The Media History Exchange

Elliot King, Loyola University Maryland

The Media History Exchange is an online social network and archive for media historians whose development has been sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Its goal is to create a private online space in which media historians across disciplines can collaborate and share their work. It also has functionality to manage the academic paper review and acceptance process for small academic conferences and journals. In this presentation, the functionality of the Media History Exchange (which is still in beta) for individual scholar/members, will be briefly reviewed and some of the barriers and challenges facing collaboration in interdisciplinary academic communities will be explored. Ideas about how to generate membership in the Exchange will be solicited.

“The defendant replied that he knew that”

The development of speech presentation in the Times, 1833 – 1988

Andreas H. Jucker, University of Zurich

Speech reporting has always been an important part of news reporting. However, the forms and functions of such reports have changed very considerably over the centuries. As I have shown in an earlier paper (Jucker 2006), early newspapers like the London Gazette, The English Post or the Evening Mail in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries used speech reporting mainly to quote reliable sources. The words of correspondents or eyewitnesses assured the readers that they were getting first-hand news and thus increased the authenticity and reliability of the reported facts. In addition these early newspapers also reported significant speech acts of the newsmakers of the day, for instance a declaration made by the king, orders issued by the government or compliments of condolence paid by the Spanish ambassador. In present day newspapers speech reporting has become much more pervasive and functionally more diverse. It is still used as an authenticating device for reporting facts, but more often it relates not facts but opinions about facts, and it is not just the opinions of more or less important newsmakers, but the opinions of the average man or woman in the street. While up-market newspapers still prefer the traditional format of indirect speech, down-market newspapers increasingly use the sound-bite quality of direct speech.
In this presentation I focus on one single newspaper, i.e. the Times, and show how the forms and functions of speech reporting changed in the period between 1833 and 1988. For this purpose I have extracted data from the Times Digital Archive in six samples of roughly 5,000 words at intervals of 31 years and analyzed the text manually for instances of reported speech. The concentration on the development of speech reporting in one newspaper makes it possible to focus consistently on the diachrony without the interference of other differences, such as social class or place of production, and it helps to highlight the speed and linearity of development.

**Understanding Research Needs for the Exploitation of Digital Newspaper Archives**

*Michael Pidd, University of Sheffield*

This paper will look at the problems of existing digital newspaper archives for conducting academic research in terms of technical approach and user interface design. It will then propose a user-centred design process for improving the exploitation of these archives and contemplates what some of the outcomes might be.

**Nineteenth Century Journalism Online – The Market Versus Academia?**

*Clare Horrocks, Liverpool John Moores University*

Nineteenth century journalism is characteristically diverse and rich in commentary. Across magazines, newspapers and periodicals there were thousands of titles created during the period, from those that endured across the century to those that survived only a few issues. From the Wellesley Index to Poole’s the process of which titles to select for study have long posed a dilemma that is not new to the creators of digital archives. How can one comprehensively represent such a range of material and yet be so selective? Certainly as Jerome McGann has acknowledged in “The Rationale of HyperText” (2004) the computerized edition can store greater quantities of materials, yet even this range is not limitless. In a climate of fear about funding for libraries and the arts, the preservation of many periodicals and newspapers is under threat. Digitisation is therefore justifiable as a conservation directive however what of those volumes that are not chosen? Are we creating an alternative version of Victorian culture through so selective a gaze? Indeed, who is choosing these titles? There is a question of access, both of what material is available to digitise but also what it is perceived ‘the audience’ want. However, a further question is raised – who are ‘the audience’? What are these archives going to be used for?

This paper will examine the different forms of nineteenth century periodical and newspaper archives that are available, how they are organised and who their perceived audience is. SciPer (Science in the Nineteenth Century Periodical) was one of the early projects to thematically consider popular culture in nineteenth century journalism. Created by academics for academics it provides a model for understanding the imperatives driving digitisation. In its selectivity though, newspapers were largely excluded. Whilst this was addressed through the British Library’s initiative, funded from a JISC grant in 2004, the British Newspapers 1600-1900 archive, hosted by Gale Cengage, is only available through subscription. Considering more recent projects such as the open access NCSE (Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition), this paper will consider the pedagogical utility of such sites. How can we enhance students’ understanding of nineteenth century culture by using these archives
in our lecture theatres? And if we do, what are the implications for postgraduate research? With the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals launching The Gale Dissertation Research Fellowship in Nineteenth-Century Media for a second year, it is clear that ‘how’ we research and ‘why’ we use such digital newspaper archives is changing. If this change is to be wholly embraced though, the subject of access needs to be more fully considered.

