

Eighteenth Century Collections Online - Reviews

1. REFERENCE REVIEWS, AUGUST 2004

Eighteenth Century Collections Online

"The *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (ECCO) provides access to approximately 150,000 works published between 1,701 and 1,800 in English and foreign languages, both in the UK and in the American colonies or the US. The collections include items from the British Library as covered in the *English Short Title Catalogue*, which have been previously available on microfilm, as well as materials from other public and private libraries and archives. In addition to providing easy access, this collection adds full-text search capability across all materials. Metadata cataloging has also been added to enhance search efficiency.

The collections are arranged into several areas or modules: history and geography; social science; fine arts, music, art and architecture; medicine, science and technology; literature and language; religion and philosophy; law; and reference materials.

In the history and geography area, one finds travel literature, history, biographies, genealogies, chronologies, and notable materials relating to the history of the American Revolution from American and British viewpoints. The social science category includes business and economics materials, as well as writings about then-current events, social issues, and political matters. The fine arts module covers music, painting, theatre, architecture, building, and carpentry, and also provides access to catalogues of collections and exhibitions. Works relating to agriculture, cookbooks, military technology, anatomy and diseases are covered in the medicine, science and technology area. The literature and language module includes drama, poetry, essays, and fiction as well as critical materials, dictionaries and book catalogues. Sermons, ethical and moral debates, and codes of conduct are among the items in the religion and philosophy area, while the law module provides materials related to legal matters throughout the UK and the Americas. Addition general materials, such as almanacs, catalogues, and directories, are provided as reference sources.

ECCO uses the standard Gale search features: basic and advanced searches and options to browse authors or works. The basic search allows users to input a search worked or phrase and limit to date or subject. Advanced searching provides full Boolean search features and the ability to search for words within certain index areas. In addition, a "fuzzy" search option is available, which will return variant spellings and related concepts to maximize results. Advanced search limits include date, subject, language and illustrated works. Search results load as citations, with the full text available by clicking the title. The digitized works are clearly scanned and are available for viewing, printing and saving.

ECCO provides excellent access to a broad range of materials in a wide array of disciplines, covering an important era of world history."

Reference Reviews, August 2004

2. EPS INSIGHTS 12 August 2003

-----Original Message-----

From: epsinfo@epsLtd.com [mailto:epsinfo@epsLtd.com]

Sent: 12 August 2003 09:14

To: eps@epsLtd.com

Subject: EPS - ECCO: SEARCHING THE AGE OF REASON

EPS INSIGHTS :: 12/08/2003

ECCO: SEARCHING THE AGE OF REASON

* Gale has launched its Eighteenth Century Collections Online, a remarkable feat of scanning, tagging and OCR searching which has the power to revolutionise 18th century scholarship. The quality of the product is not in doubt, but publishers who sell to the university market will watch Gale's sales strategy with interest.
by Nick Dempsey, Analyst

Gale's Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) is a hugely impressive digitisation project covering almost all of the significant works from the eighteenth century printed in the UK - 150,000 titles in all. Gale has converted its microfilm collection, The Eighteenth Century Collection, filmed from the holdings of the British Library and a number of other major UK and US research libraries, into 33 million images of original pages which can be viewed and searched via a web-based platform. The digitisation process has been conducted primarily by teams of indexers and metadata creators in India and Farmington, Michigan, working at a rate of 300,000 pages per week. Gale has refined its digitisation processes through The Times Digital Archive project covering 200 years of The Times newspaper, which is now near completion. To date 15% of the eventual ECCO database has been completed and launched, covering History and Geography. Texts categorised as Social Sciences, Law, Medicine and English Literature will all be available by summer 2004.

ECCO compares most directly with ProQuest's Early English Books Online (EEBO). EEBO has 22.5 million page images from 125,000 volumes published in English or in England between 1473 and 1700. The product allows scholars to search for texts and browse through them from their desktop, but ECCO, which takes up the baton from 1701 to 1800, goes one step further with its much-trumpeted full-text searching functionality.

A key aspect of the project has been the treatment of page images to ensure strong contrast between the text and the background, which allows an OCR engine to search across every word in the 150,000 titles. Once all of the digitisation is complete, a user will be able to type "River Thames" into a search form and receive results for all references from poets, diarists, biographers, writers of political tracts and social historians. The possibilities for cross-disciplinary study or indeed for tracing the earliest uses of particular phrases are immense. ECCO allows users to construct complex Boolean searches, as well as offering a "fuzzy search" facility which retrieves results that do not match search terms perfectly, an important tool given the range of spellings and difficult typefaces in use in the eighteenth century.

