

ncse Newsletter December 2005

Welcome to the second **ncse** newsletter. Since our last edition, in June, the project team has made progress in the following areas:

- Acquired microfilm for all six titles from runs held at the British Library, the Bodleian, and the Women's Library.
- Worked with Olive Software to develop processing criteria and evaluate pilots for the project.
- Launched, and re-launched, the **ncse** website: www.ncse.kcl.ac.uk.
- Planned the first of our annual symposia, to be hosted at Birkbeck in February 2006.
- Published a paper on the project in the Birkbeck Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies' new journal *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*.
- Appointed the International Advisory Board.
- Participated in numerous conferences and seminars in Britain and the United States.
- Continued to design and develop the project in line with research results.



For further details, read on...

Activities

ncse Symposium: 25 February 2006

On Saturday 25th February 2006 **ncse** will be hosting the first of our annual symposia, “*Going Digital: ncse.*” This one day event will discuss the project and place it within the wider context of the digital humanities. The aim is to converse with a small group of informed people in the field who are either current producers of digitisation projects and/or potential users of **ncse** about our work, their work, and their feedback on what we have done so far. There will be three sessions, with speakers drawn from both **ncse** and beyond, with plenty of time for discussion. The event will be held in Bloomsbury at Birkbeck College, and CCH will host a reception afterwards at Kings College London, a short walk away. Full details about the symposium can be found on our website:

<http://www.ncse.kcl.ac.uk/content/activities/event.html>

Places are very limited but if you would like to attend this event please email s.paylor@bbk.ac.uk as soon as possible. Registration is £8.00 and includes lunch and refreshments.

Website launch:

In December 2005 the new **ncse** website will be launched. The site is intended to act as an information portal on all aspects of the our activities. There you will find full details of the project’s scope and objectives, as well as profiles of those involved with it. It contains full details of conference papers and publications, many of which are available to download, and a wide range of reference resources including our working bibliography and a host of links that will be of interest to scholars and the general public alike.

Publications:

On 1 October 2005 **ncse** published its first article “Mapping the ‘Mighty Maze’: Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition” in *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, the new journal of Birkbeck’s Centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies. The paper reflects on attempts, past and present, to map the mighty maze of periodical literature and, at a time when new digital editions promise to revolutionize the way researchers interact with their materials, this paper explores timely questions about the role of the scholar in this process. It is available to download from *19* here:

<http://www.19.bbk.ac.uk/>

Appointment of the IAB:

ncse is pleased to announce that twenty one scholars of exceptionally high calibre from a multitude of disciplinary backgrounds have agreed to serve on its International Advisory Board. Full details can be found on our website here:

www.ncse.kcl.ac.uk/content/team/iag.html

Conferences and Seminars:

Throughout the summer, we have continued to share our work-in-progress with scholars from a range of disciplines. We successfully secured funding to attend the first NINES (Networked Interface for Nineteenth-Century Scholarship) workshop, hosted at the University of Virginia's Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities from 11-15 July. This innovative initiative is envisaged as a consortium of allied projects that are committed to pooling the contents of their resources in a peer-reviewed online environment. The workshop gave the research team a chance to learn from colleagues from Europe and North America, and to consider the place of NINES within the wider scholarly community.

The project was also represented in July at “Material Cultures and the Creation of Knowledge” at the University of Edinburgh, and the British Society for the History of Science Annual Conference hosted by the University of Leeds. In September the team contributed to the annual Digital Resources in the Humanities conference in Lancaster; the second Mapping the Magazine Conference at the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies; the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals Conference in Washington D.C.; and presented a panel entitled “Nineteenth-century periodicals in the long view” at the British Association of Victorian Studies annual conference at the University of Gloucestershire. These experiences have been very valuable to us: not only do they provide the opportunity to exchange ideas with experts in humanities computing, history, literature, print culture and media, but they also allow us to make contact with potential end users of **ncse**.

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Research

Progress with Filming / Digitization

We have complemented the material housed at the British Library with runs in other collections. The Bodleian have provided us with film of the final numbers of the *Tomahawk*, the Women’s Library with their run of the *English Woman’s Journal* and the National Archives at Kew with some very rare early numbers of the *Northern Star*. The microfilm has been collated and sent to Olive Software for scanning and processing and it is anticipated that we will begin to receive digital copy from January 2006. Meanwhile, the project team and Olive are engaged in a fruitful exchange of pilots and feedback, in which we are exploring the potential of both the software and

the intricacies of nineteenth-century print. This is very much a research exercise for all our partners, and we eagerly await the next version of the pilot so we can evaluate progress made.