“‘No news hitherto telegraphed to London concerning Major Marchand can possibly be correct” Researching transnational history using digital newspaper archives

Simon J. Potter, National University of Ireland, Galway

Do digital newspaper archives allow us, in a way that was not possible in the past, to piece together stories that cross national boundaries? Newspapers are a crucial source for transnational history, not just as recorders of events, but also as active agents in the creation of transnational interconnections, allowing news and ideas to flow around the world, and providing a forum in which debates and dialogues in different countries could fuse together. Does digitisation give us a clearer picture of how they operated in this regard?

The proposed paper uses coverage of Anglo-French imperial rivalries, in newspapers around the British world, in France, and in the USA, as a lens through which to examine these issues. It looks at the Fashoda crisis of 1898, essentially the peak of Anglo-French rivalry in Africa. This is the sort of ‘representative’ incident, occurring over a relatively short span time that historians have traditionally been able to focus on using hardcopy files of original newspapers. How does the availability of digital newspaper archives alter the way we research such events?

In many ways, the story of Fashoda itself, and the way that story was reported, were both influenced by the same problems of communication. Men and news both found it difficult to travel in tropical Africa. Major Marchand and his expedition took two years to reach Fashoda, travelling through sparse and narrow river channels, often made impassable by rapids, or disappeared into swampland, or (in the Nile basin) choked by floating islands of vegetation. The communications connections between Marchand and the outside world were similar – sparse, slow and liable to blockage. The British prime minister, Lord Salisbury, thought that in Europe it was ‘as difficult to judge what is going on in the Upper Nile Valley as to judge what is going on on the other side of the moon’. However, the British commander at Fashoda, Kitchener, was able to control information flows to the outside world, leaving the French force effectively cut off from the outside world.

As a result, as far as the press was concerned, the Fashoda crisis effectively involved newspapers in Britain and France, and around the world, publishing morsels of news from Kitchener, swapping unsubstantiated rumours and unsupported editorial comment, and seeking some sort of barometer for public opinion. The press is a poor source for examining events at Fashoda or within the corridors of power in London and Paris, but does provide a good illustration of the problem of information scarcity that characterised late-nineteenth-century European imperial expansion.

The paper will also seek to trawl more widely, and look at how we might use digital newspaper archives to throw light on the broader theme of Anglo-French imperial rivalries,
using searches that previously were not possible given time constraints on browsing long runs of hardcopy newspapers.

**Content Analysis 2.0: A Framework for Using Wordle**

**Murray Dick, Brunel University**

This paper explores the application of interactive web tool Wordle in the framing of content analysis, finding that it offers new possibilities for scholars. But it is only useful in the field of news archives where publishers make output available in data-portable formats. Those traditional content analysis methods used to establish the frequency of terms in text can be constrained by human limitations—most notably the difficulties inherent to selecting terms to measure from a large collection of documents. Classification process requires agreed standards between researchers, in order to establish consistency (Weber, 1990), or intercoder reliability (Neuendorf, 2002). But the initial steps in framing research often rely upon assumptions which do not (and cannot) take into account the frequencies of all significant words across large-scale document collections.

This research proposes a means by which scholars might challenge their initial assumptions about texts, and use computational power to audit the full range selected. It is proposed that this may invigorate approaches to content and discourse analyses. Wordle has been employed by newspapers in coverage of major news events, including analyses of major public speeches (Stodard, 2010; Rogers I and II, 2010), and political manifestos (Rogers III, 2010). In the literature, Wordle's merits have been explored in terms of framing partisanship in political speech (Monroe et al, 2008). While this paper acknowledges the limitations of such software as a means to an end in content analysis (McNaught and Lam, 2010), the application of such technologies can nevertheless help inform the preliminary stages in content analysis.

A simple macro for Microsoft Word is proposed, designed to parse text-based Word documents downloaded from Nexis. The algorithm removes metadata and stop-words from these documents, and the remaining text is then uploaded to Wordle. This data is presented as a word cloud, with keywords ranging in scale as a function of frequency. This offers a more systematic means of auditing large data sets across a range of variables.

