The English Broadside Ballad Archive is a project in which a team of researchers who range from professors to undergrads to independent experts work toward digitizing seventeenth century ballad collections in a format more suitable for today. The team works with ballads that are preserved in universities and libraries worldwide with a priority to preserve all surviving ballads in an openly accessible digital format for those interested in reading and researching them.

The Research Assistant position entails transcribing high-quality photographs of seventeenth century broadside ballads for a modern-day translation. Being widely distributed on inexpensive sheets of paper in thick black letter text, the preservation of the ballads is important to maintain the popular narratives of previous times. The team is currently in the middle of transcribing the Houghton Collection.

In the process of transcription, a transcriber reads through and copies the ballad’s exact text in the modern-day font Times New Roman while preserving the original text including spelling mistakes. The time and effort that went into typesetting is reflected in the detail-oriented process of transcriptions as it rejuvenates an extinct artform. EBBA’s transcription process allows for one to immerse into the literature of the period with the assistance of present-day technology, which connects one with the past in a new way.

The process of deciphering Early Modern English with frequent archaic spellings, and often difficult-to-read fonts, to something more relatable is a useful skill in life, where one constantly needs to take the unfamiliar aspects and make them relatable. This internship allows for one to connect with the past and assist in the creation of a digitized database that would allow for individuals to access enriching documents in a familiar format.

-Megan Perry,
Research Assistant

-Patricia Fumerton,
Faculty Sponsor