

A Picture or a Thousand Words? The use of images in the nineteenth-century periodical press and how they are reproduced today.

1. Introduction

1.1 Tessa Jowell

In a speech in January 2006 to the Oxford Media Convention by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell, pleading the case for media literacy in an age of media convergence, argued:

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I do not exaggerate when I say that media literacy in its widest sense is as important to our development as was universal literacy in the 19th century. Then, the written word was the only passport to knowledge. Now, there are many more. And the most insidious digital divide is between those equipped to understand that and those who aren't.

Jowell is making the valid argument that we experience the world in a mediated fashion, and that it is important for citizens in the digital age to gauge the ways in which the world is interpreted on our behalf. However her comparison with the C19th reveals some interesting assumptions:

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1.1.1 Separation of media literacy from universal literacy suggests that they are different things. Universal literacy implies a rather straightforward practice of reading texts, but media literacy – in which Jowell includes digital media – implies something more.

1.1.2 That knowledge was only available in the C19th through words. This is manifestly untrue: even in the early nineteenth century, before the widespread use of woodcuts, images were quite widespread – and indeed coveted. In addition, advertising posters, pamphlets, and periodicals all used different types of letterpress, varying in size and shape, to attract readers and convey meanings. The visual is a key component of media literacy, and we should be suspicious of over-privileging a text liberated from its manifestation in material form.

1.1.3 The concept of the “media” is here viewed as a modern (if not postmodern), twenty-first-century phenomenon. However, the idea that the media is a multi-platform textual environment combining text and image is at least a nineteenth-century development. The idea that our contemporary media environment is more complex is a dangerously teleological reading that at worst ignores the nineteenth-century media, and at best endorses the idea that it was more simple. Just as media literacy is important for full participation in our culture today, so too was it in the nineteenth century.

Any scholar acquainted with the richness of the 19thC media will perceive the clearly anachronistic nature of this position. Nineteenth century periodicals, for instance, contain words and images, in different combinations, according to the perceived wants of their readers and their differing economic conditions of production. A glance at any page reminds us that the information it contains is not solely a function of the words printed upon it, but rather where they are printed, in what order, next to which other groups of words or images, and on what type of paper. Media literacy in the nineteenth century was predicated on much more than simply reading words: rather it necessarily includes a visual engagement with the

material aspects of a text, whether this is paper size and quality, or the pictures, typography, and layout of a page. What a journal looks like is a product of all of these things, and producing a journal that would enrol the right reader underpins principles of composition, layout, typography, and consumption – in other words, the very business of publishing itself.

1.2 Large scale digital projects

The assumption that the media of the past is more simple than the present sadly informs many digital projects today. Just as the early developments towards digital libraries embodied the intermediary forms of card catalogues, so many digital editions of nineteenth-century texts also fail to realize the potential of their medium to fully-incorporate aspects of their source material. For instance, text is habitually preferred over images, which are relegated to the level of illustrations; the reliance on optical character recognition (OCR for short – where pages are scanned to produce a textual transcript that can be searched, encoded or whatever) to produce transcripts of texts in order that they become searchable ignores visual components entirely; and the various other structural components of a text – particularly in periodicals with their divisions of volume, number, department etc – are often suppressed, if not ignored altogether. As projects such as the *Times Digital Archive* demonstrates, the about-ness of an article is seen to be a product of its words, and all other structural components (what page an article is on, how long it is, whether it is illustrated, which edition it appears in etc) are seen as secondary, if they are seen at all.