A plea for the application of data portability in the construction of online newspaper archives is put forth. Those archives which do not provide text-only download options (including Times Digital Archive, and Gale's 19th Century British Library Newspapers) are explored in terms of their output formats. Optical Character Recognition software is applied in order to render text-based data, with varying results. This research demonstrates that without text-readable formats, content analysis of online news archives will remain limited in scope and potential.
The Importance of Genre for Understanding the Nineteenth-Century Newspaper Press, as Print and Digital Resource

James Mussell, University of Birmingham

We have been working with digital resources of nineteenth-century newspapers for some time now. As more and more resources have been produced, they have increasingly begun to resemble one another. In this paper, I consider how the emerging genres of digital resources structure what it becomes possible to discover about the nineteenth-century newspaper press.

The condition of the print archive has made it difficult to survey the various ways in which the newspaper permitted information to circulate in nineteenth-century culture. As many historians of the press have noted, the archive is characterized by scarcity and abundance: there is too much to read; but this constitutes only a fraction of what was published. Digitization appears to solve these methodological and bibliographical problems by allowing us to carry out extensive searches across the archive, uncovering the diversity of opinion about a particular subject or tracing pieces of news across different publications. The economics that underpin these resources ensure that facsimile pages are offered to the user as a reading text, making it impossible not to recognize the importance of layout and typography.

The digital resources that have appeared over the last ten years or so have transformed what we are able to do with the press, but they have done so in very similar ways. The high up-front costs of producing digital resources encourages conservatism, with different resources competing on breadth rather than functionality or scholarly care. These resources interpret the newspaper archive as a repository of textual information that is best accessed by a facsimile page. Although they allow us to interrogate the contents of the press with hitherto unimagined efficiency, they do not necessarily allow us to move beyond this and understand it functioned as information technology.

The newspaper is an example of a technology of inscription, encoding information into material form so that it can be moved through space and endure over time. The digital, too, constitutes a technology of inscription and, just as it is important that we recognize the material conditions that determine how the press operates, so too must we for the digital. Digitization entails a radical transformation of material form and it is in terms of this new materiality that we must understand digital resources. It is only once we think of them as digital – and not just surrogates for print – then we can begin to unlock their potential. What I have in mind are various data mining exercises to explore types of language use; visualizations of news as it spreads from context to context, changing (or not) in the process; using the visuality of the digital to undertake systematic study of typography and layout, as well as direct attention to the non-image visual material that is so often overlooked. We cannot recover the lost discourse network of the nineteenth century but, in exploiting the affordances of the digital, we can understand the generic structures of print. It is these recurring forms, impossible to detect when the press functions as repository of textual information, that allowed newspapers to participate in nineteenth-century culture.
“Archiving Crisis: Texts, Contexts, and Narrative Challenges”

Nicole Maurantonio, University of Richmond

This paper suggests that despite the temporal proximity of the topics studied by journalism historians of the 20th century and increased likelihood of archival digitization, studying recent journalism history carries its own set of challenges, tied largely to issues of technology. The ramifications of the choices made by archivists are profound for researchers seeking to answer historical questions regarding the visual, context, and space.

The methodological implications of the digital archive are apparent when studying a case such as the 1985 Philadelphia police bombing of the house occupied by the MOVE organization. The incident, which resulted in a fire that killed 11 and destroyed more than 60 row homes, was among the most visually arresting in city history. Yet, reliance upon digital archives such as Lexis-Nexis and Newsbank alone only reveals the written narratives conveyed by journalists reporting the crisis. Because of the text-based nature of these databases, the visual remains invisible, unless one unearths the microfilm of local newspapers or seeks out the photographs held by Temple University’s Urban Archives. There, researchers can also access televised coverage of the bombing and its immediate aftermath as well as the proceedings of the Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission, which attempted to discern the causes of the bombing and locate blame for the tragedy.

While the physical archive may provide an opportunity to fill in some of the gaps of its digital counterpart, context remains a vital concern. History is a cumulative process; we cannot understand an event without situating it within the context of that which occurred before it. Thus, although the 1985 MOVE bombing was a specific moment in Philadelphia history, news coverage of the tragedy was informed by Philadelphia’s post-war relationships with the MOVE organization, racial conflicts, transforming understandings of how best to police the city, and journalists’ own reinterpretations of their place within the cityscape.

