' However, in other places women voters were positively encouraged, particularly if it was thought they might be of use to a particular vested interest. In Leeds for example, a select vestry had been established under the Sturges Bourne Act which was dominated by nonconformist radicals who then refused to set a Church rate. Local Tories insisted on a regular parish poll in an attempt to replace the dissenting churchwardens. In April 1835, the Tory *Leeds Intelligencer* outlined the strategy, 'the only method now left to the friends of law and order is to appeal from such packed Vestries to the parish at large. Nor will the appeal be in vain… Rated females are entitled to vote as well as males. We do not wish for a gynocracy; but we are sufficiently gallant to perceive that too many of the wayward lords of creation are disposed to make a bad world of it; therefore the sooner the ladies interfere the better.' The attempt to remove the churchwardens was in vain, they were re-elected with a majority of more than three thousand and Leeds continued to resist levying the Church rate. In some places the situation could be further complicated by the expansion of the electorate for churchwardens to include those paying pew-rents. For example, in a case before the Queen's Bench in February 1861, a parishioner from Rotherhithe asked for a writ against the incumbent, the Reverend Frederick Perry, for the purposes of holding a vestry meeting to elect a churchwarden. The parishioner, Mr Baddeley had attended a meeting where a Mr Spurgeon had been elected as a churchwarden by a show of hands of those present; but the voters had included 'vast numbers of women and children.' Frederick Perry countered that:

Various ladies were present at the vestry meeting in question, and voted as pew-renters, in accordance with the Act under which my church is built. There were no children present, but almost every pew-renter was at the meeting, and voted for the churchwardens now in office.

In February 1861 the Queen's Bench upheld the assertion that female pew-renters as well as inhabitant householders were able to vote in the election of churchwarden. As this judgement

demonstrates, the parish electorates continued to be a shifting, nebulous entity, not fixed in terms of gender or status, and one influenced by local custom and practice. There were a wide variety of different systems and procedures depending on precedent and the particular parish type. For example, in 1831 John Cam Hobhouse attempted to restore some elements of local democracy in larger communities. Such places were permitted to establish vestries which were elected by all ratepayers, men and women, voting by secret ballot. One-third of the vestry retired each year and thus there were annual elections. Although Hobhouse's Act was permissive and few such vestries were constituted outside the metropolis, the principle of a female ratepayer franchise had for the first time been enshrined in law as opposed to depending on local custom and precedent. London parish vestries were given a new lease of life with the passage of Sir Benjamin Hall's Metropolis Local Management Act in 1855. This established a Metropolitan Board of Works and placed parish vestries in charge of local services. The vestries were elected under the uniform franchise and procedures established by the Hobhouse Act and again included female ratepayers. The status of female ratepayers was discussed during the proceedings to establish the ward boundaries in Mile End Old Town in September 1855. The Commissioner over-ruled the vestry clerk who had argued that the word 'he' was used in the Act in reference to the payment of rates and voting declaring that there was nothing in the Act to prevent women voting and the clause was not restrictive, moreover they continued to vote in other parish elections.

The eligibility of women ratepayers to vote in parish elections was used by some commentators as ammunition in their campaign against the inadequacies of the vestry system in nineteenth-century communities. Dickens, for example, derided what he called the 'vestrylisation' of local services and satirised parish elections and officers in his *Sketches by Boz* (1836). Dickens focused on the election of a new beadle – an embodiment in many of his literary works for everything that was wrong in the organisation of local affairs and implementation of social policies. Female electors played a crucial role in the election between Spruggins and Bung. In spite of the majority of women voters declaring for Spruggins, Captain Purday, the organiser of Bung's campaign used other tactics to increase the vote for his candidate:

The captain engaged two hackney-coaches and a cab for Bung's people - the cab for the drunken voters, and the two coaches for the old ladies, the greater portion of whom, owing to the captain's impetuosity, were driven up to the poll and home again, before they recovered from their flurry sufficiently to know, with any degree of clearness, what they had been doing. The opposite party wholly neglected these precautions, and the consequence was, that a great many ladies who were walking leisurely up to the church - for it was a very hot day - to vote for Spruggins, were artfully decoyed into the coaches, and voted for Bung.

Dickens' parody of the electoral process was effectively supported by a Cruickshank illustration of an uncomprehending female elector being hoodwinked by Bung's party on the steps of the vestry.
[Figure 1: The election for beadle]

Women also featured in the election of the beadle in other ways: Mrs Spruggins acted as an effective canvasser for her husband and Bung's party employed a strategy of exclusive dealing against an old woman muffin seller in order to secure her vote. However, women – like the drunkards - are generally depicted in the Sketch as ignorant and easily influenced: the epitome of all that is wrong with parish democracy.