The preponderance of large-scale digital projects currently underway at the moment (Proquest *C19*, Thomson-Gale's *British Periodicals* and the British Library's *British Newspapers 1800-1900*) testifies that the digital domain permits the republication of this material in much more accessible and, more importantly, marketable ways than previous editions in microfilm. Indeed, it is the medium increasing capacity to store and manage information that allows the digital publication of millions of pages. However, digitisations of this material do not fully exploit what is supposedly different in new media to republish the old. Many projects conceive of themselves as gateways that lead to textual content, eliding the structures and contexts that inform this content in its paper version. This need not be so:

1.2.1 Hypertext

As hypertext permits users to travel idiosyncratic paths through material, it can be exploited to capture the non-linear reading patterns that characterize many more newspaper-like periodicals. In addition, it can also map onto the non-linear publication patterns of the journals themselves, accommodating extratextual material and parallel texts such as supplements, inserts, and multiple editions.

1.2.2 Picture viewing

Just like handling hard copy, the eye is not necessarily at a fixed scopic site when reading material from the screen. Just as one can pick a page up, turn it round, or bring it closer, so the functionality of a browser allows images to be easily manipulated. In fact, if the source images are of sufficient resolution, zooming through a browser can actually enhance the image, providing access to detail that could be reached using non-digital tools such as magnifying glasses.

1.2.3 Reproduction

We are all aware of the practical difficulties in photocopying nineteenth-century periodicals and the danger that this reproductive method poses to deteriorating bindings and crumbling paper. Digital images are easily reproduced and can be saved by users on their local systems.

This means that people can build up their own archives, return to them at their leisure, and make use of them in new contexts.

1.2.4 Intellectual property

The uses to which people put their saved page images will be restricted by copyright. However, often the material in digital projects is sourced from public or academic libraries and users are being charged for access to information that already, in effect, belongs to them. Of course, digitization is expensive and adds considerable value to holdings, so it is only reasonable that those who undertake the work seek recompense. However, the existence of easily reproduced images is putting considerable pressure on this funding model, and so companies are being forced to explore other cost-recovery models such as subscriber access and licensing. The academic sector is a key player in this, as public money here is used to pay for labour so that our projects can feasibly remain free, edited with rigour, and made available to all.

1.2.5 Access

Whereas previously access to journals was restricted to those physical locations that actually held them, and depended largely on the historical accidents that determined what each archive held, digital publication provides the potential to recreate whole runs from partial collections, and contextualize these within wider collections. Additionally, putting these editions online (rather than, say, on cd-rom) allows anybody with a web-portal access to them. Of course there are issues connected with subscriber access, and the provision of high-speed internet access globally.

1.2.6 Interoperability

Fragmentary holdings of nineteenth-century material means that scholars notes frequently become the place where comparisons are made. Online access to digital resources goes some way to remedy this: however, if resources were designed in a way that they were interoperable, this would be much improved. The expense of digitization mitigates against this however, as competing commercial projects attempt to secure as much content as possible for their archives, while denying access to others. In addition, the use of proprietary software means that where a will to exchange information exists, it is sometimes technically impossible. This need not be the case, and we are working with the NINES organization, at the University of Virginia, to explore an alternative scholarly model in which individual projects open their content to the central, freely accessible, NINES hub.

1.2.7 Searching

As the *Times Digital Archive* has shown, simple free-text searching is invaluable when dealing with large repositories of texts. They permit users with more freedom to enter their own search terms. Of course, the success of these terms depends on whether they occur in the text, and at least with a print index you know the reference will lead somewhere. As projects such as SciPer, which indexed the scientific content in a number of general nineteenth-century journals shows, there is still a place for scholarly input into the creation of indices. However, this is labour intensive, and is best served alongside other search strategies such as user-generated free-text searches and searches of predetermined metadata categories.

1.3 ncse: what is it?

- Digital edition of six periodical titles

- Monthly Repository 1806–1838 (plus its supplement, the Unitarian Chronicle and including its multiple editions)
 - Northern Star 1837–1852 (including the Chartist portraits published as supplements and including its multiple editions)
 - Leader (1850-1860)
 - Tomahawk (1867-1870)
 - English Woman’s Journal (1858-1864)
 - Publishers’ Circular (1880-1890)
- It is a collaboration between BL, CCH, Olive software, but will produce a freely accessible online resource.
 - We are working with Olive Software and CCH to develop ways of identifying and capturing information beyond simply relying on OCR to produce an index.
 - Developing metadata structures to allow comparisons across the titles. These include indices of people, places, events, institutions, and publications, and data mining to provide subject indexes which we will link to thematic concepts.
 - It is not just a delivery system that serves an archive of content, but rather an edition which foregrounds the contextual and referential nature of C19th print culture.

