ASERL Webinar
Scholars’ Lab

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Collective Biographies of Women

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How Books Reshape Lives

Collective biography:
A set of three or more chapter-length biographies placed together in a single book.

Forum
Why Biography?—“a higher sense of the glorious possibilities of a woman’s ministry”
Suffrage Women and Church-Based Biographies
Catherine Grace and the Lady Volunteers

Kinds of CBW Data
- Person Records
- Biography Chapter Titles
- Collected Biography Volume Titles
- Photographs
- Location of Publication
- Source of Biography

Kinds of CBW Metadata
- Topography of Women
- Genealogies of Collective Biography Volumes
- Collected Biography Field Guides
- Interests of Feminist Movements (ID20)
- Documentary Society Network Affiliations
- User-Friendly “TL” of Biographies
- Analysis of Sources
Two phases over 15 years:

http://womensbios.lib.virginia.edu

http://cbw.iath.virginia.edu

I. Bibliography online

II. Database with Study of Texts

• 1272 English-language books (primarily 1830-1940) that include three or more short biographies of women
  • Canada, Australia, US, UK, India, etc.

• 14,733 individual biographies in those books

• 8700 persons: subjects or biographers
Collective Biographies of Women

Thanks to:

**Scholars’ Lab**: Bethany Nowviskie, Joe Gilbert, Jeremy Boggs, Chris Gist, Brandon Walsh

**IATH**: Worthy Martin, Daniel Pitti, Cindy Girard, Sarah Wells, Doug Ross, Robbie Bingler

**English Dept. & other Research Funds, ACLS and NEH Grants**: Project Managers Rennie Mapp & Lloyd Sy; dozens of graduate research assistants

for more thanks, see http://cbw.iath.virginia.edu/people.php
From scanning/OCR to HathiTrust and OCLC links. CBW is not an archive of edited texts

• We began with OCLC and visits to libraries → annotated bibliography
• Hired a vendor to double-keyboard a sample repository @2011.
• After Google Books, the tasks of nineteenth-century research are eased.
• CBW entries on texts are linked to OCLC and HathiTrust search results, as available.
• Public domain or copyright: HTRC can make worksets available, including data capsule of 1924-present copyright material for non-consumption use
Summary of some talking points in Webinar

• Legacy intellectual property—the experience of CBW.
  • It shows the different, unintegrated stages of its development:
  • By agreement with U. Chicago Press, bibliography (too large for the book) was produced on a website by staff in E-Text Center, hosted on library server
  • I learned more of the XML coding process alongside my RAs and Scholars’ Lab staff
    • CBW was peer reviewed in NINES in 2007
    • Scholars’ Lab migrated it into cocoon and helped devise search functions and visualizations
  • In IATH, with fellowship and ACLS and NEH grants: the bibliography data imported in a relational database (php; mysql) on IATH server
  • Since 2017, with other faculty projects, Scholars’ Lab developers have worked to migrate the first “Library List” part to a stable “docker instance,” and now that ITS is getting out of the hosting business, Amazon Web Services.
Summary of some talking points in Webinar

• Reflections on shifts in humanities research with Digital Humanities
  • How slowly research criteria for tenure and promotion change! This does not count as a book! Junior scholars need to be wary, though in some cases this is changing.
  • Digital projects are hugely time consuming. Colleagues regard it more as editorial or bibliographic work, which hasn’t had the same prestige as the monograph.

• Faculty trained in humanities need help with the new landscape of online publication, collaboration, and open-access intellectual property

• It’s a new language: grant applications; open peer review, if any; blogs, websites, posters.

• Humanists often aren’t trained well in quantitative reasoning

• Let’s preserve the potential of qualitative research even in the technological format

• Humanistic work may not allow other teams to reproduce their results.