However women were often expert at using the chaotic system to their own ends. *The Northern Star* reported in 1843 that a notice was attached to the door of Birstal Church, on Sunday week, calling a vestry meeting in the usual way, to elect a churchwarden for the ensuing year. At the time appointed, the *wife* of the assistant overseer entered the Vestry with the parish book in which the usual entry is made on such an occasion, and after waiting nearly an hour and no person making his appearance,

either lay or clerical, the good dame took her departure and budged home with the book under her arm. On entering her dwelling, her husband eagerly enquired who was appointed warden, to which she replied why *me* to be sure – *thee* ejaculated the astonished official, yes, *me*, reiterated the wife, for there has not been another living soul at the meeting, therefore, I suppose, I must be the churchwarden. *The Morning Chronicle* of 1834 noted the views of the Revising Barrister for Essex who commented 'In one instance I was attended by a *female* overseer, and it is due to her state, that the list furnished by her, and in her own hand-writing, was one of the most complete ever met with.'

An analysis of the evidence from the local press has demonstrated that women office holders and voters were not rare in parish elections of the early to mid-nineteenth century. Examples are found in places as diverse as Edinburgh, Bristol, Leeds, Ipswich, Portsmouth, Dorset and Whitby. Thus historians' tendency to marginalise or more commonly to ignore women's participation in parish government because of the lack of evidence of their contribution is beginning to be changed by the ability to search the local press on a national scale and to recover women's experiences. Historians have been too quick to write off the opportunities for women to exercise citizenship in the period before their right to vote was formalised by legislation. There is a need to recognise an alternative framework for female participation: one which incorporates the myriad ways available for women to employ voter choice at a local level. Women had a long history of office-holding and of voting at a local level. The recognition of the right of women to take up local offices, the existence of female sextons, overseers and Poor Law Guardians proved important for the future of women's participation in politics. In the nineteenth century, the positive benefits women surveyors, overseers and guardians brought to their community gave early feminists evidence to construct a rationale for female local government officials. This case was based upon their authority in the community, their practical experience in dealing with the poor and their ability to liaise with a range of professionals to provide a superior service. This reasoning was used for electioneering purposes in the early days of organised female candidacies in local government but was also recognised by official bodies such as charities and parliamentary commissions.

Definitions of female citizenship in the nineteenth century thus need to take more account of the politics of the parish – and the availability of digitised source material allows evidence to be gathered. For it was at this very local level where women gained experience of political participation, honed their skills as office holders and engaged in the practical activities of local politicians.

11.3 International Association for Media and History (IAMHIST) Conference 2009, Aberystwyth

***Adrian Bingham (University of Sheffield),* 'Using Digital Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges'**

Dr. Bingham is currently preparing his very insightful paper for publication.

***Nick Hayes (Nottingham Trent University),* 'Making Urban Identity: Digitial Resources and the Historian'**

Dr. Hayes' presentation involved the use of several video clips illustrating aspects of the history of Nottingham which are obviously challenging to reproduce in a written report. I have included his slides here, although they are without any accompanying notes.
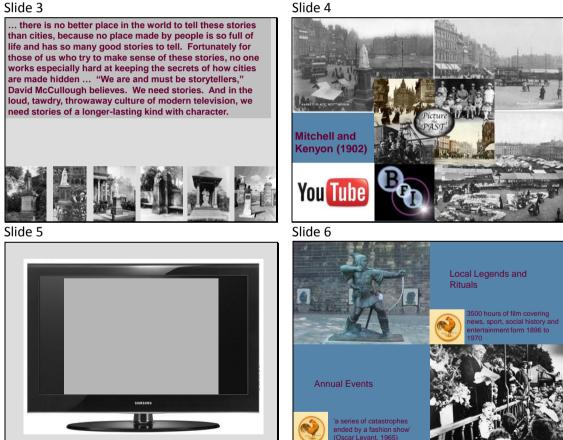
Slide 1   Slide 2

(Re)Telling City Stories: Urban Identity, Film & Digital Archives

IAMHIST 2009 Conference

**Nick Hayes
NTU**

The wonderful thing about cities is that so much happens in them.

To cite Daniel Monti, *The American City: A Social and Cultural History* (1999):

'Impressive as these buildings are, they do not hold the secret of what makes a city great. The secret is found … in the warm remembrances of a walk down a celebrated street lined with long-dead heroes and great buildings. It is locked up in the stories about the way all of us fill these streets and buildings and the meanings we attribute to them.'

Slide 3

Slide 4

… there is no better place in the world to tell these stories than cities, because no place made by people is so full of life and has so many good stories to tell. Fortunately for those of us who try to make sense of these stories, no one works especially hard at keeping the secrets of how cities are made hidden … "We are and must be storytellers," David McCullough believes. We need stories. And in the loud, tawdry, throwaway culture of modern television, we need stories of a longer-lasting kind with character.

Mitchell and Kenyon (1902)

Slide 5

Slide 6

Local Legends and Rituals

3500 hours of film covering news, sport, social history and entertainment form 1896 to 1970

Annual Events

'a series of catastrophes ended by a fashion show' (Oscar Levant, 1965)

Slide 7

Slide 8

Slide 9

Slide 10

Suzanne Franks (University of Kent), 'Researching the BBC in a Digital Age'

Dr. Franks felt that her slides and notes were by themselves too rough for publication, so they are not included here.