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IDHDU January Update
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Women Poets of the Romantic Period Project

Dear IDHDU Colleagues,

Here you'll find an update on my project, digitizing the Women Poets of the Romantic Period (WPRP) Collection in the University of Colorado at Boulder's Special Collections in Norlin Library. As I stated in my October blog post, I changed projects from my original proposal to encode Radcliffe's travel narrative *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (pub. 1795) when I was hired by CU Libraries to start digitizing the WPRP collection and curate a digital exhibit, as well as an in-house exhibit, that features the collection for the 20th Annual British Women Writers Conference (BWWC). The conference will be held in Boulder, June 7-10, 2012 (I am a co-organizer for the conference) and the exhibits are geared toward the conference theme ("landmarks") and audience of 18th- and 19th-century literary scholars. The digital exhibit serves the double purpose of (1) serving the BWWC scholarly community – a short-term goal – and (2) seeding the much larger, long-term project of digitizing the entire WPRP collection of approx 500 rare books.

Part I: Description of the Project
The WPRP Collection contains approximately 500 books and textual artifacts that primary sources from the romantic era written by women poets. Though their authors are all poets, the works themselves span a range of genres, including epistles, novels, poems, essays, edited collections, literary annuals and gift books, children's literature, travel writing, and more. The collection includes first editions of well-known works in the romantic canon, like Anna Barbauld's poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, as well as rare and unpublished artifacts, like a letter from the poet Mary Cockle to Jane Porter on the death of Jane's sister, Anna Maria Porter, also a noteworthy poet from the period. Romanticism scholars from a number of universities have indicated that this collection is an important one for our field – one that continues to grow – and that its digitization and public accessibility would be an important contribution for scholars, teachers, and interested readers.

The WPRP digitization team consists of myself, Deborah Hollis (Faculty Director, Special Collections), Amanda Brown (Senior Instructor, Special Collections), Holley Long (Asst. Prof and Digital Initiatives Librarian), Elizabeth Newsome (Adjunct Instructor, Special Collections), and Danielle Forte (Graduate Assistant in Exhibits, CU Museum of Natural History). We are also collaborating with The Initiative for Digital Humanities, Media, and Culture at Texas A&M (Director, Laura Mandell). Thanks to Holley, we also have a wonderful work-study undergraduate, Gor Djiganian, who scans the texts in our digitization queue. Having a team of collaborators, technology, the

support of the library, and funding made the decision to switch projects from the Radcliffe project to the WPRP project an easy one.

As I said earlier, the project has two phases: (1) to create a small digital exhibit of around 10 works for the BWWC's 20th annual meeting in June 2012, and (2) to use these digitized works as a foundation for the digitization of the entire WPRP collection and making it publically available. More specifically, we hope to offer each work in several formats published through the library with open access: page images of the artifact, HTML pages of the texts, as well as TEI encoded XML files. This seems to be the best-practice model for archive-quality digital editions. One work in particular, John Stainforth's catalog of his library of works by women authors from the era, is particularly valuable as a research artifact for the era as it is a meticulous handwritten record of the largest bibliographic collection (around 6,000 works) in the romantic period. We are in the process of building a relational database for the work (since the book itself is a kind of database or card catalog of Stainforth's private library).

The past fall, I spent my project time reading and surveying as many of the 500 works in the collection as possible. I have a very good sense of the breadth and strengths of the collection. From the works surveyed, I created a list of about 85 works that made an impression on me for the exhibits, and also a "top 50" list that must be in the exhibit. From these 50, I selected 5 that will be the first to be digitized and TEI encoded fully or in part.

Part II: Current Project Status
January marked the end of the reading/surveying phase and the beginning of the curation/building phase. Already, I have created a draft of a teiHeader (the TEI metadata) for the collection's TEI files, begun encoding Alcock's poem *The Air Balloon* (1784), and co-hatched a plan for getting the relational database for The Stainforth catalog going. I am also working closely with Danielle, who is going to help me design and execute our plans for the in-house exhibit.

