

Search the Archive

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Title:

Immortalizing Knowledge



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Introduction: I have transcribed several broadside ballads

during my time with EBBA. In navigating the website, I

have noticed how many different types of effort go towards

creating and steadily improving a research database.

Whether it be transcribing, coding, performing the ballads,

scanning, etc.; online databases are a labor-intensive form

of archivist effort. I attended the “Digital Culture from

Below, 1500-1800: A Symposium in Honor of Professor

Tim Hitchcock.” symposium, during which the keynote

speakers explained the struggles and triumphs they had had

in creating The Old Bailey Online. It made me curious as to

what things historians and engineers must consider when

making the past more accessible, especially in terms of how

to disseminate information and structure user experience.

Discussion: Getting to interact with and interpret these texts

makes me hype-aware of historical perspective’s power, and how

some day even the most innocuous peace of media will be

studied. The EBBA and Old Bailey are comprised of such

interesting pieces because they were made to record and preserve.

Modern media seems to focus more on speedily spreading

information as opposed to holding posterity as a key

consideration. Being able to catalogue and clarify history is a

really powerful thing, and can really muddle the original intent of

the source material. The Old Bailey differs from EBBA in that it

seeks to account for different queries users might have, hoping to

guide them based on those avenues of study about which they are

already curious.

EBBA instead offers a randomly generated example

to intrigue its users; offering a chance for the general

public to be unintimated and explore a new interest, or

an easy-to-use search feature for those that are well-

versed in broadside ballads. This raises a lot of

questions regarding what deserves to be archived and

what does not, and which type of researchers should be

catered to. I hope to keep these ideas of accessibility

and audience in mind for future research, applying

them in such a way that I can help ensure information

is intuitively available to the most people. Databases

will always vary in who they target based on what

their archivists value, but I especially love when they

provide traditionally distant texts in a more accessible

manner outside of just academia.