Most directly, however, the 1985 crisis was shaped by the city’s response to the first fatal confrontation between MOVE and the Philadelphia Police Department in 1978, before any of the city’s local newspapers are digitally available. The Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Daily News can be searched from 1981 through the present. Ethnic-Newswatch, the database providing a searchable Philadelphia Tribune, Philadelphia’s black press, can only be accessed from the 1990s through the present. The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin clipping collection, housed at Urban Archives, provides one useful entry point into examining print coverage prior to the 1980s, yet the collection has only begun to be digitally archived. The vast majority of the mostly 20th century collection remains organized in envelopes by subject carrying clippings from the original newspaper. Although this form of archive allows researchers to engage with the material text, it has also divorced the articles from the page, precluding researchers from seeing how the articles were placed or what images they were accompanying.

This case study points to the central tension confronting journalism historians of the 20th century: how do we interpret the past through the varied lenses of archives with different capacities?
Cultural History 2.0: Exploring the methodological potential of digital newspaper archives

Bob Nicholson, University of Manchester

History is changing. The development of new digital archives and online research tools is no longer transforming just the day-to-day mechanics of historical research, but the kind of history that we do. We are on the cusp of a ‘Digital Turn’: the emergence of a new body of scholarship which will use digital tools to conduct forms of research that were inconceivable less than a decade ago. Whilst the full potential of these developments is far from being realised, an increasing number of historians are beginning to use digital resources in creative new ways. They are asking new questions of old material, making new connections between sources, exploring the past from alternative perspectives, and experimenting with innovative new methodologies. Crucially, researchers are also beginning to theorise and map out the methodological implications of digitisation. How does the digitisation of a source change the ways in which we organise and access its information? What role does an archive’s interface place in shaping its methodological possibilities? How do we make the best and most methodologically sound use of existing interfaces? How should new archives and interfaces be designed in order to facilitate new forms of research?

This paper contributes to this emerging debate. Drawing upon my own research into the circulation of American popular culture (slang, jokes, distinctive forms of language and discourse, etc) in the Victorian popular press, it considers how the digitisation of nineteenth-century archives is reshaping the methodological possibilities of cultural history. In particular, it examines how the digitisation of a newspaper alters the way in which its contents are accessed and organised. Classically, when we want to find something in a newspaper we approach it from the top-down. We start by selecting what we hope will be a useful publication, then pick out what we hope will be the correct volume or issue, scan through it looking at headers for potentially useful columns or articles, and finally read what we hope will be a relevant article. But, of course, the vast majority of the key information – the things that we can learn about the people, and the society, who produced and read it – are not organised using this system. Once you get down to this level in a traditional newspaper format, organisation breaks down and it becomes a dense jungle of words and ideas. This is everyday cultural discourse – the fabric of everyday life in all its chaotic splendour. For cultural historians, the digitisation of newspapers turns the established organisational framework upside down. Thanks to OCR technology and keyword search engines, we can now directly access this bottom level – this vast terra incognita of print – and navigate it with powerful new precision. This paper considers the methodological implications of this shift and how it allows cultural historians to do exciting new kinds of qualitative and quantitative research – an upgrade to what might be termed Cultural History 2.0.
“Ladies’ Tormentors”, “Tour Balloons” and “Vassarettes”: Everyday Commodities from 19th Century British Newspapers