1.4 The Argument

In the remainder of this seminar we are going to draw on the **ncse** materials to argue the following two points:

1.4.1 The visual is a determining category for both the nineteenth-century and the twenty-first century media, and any discussions of media literacy must take this into account.

1.4.2 The visual is the thread of continuity between old and new literacies but it is precisely this communicative element that is being ‘lost in translation’ between old and new media. As the focus on historical resources has been overly-textual, we need to first of all recognize the role the visual plays in structuring information in media environments and then secondly, design ways of incorporating these in the digital domain.

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2.0 Visual Context

2.1 Broad Visual Content

[slide of *Northern Star* turning into *Leader*]

Before we even begin to look at components on the page we should stop and consider the object as a whole.

2.1.1 The example shows how a journal shifts from a newspaper, with six columns of closely printed text, to a more magazine format, with three columns. Both titles are weekly, but this change by the Northern Star signals a shift from a format that identifies strongly with news to one that is more journal-like, reviewing the week’s events.

2.1.2 What the image doesn’t show is paper quality. This is difficult to capture digitally – especially when, as with **ncse**, microfilm is an intermediary step – although it is feasible a high-quality scan and zooming software would allow an image to be shown in colour with sufficient detail to make out the texture of the paper.

2.1.3

We can show variations in printing quality however. The quality of the print can be an indicator of the quality of the journal, but it also bears the marks of the conditions under which it was produced.

[slide poor impression in *MR*]

For instance the poor impressions in the *MR* are the result of low paper-quality in the early C19th,

[slide poor impression in *NS*]

while the editor and proprietor of the *NS* were prepared to go to press with white spaces as they were working to tight deadlines, and had an interest in circulating copy in a timely fashion.

2.1.4

[slide Northern Star front page]

Fonts (in the mastheads and department headings) carry structural information, as well as wider cultural significations. For instance, in the Northern Star departments – those sections that reappear week after week – are often signalled by the use of gothic text. Where these sections end is marked with a double line, all the way across the column. The double line, in fact, is a more reliable textual mark than the typography as not all departments carry titles (for instance advertising), and often the format of headers varies according to the type of department. Despite these inconsistencies however, the end of a department, where two types of content meet, is always clearly marked with a double line.

[slide]

The masthead is usually the most flamboyant text in a periodical. Along with the dateline immediately below, the masthead is a key generic feature of all periodicals, and stands in contrast to the largely unillustrated letterpress. Visual icons such as these are lost if we over-depend on OCR transcripts.

2.1.5 Layout: as this page of the *Northern Star* shows, the position of the items on the page carries meaning: advertisements, mastheads, datelines, and the position of Fergus's column.

2.1.6 What a page says is also a product of how it is said, and this includes what are often considered nontextual components such as form and context. The production of textual transcripts is therefore doubly misleading: firstly they strip words of their formal properties, rendering making them all appear the same; and secondly they relegate all other components of a page as secondary. Although transcripts locate words within sentences, they do not locate them within columns, items, departments, numbers and volumes, let alone acknowledge the other things on a page, how they are laid out, or what typography is used. Facsimile pages at least acknowledge the equivalence between what is misleadingly considered textual and nontextual information but, without editorial intervention, we are still reliant on textual transcripts to search for content. As we will go on to demonstrate, the visual components of a page do not simply supplement the words printed upon it, but are equal contributors to the meanings encoded upon it.