Each text has an electronic table of contents which allows for easy browsing and most pages have a guaranteed persistent URL, important to ensure enduring links in seminar notes. Discussions with librarians led to a decision to allow a maximum of 10 pages for printing in any one session, to prevent students from printing large works such as Boswell's Life of Johnson on library printers. In these areas Gale, along with ProQuest, is making a first attempt at writing the rule book for this kind of database publishing.

Gale is of course pushing the value of the collection to universities. One claim is that ECCO will draw more and better graduate students and faculty to the university to study particular subjects. Another plays directly to senior librarians - a product this powerful will enhance the role of the library within the university. While pricing is not publicly available for ECCO, these statements - though possibly true - suggest the urgent necessity of convincing universities to create new budget for such an exceptional item. There will certainly be initial scepticism about the ability of many universities in the UK, at any rate, to find room in their already-squeezed budgets for an expensive new digital product. University librarians already need to reduce their budgets for new monographs to keep up with the price of journal subscriptions. Despite their strong relationships across the library sector, Gale will have to be at their most persuasive to make an early return on considerable investment.

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Related links

 ECCO :: <http://www.gale.com/EighteenthCentury/>
 EEBO :: <http://www.chadwyck.com/hp/Features/EEBO/>
 Gale :: <http://www.gale.com>
 ProQuest :: <http://www.proquest.com>
 The British Library :: <http://www.bl.uk>

3. EPS INSIGHTS 10 AUGUST 2004 (NB reference to ECCO in **bold**)

-----Original Message-----

From: epsinfo@epsLtd.com [mailto:epsinfo@epsLtd.com]

Sent: 10 August 2004 09:26

To: eps@epsLtd.com

Subject: EPS - JISC AND THE OVID ARTS PACKAGE: UK ARTS STUDENTS CATCHING UP?

EPS INSIGHTS :: 10/08/2004

On the web: <http://www.epsLtd.com/locate.asp?go=updateNotes>

Search the archive: <http://www.epsLtd.com/locate.asp?go=search>

JISC AND THE OVID ARTS PACKAGE: UK ARTS STUDENTS CATCHING UP?

* As a result of a deal negotiated with the JISC, three arts-related databases on Ovid's SilverPlatter platform will now be available at affordable prices for all of the UK's higher education institutions.

by Nick Dempsey, Analyst

As a result of its deal with the JISC, Wolters Kluwer's Ovid Technologies is to offer a package of three databases: the International Federation of Film Archives (based around abstracts of film writings from over 300 international publications); the Bibliography of the History of Art (indexing and abstracting information from 1,400 journals, as well as books, essays and art catalogues) and the Repertoire International de Litterature Musicale (a database of music scholarship, with abstracts from thousands of articles, catalogues, recordings and concert reviews), to UK higher education institutions on a three-year subscription basis. All institutions are banded A to J by JISC based on: numbers of students and staff; past usage of information; and levels of central funding. So, for example, the University of Cambridge is in band A, Nottingham Trent in band C and Orkney College in band J. For the Ovid Arts Package, institutions in bands A-B will pay UKP4,000 for each of the first three years of their subscription, bands C-D will pay UKP3,200 a year, band E will pay UKP1,900 and bands F-J UKP1,200. In the case of the higher bands, this represents a substantial discount on the JISC price for each of the databases purchased separately.

A broadly comparable package, Oxford University Press's Oxford Reference Online, costs over UKP4,500 spread over three years for a Band A institution, representing a discount of nearly 30% on the annual cost of that product purchased outside the JISC deal. An even better deal offered through JISC is for ProQuest's Early English Books Online (EEBO), a database of scanned-in pages from all printed publications in England before the eighteenth century. Band A institutions pay only a UKP2,200 hosting charge annually for this product. JISC is thus building a powerful set of arts and humanities databases to offer institutions in the UK, from reference works to bibliographic information to mighty primary text collections. **The mightiest of these, Gale's new Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO), has not been the subject of a JISC deal yet. ECCO is drawing nearer to being a truly comprehensive scanned-in collection of all printed works from eighteenth century England, and through the magic of OCR, users can perform keyword searching on the whole collection. With this product, which adds significantly to the arts and humanities student's armoury, Gale is playing on the suggestion that its product will be recognised as a differentiating factor for a university in terms of reputation and attracting postgraduate students - and therefore worth a budget boost from central coffers.**

For Ovid, the gamble is that new customers brought in through the JISC deal will more than compensate for the lower prices that such a deal inevitably entails, and that hooking in institutions for three years will ease some of the churn-related difficulties that any subscription publisher experiences. For the last reason in particular, this deal may well make sense. However, the balance between marking products out as exclusive, as Gale is determined to do with ECCO, and bringing in as wide a range of institutions as possible will always be a tricky feature of selling academic databases.