Laura Wright, University of Cambridge

Words to do with early Victorian daily life and popular culture are surprisingly well documented in the Oxford English Dictionary, however, our knowledge of their wider sociolinguistic usage is greatly enhanced by the recent advent of searchable digital newspaper archives. I have been looking at the semantic field of Victorian quotidian life in London as evidenced by British newspapers; in particular, articles discussing the annual exhibitions in Albertopolis, advertisements for entertainments at the pleasure gardens and commodities at the new shopping arcades, letters to the editor discussing unruly bank holiday behaviour, and long-running arguments about roads, traffic and road surfacing. When triangulated with a search of Victorian literature, it is found that vocabulary which started life as highly restricted technical terminology was taken up by journalists and spread to the readership at large, thereby becoming material for literary creativity, both low-brow (music hall) and high-brow (poetry). For example, two methods of preserving wood were invented by Irish Londoner John Kyan (patented in 1832) and Scot Sir William Burnett (1838). Their names soon became verbs as the merits of kyanising and burnettising were widely discussed in the press, not least in connection with London’s roads (which were controversially paved with wooden blocks as well as granite setts). These words entered the lyrics of popular songs, and in 1859 the American poet Sylvester Breakmore Beckett wrote in Hester, the Bride of the Islands the lines “…nor gave / He heed to aught on land or wave; / As if some kyanized regret / Were in his heart”, where kyan had not only entered American English but become used metaphorically (actually this usage was made fun of in a review in the Atlantic Monthly a year later, but the target was the demerits of Beckett’s verse rather than the process of technical term -> wider usage -> metaphor). The evidence for this process of words percolating from the specialised to the general to the literary via newsprint is more thoroughly documentable now that newspaper archives can be searched.

I shall argue that there is a distinction to be made between words which the contemporary Victorian reader commonly saw in newsprint but did not actually use (evidence for such passive vocabulary shall be taken from terms for fireworks from newspaper pleasure-garden advertisements), and those which entered the active repertoires of the readers. The evidence, I argue, for active usage lies in the transfer of a word from one realm to another; that is, from surname to verbal noun (as in kyanising), from conversion from one part of speech to another, from transfer from one semantic field to another, to wider metaphorical usage. In terms of methodology, this disseminating-out process can be discovered by searching databases of text-types other than newspapers. Thus, the paper focuses both on journalism as a text-type in itself, and newsprint as a medium akin to a vast weak-tie network, enabling speakers to take up words and redeploy them out of their original context.
Exploring the Language of the Popular in Anglo-American Newspapers 1833-1988
(Looking at Rudyard Kipling)

John Lee, University of Bristol

I am neither a historian, nor a scholar of the history of newspapers. I am lecturer in a department of English Literature, who is at the beginning of a project which hopes to study the cultural success of a particular poem - Rudyard Kipling's 'The Absent-minded Beggar'.

This poem was written at the end of 1899, in response to the Anglo-Boer war. It quickly became a national, and then an international, cultural event. On Christmas Day, the *Daily Mail* pronounced: 'The history of the world can produce no parallel to the extraordinary record of this poem.' The pronouncement was premature; the poem had not yet raised a fifth of the money it would do.

The *Daily Mail* also, of course, spoke out of self-interest. The newspaper had launched the poem, and used it, and Kipling's name, as the foundation of its (self-promoting) campaign to raise money for the families of the troops fighting in South Africa. It was a beautifully orchestrated campaign, although, in fact, made up on the fly. The poem was first recited, then sung, in the Music Halls. There were concerts in the Albert Hall, various auctions, and numerous licensing deals. A ambulance corps was raised, which provided the soldiers, among other goods, with 'Absent-minded Beggar' cigarettes. None of which, in a sense, would have surprised Kipling, for he wrote in a popular idiom and for a popular audience. His poem aimed at being 'catchy' and had the music halls as its target. With the help of the newspapers, and then the economy of the business of Victorian pleasure, it became a 'rage' and a 'boom'. It became a part of national life, and had its own literary afterlife. For Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Ulysses*, Hamlet becomes 'The Absent-minded Beggar'. For Molly Bloom, the tune is woven into her memories. It also spread abroad, shaping different responses in different countries, and within countries.

I would argue, then, that Kipling's poem and its cultural success provides a very productive case history for exploring the language of the popular. Certainly, at the time, Liberal writers feared that Kipling and the new million-copy selling papers had uniquely captured that language. For Scott-James, in 1913, it was 'Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Kipling, and the *Daily Mail*' who had understood that the working classes, under the impact of the Education Acts, were becoming self-conscious, and who had captured and guided that new understanding, and steered it from revolution to nationalist war (The Influence of the Press 194-5).

The poem, as case history, is also ideally placed, in terms of time, to benefit from the recent digitalization of newspaper archives, both in England (thanks to the British Library, mainly), America, Australia, and New Zealand. My project (a submitted AHRC bid) hopes to develop various aggregating and data-mining techniques to make use of these, with the aim of producing something akin to an epidemiological study of the poem's cultural success.