2.2 Words as Pictures: the Death of Wellington

[slide]

The above image is an extreme example of this. Here words are actually acting as pictures:

2.2.1 *Northern Star*

- Information contained in spatial layout: the order of those in the procession is given.
- It is like a list, but also a representation of the procession itself.
- The orientation of the text at 90° creates a bird's eye view: the viewer is in the privileged position above the procession. And it is precisely this that is lost if you simply reproduce what the text says, rather than how it says it.

2.2.2 *The Times*

[slide]

- Such displays are not unique to the *Northern Star*. For instance, the above description of Wellington's funeral is also printed in *The Times* on 6 November 1852 – the Saturday before it appeared in the *Star of Freedom*.
- Therefore *The Times* has more news value, and indeed might have been the source.

2.2.3 Wellington's death in *Leader*

[slide]

- But a week after *Star of Freedom* (20 Nov 1852)
- Note the coffin is drawn, rather than represented with a word – but the word (“the body” is still there, in an appropriate gothic font).
- Black borders have a non-verbal signifying function. They also appear the week of Wellington's death

[slide]

- Borders mark respect – perhaps unusually for the title's readership?
- Borders also mark the exceptional nature of the week's news – all news is exceptional, but this more so.

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3.0 Pictures:

[slide]

Whereas the last example had words functioning like pictures, here we have what we all recognize as a picture featuring words within it.

3.1 **Tomahawk and the muck-rake**

Each number of *Tomahawk* featured a cartoon, on a separate sheet of paper, which accompanied a “Sketch” in the paginated letterpress. *Tomahawk* was a satirical rival to *Punch*, selling around 50,000 copies per week. The title cast itself as standing for truth, and the eponymous native American would “scalp” those it felt were misrepresenting the affairs of the day. The image has *Tomahawk* overlooking the workings of the dissolute “Penny

Press” (it says who he is in his hat) as he rakes the muck with his “Sensational Claptrap.” Unseen behind the “Penny Press” is an Angelic female figure who carries the crown of “Truth.” A motto – just below the subtitle in the original, I’ll explain why it isn’t in the slide shortly – relates the image to *Pilgrim’s Progress*:

There was a man that could look no way but downwards with a
Muck-rake in his hand. There stood also one over his head, with a
Celestial crown in his Hand, and proffered him that Crown for his
Muck-rake; but the man did neither look up nor regard, but raked to
himself the straws, the small sticks, and dust of the floor.

In the image, “Penny Press,” with “Dr Beelzebub’s Advice” in his pocket, doesn’t see the proffered crown, and continues to trawl the muck for “Revolution,” “Twaddle” and “Mock Morality.” This image demonstrates how words can function within images: the iconography interacts with the more direct labelling of components in order to instruct the reader how to interpret the image. For instance, if the muck did not contain “Twaddle” and the tool was not one of “Sensational Claptrap”, then the image might represent the search for “Truth” by the penny press. Similarly, the depiction of the “Penny Press” as a poor unshaven man might evoke sympathy if he was not following the advice of Beelzebub. The title and the quotation, although divided from the picture by its frame, are also in dialogue with it, providing a further allegorical level of meaning that informs its iconographic components.

These words, operating at the level of iconography, and participating in the organizational logic of the image, are also unlikely to be captured by OCR processes, and so would not be “readable” to the computer. The only aspects of the image that would be accessible by text searching is the caption but, without the accompanying image, its meaning is quite oblique. For instance, although “People’s Guide” signals its relevance towards working class politics, there is nothing in the title or the motto to signal that the image is about the press. The cartoon also refers to *Tomahawk’s* role within print culture. Although it was only tuppence weekly, *Tomahawk* was not intended for the “people:” its gentlemanly satire requires knowledge of metropolitan high society, and it had no pretensions to speak to (or indeed for) the working class. However, it did reserve the right to judge its politics and, as the picture suggests, an entire genre of periodicals. This picture, in other words, is not just a comment on the “Penny Press,” but also locates *Tomahawk* in a different sector of the print trade. Any metadata seeking to identify the image would have to also recognize this self-reflexive level of meaning.