While students of scientific, technical and medical disciplines have long been used to searching an array of bibliographic and content databases, the possibilities for arts students are only now beginning to emerge. The ability to search resources containing bibliographies, collections of historical texts, journal articles and a range of supplementary materials can free up the borders between different arts and humanities disciplines. Finding all references to Shakespeare's Ophelia, for example, in the visual arts, music, literary texts, criticism, psychological writings, and diary entries from the late sixteenth century, is an exciting prospect for an English literature or history PhD student or even undergraduate. Though the Ovid databases have been available for some time, the JISC deal will make them much more widely used. Placed alongside primary resources such as EEBO, such databases of scholarship will begin to shift the research experience for many arts and humanities students. © Electronic Publishing Services 2004

From the EPS archive

 ECCO: searching the Age of Reason, EPS Insights, 12 August 2003 ::
<http://www.epsltd.com/accessArticles.asp?articleType=1&updateNotelD=999>

Ovid: the hard work starts to pay off, imi, December 2003 ::
<http://www.epsltd.com/accessArticles.asp?articleType=2&articleID=259&imiID=51>

Related links

 Ovid Technologies :: <http://www.ovid.com>
 Ovid Arts Package ::
http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=coll_ovidartspackage&src=alphaThe
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http://www.jisc.ac.uk/collections_banding.htmlOxford
 Reference Online :: <http://www.oxfordreference.com>
 EEBO :: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/>
 ECCO :: <http://www.gale.com/EighteenthCentury/>

4. *The Times*, Thursday 23 October 2003

BIBLIOMANE Jim McCue

THIS year, the database publishers Gale put online — to subscribers — the historic run of back numbers of *The Times* (see *The Register*, May 9). Even that enormous project, however, is small beside its latest undertaking. Over the next couple of years Gale's Eighteenth-Century Collections Online will digitise essentially the entirety of British and a good deal of American publishing from that period, apart from newspapers.

Working from microfilm, but producing crisp images, page by page, Gale's scanning programme covers nearly 150,000 titles. The text of all of them will be searchable, either individually or by date or in toto. The collection is based upon the findings of the English Short Title Catalogue, which uses the holdings of the British Library and some 1,500 others.

It will be possible to search the database's 33 million pages to find occurrences of a word, phrase or name. Its power is awesome. A researcher tracing the 18th-century whereabouts of works by Leonardo da Vinci, for instance, might forgivably have overlooked Thomas Hinderwell's *History and Antiquities of Scarborough and the Vicinity* (1798), with its claim that the Duncombe family owned a Head of St Paul, or might not have come across the catalogue of Mr Aufrere's collection at Chelsea (1790), which claims he had one in his ante-room and another in his front dressing room. Now a database search turns up the references in seconds.

So far, only a small part of the project has been put online. There are very few, for instance, of the 18th-century titles in the sale catalogue recently issued by Amanda Hall (www.amandahall.co.uk: I was particularly sorry not to be able to read *The Pleasures of Retirement, Preferable to the Joys of Dissipation*, by the Count de B----).

With only history and geography yet fully operational, Newton's Opticks, Benjamin Franklin on electricity, Halley on comets, David Hume and Adam Smith, Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels are all still to come. Original copies of these are now major individual purchases, and

since universities around the world can no longer hope to procure representative 18th-century collections, they are likely to be keen online subscribers.

5. *Library Journal*, May 15, 2004 'Database and Disc Reviews', Cheryl LaGuardia

Electronically speaking, the star of this column is easily Gale's *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, an enormously rich tool for literary and historical research.

Eighteenth Century Collections Online contains the digital images of 150,000 works published in the UK between 1701 and 1800. The file comes from Primary Source Microfilm's Eighteenth Century microfilm collection, and if this sounds familiar, it's because it derives from *English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC)*. There are 33 million full-text searchable pages, divided into seven subject areas: History and Geography; Fine Arts and Social Sciences; Medicine, Science, and Technology; Literature and Language; Religion and Philosophy; Law; and General Reference. Types of material include books, Bibles, directories, sheet music, sermons, and advertisements.