In addition, I am looking ahead to the start of Fall 2012, when my funding expires. Debbie, Holley, and I are in the process of drafting grant applications for funds to extend my time working on the project. I am, at present, the only romanticist in the English Dept at CU-Boulder with the skills to encode these works and collaborate on other electronic publishing issues, and I believe that my presence on the WPRP team will help our productivity and output remain consistent and archive-quality as we move slowly and carefully forward.

Part III: Upcoming Project Goals
In the coming month (February 2012), we will:
▪ Complete TEI encoding of Alcock's *The Air Balloon*
▪ Start encoding "Tour to Matlock" – a long, narrative poem by Sarah Hamilton that is noteworthy for being a travel narrative for four eighteenth-century women on a road-trip together.

- Convene a small focus group of scholars to help determine the fields for the Stainforth database. The focus group will indicate what research questions they would like to use this book to answer. The questions they suggest will tell us what fields to create in the database.
- Gather a second witness for transcription of Mary Cockle's letter and start to encode the letter.
- Submit grant proposals to various sources for the continuation of this project.
- Continue to work with Danielle on designing the in-house exhibit.

Part IV: How IDHDU Tracks Have Helped My Progress
My IDHDU summer fellowship workshops in Data Visualization and Digital Archives have helped my work on the WPRP project in four ways.

First, the Digital Archives workshop was, for me, about realistic project planning. I have been a leader, along with the Faculty Director in Special Collections and our Digital Initiatives Librarian, in project planning for the WPRP digitization project. Project planning, outlining realistic objectives, researching models and resources, and communicating with team members have been some of the most positive aspects of this project. Project planning in advance has been a major source of momentum for productivity and organization – as I talk about in my recent blog on moving from research phase to the curation phase of the project.

Second, the open source workshop and roundtable reiterated what I have come to recognize as one of the most important initiatives in DH work: making tools, ideas, and digital documents/works free and adaptable to a variety of user and developer platforms. The WPRP digital archive will be free and open for all scholars to use. We are also thinking about crowd-sourcing knowledge and transcriptions for the Stainforth catalog – a practice that works to break down assumptions about scholarship and scholars participation from outside the Academy.

Third, my Data Visualization workshop has been useful for knowing the range of kinds of visualizations our interface can offer – we are not yet to the stage of designing our interface. Before we can imagine visualizations of the data we're creating in digitization, we have to "make" the data by encoding it so that it can be analyzed by machine. Admittedly, we spend a lot of time learning Processing, and I am fairly positive that I will not be using Processing on this project. However, we also briefly surveyed a variety of different kinds of visualizations and tools for creating them. There are two visualization projects on deck: for the first, our team is currently working on a mapping interface or feature for the website, whereby we map subscribers to a book in the collection using Google Maps with an overlay of maps from the Romantic era. The second project is to use page images of The Stainforth catalog as a kind of index for the digital archive we're creating. I would be particularly interested in learning about mapping and text analysis visualizations in subsequent workshops. By text analysis visualizations, I mean programs in which we can run a text file and produce graphs, charts, diagrams, or other kinds of images to help us analyze the text via stats or pattern recognition.

Fourth, the IDHDU workshops helped catalyze collaboration and connections in the DH community. Doing DH work is highly collaborative and also requires a degree of bravery and a willingness to work with tools you have most likely not completely mastered. Another reason why I gladly switched projects from the Radcliffe project to the WPRP project is that I knew I would have collaborators, and from working with IDHDU fellows who have collaborators and with other DH project teams, I realized that I really needed – and wanted -- a team. At the HASTAC V conference at the University of Michigan in December, I ran into Jon Winet, who is a member of my Data Visualization group, and met his co-presenters on the Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature mobile app project. We dialogued throughout the conference about our projects, which was both useful and a delight. Knowing how important collaboration and knowledge sharing is to this field, I felt as though the summer workshop created connections that will be beneficial as these long-term projects progress and even as colleagues move into new roles and onto new projects.