Whereas as the other images in this paper are taken from the tiff images generated from microfilm prepared for **ncse**, this image is scanned from a photocopy taken from the hard copy. The reason for this is that, in order to get good definition of the black letters on the white paper, the tonal contrast for the microfilm needs to be set quite high. This means that the various grey effects created by close lines in engravings are not captured very well, usually coming across as uniform dark areas.

[slide of light and dark versions]

Although in this case the operators have recognized that images would benefit from different settings and have taken another image, often they do not, showing a clear bias towards the written text. However, as the microfilm technicians cannot see the image that they capture, they can only estimate the amount of contrast necessary and here you can see that they have over-compensated in the lighter image. This problem can be overcome by inserting digital images that are taken directly from the hard copy. However, as filming each page is time-consuming, libraries like to use microfilm – which has already undergone this process – rather than film once again from hard copy. This makes sense if all you want to do with your digital edition is make use of well-defined text, but such a methodology limits the extent to which

one can work with either the original colours on a page – whether in coloured letterpress, coloured images, or on coloured paper – or even the subtle variations that exist even in monochrome source material.

These problems with reproduction reveal the mediating technologies that create the image – in this case it is the older technology of microfilm – and we, as editors, have to compensate for them to return to some sort of original, however we might conceive it.

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4.0 What is a Picture

The cartoons in *Tomahawk* are literally the centrepiece of number, and, because only one side of a page is printed upon, can sometimes take up to four pages of a ten page number. These are obviously important, and there is an editorial imperative to recognize this importance at the digital level. By recognizing these are pictures, they will need both marking up and, perhaps, being associated with the other features on the page with which they interact. This can even extend to the need to represent the black pages:

4.1 Tomahawk blank page

[slide blank page from Tomahawk with a bit showing through]

- Need them to maintain pagination
- But also to show what was being sacrificed for every page of cartoon. If you wanted a double spread, it actually ‘costs’ 2pp of the journal.

4.2 Other miscellaneous images

However, there are a range of other visual components that aren’t so straightforward:

[slide from Verbal and Visual plus a British Museum stamp]

4.1.1 “Open Council:”

- This image appears in the *Leader* as a motif above each week’s correspondence column. A branding motif, present throughout the run.
- These are clearly iconographic, but there is no textual information that might inform their presence
- Should we mark them up? Well, they don’t change, so there is no point in searching for them
- Yet they remain part of the journal and, indeed, are one of the few images within its pages. Clearly then, they are important for the visual identity of the title.

4.1.2 Finger posts

- Fingerposts are a common visual icon and are used in a range of our journals.
 - The “all orders” fingerposts from an advert in the *PC* in 1880
 - The small one above it is from the *Monthly Repository* in 1814
- This presence across textual contexts makes them especially interesting in a cluster of titles like ours: it perhaps surprising to see the recurrence of this image not only in very different textual contexts, but also right across the century.

- So we should mark these up, but what about the hand-drawn one, also from the *MR* in 1814. Are we trying to make a point about the persistence of the icon in print culture, or the wider nineteenth-century culture of which they are a part.

4.1.3 Mastheads

[masthead comparison slide]

- Mastheads, as we've mentioned are clearly a visual icon that are an important generic feature of the periodical press.
- They exist to mark create a visual identity that can span numbers and, with the datelines that are often beneath them, speak to both the stability of the periodical over time, and its variation with each issue.
- They do not always stay stable over the run. For instance the *Northern Star* changes its imagery, even while the title, at this point, remains the same. This variation is something that users might wish to search for, and iconographic mark-up schema would allow this to work.
- However, even while recording the specific occurrence of a masthead, we might also want to enable comparisons between very different mastheads in different titles. To do this we would have to use the position on the page to locate them. Is this all a masthead is? Large text in the centre of the first page?

