

DIGITAL RESOURCES, CRITICAL MASS AND HOMICIDE

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The Murder of Jean Alexander

A true and particular Account of the barbarous and cruel
Murder & Robbery
 Of JEAN ALEXANDER & CHRISTIAN PEACOCK,
At KILMARNOCK, a few Days ago.

Edinburgh, Nov. 14, 1867.

Dear Friend,

I am sorry I have nothing at present to inform you of, that will either afford the amusement or contribute to the improvement of your mind.

And, were it not that they are so qualified to catch good out of evil, and to turn the worst of our actions to the profit of their souls, I should be inclined to think that they were vile and profane, rather than circumspect and prudent, and that they should, freely they should, make the thunder at the name of man! Allow me to be proved to this, painful task.

From a deposition taken before the magistrates there is reason to suppose that James Burnside, James Thompson, John Kilmister, and Thomas Tappin, also a journeyman blacksmith, James Brown, and a woman, were concerned in the murder and robbery. These men are natives of Ireland, and, I understand, are of the same religious persuasion as the English, and very pious;—a circumstance did to discover and apprehend them.

both the charges he was fully committed for trial.

MURDER.—Between the night of Friday and morning of Saturday last, a most barbarous and deliberate murder was committed in the town of Kilmarnock, in the West of Scotland, on **James McEwen** and **Christian Peacock**, in the dwelling house of the former. It appears that they were strangled, the one with a cord, and the other with a handkerchief. The perpetrators robbed the house of 15l in silver, bank notes to the amount of 50s, two silver watches, and three plain gold rings. From a precognition taken, there is reason to believe that **William McEwen**, a journeyman shoe-maker, in Kilmarnock, and **Thomas Taggart**, a Glasgow shoe-maker, are the persons guilty of this shocking murder and robbery. These men are natives of Ireland; and, we understand, warrants of commitment are made out against them, and every possible exertion being to discover and apprehend them.

PROVINCIAL THEATRE.—To a play-bill published by a Country Magazine in the vicinity of the metropolis.

News sheet, from Edinburgh Nov
14, 1807 – from John Johnson
Ephemera Collection

Morning Chronicle, London, 19
Nov 1807 – from BL Newspapers

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What research sources has JISC made available?

- o Mass Digitisation Programme – 22 projects, £22m, 2004-9
 - o 18th-Century Parliamentary Papers
 - o Welsh and Irish Journal Digitisation
- o Enriching Digital Resources – 25 projects, £1.8m, 2008-9
 - o E.g. Clustering Anglo-Saxon resources
 - o Digitising Sudan map collection
- o Licensing work by JISC Collections
 - o Early English Books Online
 - o Eighteenth Century Collections Online
- o Add this to other funders' work
 - o <http://web.me.com/xcia0069/uk-digitisation.html>



What is the impact of this digitisation?

Study of 19th-Century Britain

- ❑ British Library Newspapers
- ❑ Research Libraries UK project – 1m pamphlets
- ❑ Electoral Data in Vision of Britain
- ❑ John Johnson Collection of Ephemera
- ❑ Old Bailey Proceedings
- ❑ 19th-Century Serial Editions
- ❑ Nineteenth-Century House of Commons Parliamentary Papers
- ❑ Nineteenth-Century UK Periodicals Online
- ❑ Microsoft Digitisation
- ❑ Google Books!

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What is the impact of this digitisation?

- 20th Century – despite copyright
 - National Archives Cabinet Papers
 - NewsFilm Online
 - Archival Sound Recordings
 - Independent Radio News recordings
 - Welsh and Irish Journals
 - Freeze Frame Polar Images
 - Electoral Data

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What is the impact of this digitisation?

- ▶ Possible changes in research
 - ▢ Retiring scholars see their work cast aside – or maybe reaffirmed?
 - ▢ Doctoral students have a whole new landscape to explore
 - ▢ Previously aesthetic readings become more historicist
 - ▢ Need to refine questions because of greater amount of evidence
 - ▢ Will there be a increased need for sampling?
 - ▢ Or will macro-history become easier?
 - ▢ Study of language emphasised; linguistic interpretations to the fore
 - ▢ What is the impact of sound and vision (as compared to text)?
- ▶ Add all these changes together, and what will happen?
 - ▢ Usual slow drip of sources becomes a deluge

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What is the impact of this digitisation?

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- Plenty of fields of study not covered by digitisation
- Plenty of resources are under used
- Plenty of resources are not sustainable
- Resources are spread all over the place

- How does this effect JISC plans and future funding in this area? Currently an area open for discussion
- Less funding for digitisation per se

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1) Data Mining / International

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- Digging into Data Challenge established with international funding bodies
- To promote international, innovative research work with large humanities orientated data-sets
- The internet is global – continuing collaboration with National Endowment for Humanities

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2) Improving Usage

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- Continuing 'Enriching Digital Resources'
- Responding to the Lariah and Bristol reports
- Improving metadata / usability / marketing of digital resources
 - ▣ Isaac Newton on YouTube, Stained Glass Web 2.0
- Assisting their take up in research and teaching

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3) Clustering

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- The silo cliché remains true – too many resources in too many areas
- Impact on front end – users have to go to multiple places to find related items
 - ▣ Need for strategic thinking about how content overlap
 - ▣ Medieval Stained Glass; Church Plans Online; Funerary Monuments of Sussex; Vision of Britain
 - ▣ What kind of framework would help answer urgent intellectual questions?
 - ▣ Building a framework which respects the granular
- Impact on back end – more difficult to sustain multiple technical infrastructures

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4) More Content

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- UK special collections are still largely untapped
- Arguing for further digital content creation
 - ▣ Meeting and advancing research and teaching needs
 - ▣ Bringing collections out of the dark
 - ▣ Stimulating the economy, underpinning competitiveness and developing skills
 - ▣ Reaching out and building communities

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