Pagination:

In July, as part of the page turning exercise, the team discovered that the British Library holdings of the *Northern Star* and *Leader* included multiple editions of many numbers. The discovery of this material has posed interesting challenges for the project team: the presence of the editions allows us to explore little-known and under-researched material through electronic means, and provides vital insights into nineteenth-century print culture; however, the consequences of including the extra pages greatly increases the size of the project well beyond our initial calculations. The *Leader* only published two editions, one for the town and one for the country, but the British Library run of the *Northern Star* contains up to four editions for each number. Including this material increases our original (and already conservative) estimate of 30,000 pages up to approximately 110,000 pages.

It is impossible to execute the depth of processing we envisaged for 30,000 pages on all 110,000, and we were not willing to abandon one of the key research outcomes of the project: the innovative application of electronic scholarship to serial literature. Such a radical increase in scale has prompted us to consider carefully principles of selection for a core of 30,000 from the wider edition of 110,000 pages. The resource would then consist of a fully searchable edition of all six titles, including multiple editions and, wherever possible, advertising material and supplements. We will also provide a core of 30,000 pages to demonstrate the depth of information that can be unlocked through advanced processing. We hope to integrate both within a user interface that will allow users to delimit their searches according to their interests. This way users can do detailed bibliographic work on the multiple editions, explore thematic concerns across the core, or remove the multiple editions for a more convenient way to mine the edition for data.

Early Launch

As the 110,000 page edition has a minimum of editorial and technological intervention, we are aiming to move forward its launch date. We anticipate being able to give users access to a searchable archive of all six titles, plus the multiple editions they contain, complete with bibliographical headnotes, from sometime in the summer of 2006. This edition will constitute phase one of the project, and will be integrated with the core in phase two, due to be launched at the end of 2007 / early 2008.

Core Selection:

The decision to select 30,000 pages from 110,000 pages for further processing required extensive discussion to establish principles of selection. The team decided that, as the cluster itself represents one cluster among many, that the same principle should apply to the core. As such, we have selected according to a set of case studies

that represent conceptual issues to link together pages from the cluster in interesting ways. These are:

- Beginnings
- Endings
- Changes of editorship
- Visual material
- Thematic case study (to be determined)

The choice of “beginnings” and “endings” seemed a logical one as it would allow us to utilize digital technologies to track the periods where journals are trying to identify an audience, provide copy, and establish themselves in the market. Equally, we believe that periods where there is a change in editor often result in textual changes that would be amenable to the sort of processing we will apply. It is this argument that also motivates our choice of “visual material.” Free text searching of automatically generated text is “blind” to visual material, and indeed much elaborate typography common in the periodical press. Therefore, if we are to identify this material in our cluster, it needs to be present in the core, where we are developing tools to compensate for the logocentric bias inherent in search technologies and to incorporate it fully alongside more explicitly textual components. The final principle, the thematic case study, addresses the under-representation of the *Northern Star* that results from these selections. We are currently working to identify a thematic issue that occurs frequently (but not exclusively) in the *Northern Star* so that we can complement the more bibliographic principles with a principle that selects according to a conceptual theme.

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Future work

The next six months will see a number of exciting developments for the project including the event in February, and our first digital copy. The majority of our work will be on further design for the core, and preparing the full 110,000 page edition:

- **Early Launch:**

The pages that will make up the 110,000 page edition must be checked for quality. We will also need to develop a user interface through which to view the pages, and write the contextual material that will accompany phase one of the project.

- **Segmentation:**

The pages that are going to be in the core have to be segmented according to article, department, number, and volume. We have been working with Olive

to automate as much of this as possible, but it will have to be checked and edited by human operators.

- **Metadata:**

An important component of the core is a database of people, places, objects, events, institutions, and publications. We intend to populate the database using extant lists of data, and then configure the fields so as to accommodate variants and hierarchical relationships. This way the edition will be able to handle variant spellings, pseudonyms, and bibliographic variations in titles of publications etc...

- **Concept mapping:**

We have already produced an extensive concept map from samples taken from the edition. In the next few months we will explore keyword extraction software in order to develop a way to link the detailed research with an automated process.

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**If you would like any further information, or wish to contact the project team,
please visit our website:**

www.ncse.kcl.ac.uk

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