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5.0 Relationships between text and pictures:

The use of icons such as fingerposts varies according to the positions in which they are used. The advertising sections of journals are often the most visually striking elements of a periodical. In the *Northern Star*: these are often the only pictures in a number and therefore they have considerable impact despite their often crude rendering and small size. Equally, although *Tomahawk* carried a striking cartoon in each number, the rest of the text is letterpress. The frequent images in the advertising mark it as both different from the letterpress – an important feat in a journal that likes to spoof its own form – while also being visually alluring in its own right.

5.1 The *Publishers' Circular*

Although most periodicals carried, and indeed were largely dependent upon, advertising, the *Publishers' Circular*, like most trade journals, explicitly packaged them as an integral part of its letterpress. We are all familiar with the notorious lack of advertising surviving in the bound volumes that have survived into the present: the *Publishers' Circular* clearly refutes the idea that they were somehow inferior or supplemental to other content.

[slide *PC* wrapper – or maybe flick through a Christmas number?]

In the 1880s, each number came within a one-page advertising wrapper, but at least three quarters of its letterpress was also devoted to advertisements. As its readers were involved in the trade, these functioned as news, advertising publishers lists, as well as promoting certain goods and services connected with writing, printing and publishing. Not only does the wide variety of content in these advertisements call for some sort of mark up, but bewildering range of typefaces, text sizes, visual icons and full-blown illustrations belie a complex repertoire of gimmicks designed to attract the attention of readers. If we are serious about understanding

nineteenth-century reading practices, we must also engage with pages such as these, which deploy visual resources in order to compete for attention on the page.

[slide Christmas number – advert and illustration]

The advertising section of the title was especially striking at Christmas, when a supplement, with over 100 pages, was published that reproduced the most striking images from the Christmas numbers of the magazines and annuals. In this instance, although there is matter other than advertisements, it is for this supplement that that readers would buy the journal. Such advertisements are striking images in their own right, but their complex bibliographical histories cause editorial headaches. Although they are part of advertisements in the *Publishers' Circular*, and might be linked up with the rest of the advertisement, they could also be considered individual images – after all they are circulating as commodities – with their own illustrators, engravers and publishers, and appear in at least one other textual context.

It was therefore in the interests of Sampson Low et al, the owners and publishers of the *Publishers' Circular* to have as wide a range of high-quality advertisements as possible. They still charged however: a full page advertisement costs 3 guineas; ½ page costs £1 12s; ¼ page is a guinea; a 1” banner across the page was 10s 6d; and 4 lines in a column was half a crown. These expensive rates show how coveted advertising space was in the journal, but this was to some extent offset by its subscriptions, which included 6 free advertisements for 6s a year. This information, which is printed in the journal itself, provides a glimpse at the economics of the text, hinting at the interaction between the advertisers who would pay to contribute copy which, in turn, is in demand from readers who would also pay to receive it.

6.0 Pictures or a Thousand Words: the *Northern Star*

Advertising provides an example of the intimate interplay between word and image that underpins periodical publication. However, what happens when this relationship breaks down?

[slide *NS* with the white space]

6.1 In the first edition for 20 August 1842, the *Northern Star* went to press with an embarrassing white space on its front page. The *Northern Star* was a Saturday weekly, but in 1842 its first edition was part-printed on Wednesday, completed on Thursday, and then published on Friday in order to reach Scottish and other readers distant from Leeds.

[slide text in white space]

6.2 The text within the space reveals that this is where an engraving of a monument to Henry Hunt, under construction in Manchester, was to have appeared. This suggests that the note was written on the Thursday, while there was a chance the engraving would arrive in time, but that they were forced to go to press without it.

[slide page with engraving]

6.3 The next edition of the *Northern Star* had an extra day for preparation, and sure enough the engraving is present. The decision to go to press without the engraving suggests that the editors of the *Northern Star* believed that their Scottish readers would value an on-time newspaper rather than a delayed but fully-illustrated one. Of course there may be other reasons to do with distribution and printing schedules that would make such a delay unaffordable, but the fact that the space was set, and then kept available until the last moment, gives the front page a timeliness that emphasizes its news value. The space itself is

particularly suggestive of the absent image: the retention of the title and the caption allows readers to appreciate what should have been there, and the space itself indicates its size. By signalling the absent image, the editors of the *Northern Star* demonstrate the expense they have gone to in order to produce the image (even though it isn't there), while sacrificing the space by not filling it with letterpress or advertisements. The space invites readers to imagine the absent image, especially as the other relevant components on the page – the tribute to Hunt printed in the space usually reserved for the proprietor Fergus O'Connor in the first column, and the other cut showing Hunt in full flow with the Peterloo Massacre raging around him – are present. Yet the white space reminds readers that this is an incomplete version of the *Northern Star* and that a different, more up-to-date version exists elsewhere. This white space is therefore not only important for its relationship with what is not there – the missing image – but also for what it reminds us about seriality. Seriality marks periodicals in a number of ways: from the dateline that appears on the front page of nearly every title, to the various serial articles that look both behind and beyond the number in which they appear. However, what the white space inscribes into the text is the existence of multiple editions, and the spatial-temporal conditions that create the differences between them.

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7.0 Conclusions

The presence of multiple editions reminds us that periodicals do not simply fall into neat linear runs. Equally, the various relationships between different types of content that are played out on each page challenge the idea that they are simply lines of text, to be encountered one after the other. Seriality does not necessarily correspond to linearity, and the model of the book is inappropriate for the reading strategies encouraged by the pages of the nineteenth-century press. A better model for periodical publication is one that recognizes the various units of information, whether these are individual items, the departments into which they are often gathered, or indeed whole numbers or bound volumes. The relationships between these, we argue, are played out in the visual signs that these complex objects carry, and it is to these that editors today must turn their attention.

Anachronistic conceptions of C19th print culture often prevent this being realized. The unfortunate idea that this was a logocentric age has been buttressed by a bias towards the word in literary studies combined with an increasing awareness of just how many words were printed. Clearly what periodicals say is important: after all, people bought these things to read; but the value of periodicals, and the experience of reading them, is inextricably bound up with visual. Although the dominant model for the republication of this material – OCR transcripts and facsimile pages – does provide access to an image of the page itself, we hope this evening that we have pointed out the limitations of this technology: that it still relies on textual categories to provide access to the text through searching. As Tessa Jowell reminds us, the digital medium is capable of much more than simply using text to index images, and our potential users are already highly-practiced operators within it. Digital editions of nineteenth century material should thus be a dual recognition of the historicity of literacy: we must attempt to recover the various units and their relationships that constitute C19th print culture, while representing these technologies in ways that take full-advantage of our own digital technologies.

It is conceivable that in designing our digital resources we are still hampered by a literacy that is biased towards the textual. If, as we suggest, the visual is so important to nineteenth-century periodicals, then there is an argument for a much more radical program of editorial intervention. Earlier we discussed the merits of identifying certain icons, or permitting users to search all the mastheads. We might also demarcate where things appear on a page, allowing users to search, for instance, the left-most columns. This could be expanded to explore where things appeared within a number: are they on the front page, or does that

department always occur towards the rear? We could rank content according to the size of its type, and then explore whether this connects to importance. If such search strategies were combined with free text searching and more sophisticated interpretive-linguistic methods, then we might begin to recognize the complex orders of information on the nineteenth-century page. However, at present these things are all time-consuming, and the archive is too vast. Most importantly, however, at present those digitally literate users are unlikely to be those who will be using whatever we design. By definition all our users are digitally literate: they are all at home in an online world of images and texts. However those people who are digitally literate in a critical sense are not the same people who are literate in C19th periodicals. We are at a time when our field will soon be dominated by digital projects that – often with the best intentions – strip periodicals of some of their complexity. There is a real danger that the advanced users of digital editions and the advanced users of nineteenth century periodicals – and the literacies they represent – will never coalesce. At such a moment, critically informed collaborations, both within projects and between them, represent the only real way forward.