A Basic Search for "cosway and miniatures" as Keywords produced no results. However, the same search in Full-Text yielded six items, one of them a highly entertaining resume of Richard and Maria Cosway's lives and work by the 18th-century satirist Anthony Pasquin. Citations give detailed bibliographic information about each work, including its *ESTC* number, 18th-century microfilm reel number, a physical description, the library that provided the original, and a link to the libraries in the UK and the United States that owned the printed work. Remarkable. Even more remarkable, however, are the digital image page views of the original documents, including the illustrations. I got lost for over an hour in the various editions of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* and their vastly different artwork.

The Advanced Search is so powerful it gave me sensory overload. Researchers can search by Keyword, Author, Title, Full-Text, Front Matter, Main Text, Back-of-book indexes, Publisher, or Place of Publication. Users can combine five lines of searches with Boolean "and," "or," and "not." They can perform "Fuzzy Searches" (more on this later); limit by a range of dates; choose to include documents that have no known publication date; search within one or more of the seven subject categories; limited by language (more later); or limit to illustrated works including Cartoons, Coats of Arms, Genealogical tables, and much more. Or you can simply search by a Gale document number or *ESTC* number.

But that's not all. Readers can also Browse Authors or Browse Works. This system performs well; you can literally browse by alphabet or type in the beginning of a name or title to pull up a suggested list. A browse for Burke brought up 11 pages of citations to Edmund Burke's works, including seven different editions of *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*. I even came across Ben Franklin in the list of authors and found four editions of his *Experiments and Observations on Electricity*. Made at Philadelphia in American (but all printed in London). Keep track of which Browse you're using. I was perplexed not to find *Tristan Shandy* under Sterne until I realized I'd wandered into the Browse Works section and was looking for the wrong entry. Entirely my fault, but it gives you some idea of how fast and easy it is to move through this system.

Most of the material here is, not surprisingly, in English, although there is a fair amount in French. Language can be limited to English, French, Dutch, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish, and Welsh. Gale's publicity notes that women writers are included, but they are few. It would be useful to search the file for them. Gale, any chance of tagging the female authors so they're searchable?

The online Search Tips section is nothing short of superb. Best of all, it is constantly available at the top of every screen. But it's simple to carry out most functions: marking records, going back and forth between displays and emailing citations. To email the full images of a page you must identify the name and type of mail server you use – kind of a hassle. To display pages Gale has intelligently integrated some of the same techniques by Octavo in its Digital Editions and Facsimiles on disc; users can scale images from ten percent to 100 percent for viewing/reading and also rotate them 90° or 180° left or right. At 50 percent scale the originals are generally easy to read.

The Fuzzy Search is an integral function of this database. Gale notes that a Fuzzy Search “expands the search to include words similar to search terms entered, thereby accommodating for spelling variations.” You do a Fuzzy Search by degrees: low, medium, and high. Gale adds, “the higher the degree, the greater margin of error, presenting the researcher with more results.” For researchers trying to pin down obscure references with both English and American spellings, this is a huge boon.

THE BOTTOM LINE: The content, scope, and accessibility of *Eighteenth Century Collection Online* are astonishing. Enthusiastically recommended for all academic, public, and research libraries serving serious literary scholarship. — Cheryl LaGuardia.

6. *Advanced Technology Libraries*, September 2003

Columbia U Purchases 18th Century Collections Online

"Columbia University is the first academic institution to purchase the entire Eighteenth Century Collections Online, a comprehensive digital collection of 150,000 rare English-language and foreign language editions published in Great Britain during the 18th century, offered by Gale ...

'There is no way to overestimate the value of this digitized archive for 18th century studies,' said John L. Tofanelli, Anglo-American bibliographer at Columbia's Butler Library. 'We've had tremendous faculty support to obtain the Collection, which will change the way that 18th century studies are taught and incorporated into course curricula even at the undergraduate level' ..."

7. Email of 30 April 2004 from Professor George A. Starr, Department of English, University of California, Berkeley.

---Original Message---

From: george starr [mailto:gastarr@berkeley.edu]

Sent: Friday, April 30, 2004 12:04 AM

To: Devine, Dawn

Subject: ECCO

Dear Ms. Devine,
I enjoyed meeting you at your presentation of ECCO in the Doe Library, which I thought was very professional and informative, and I am happy to share with you my thoughts about the usefulness of ECCO, and the desirability of CDL acquiring systemwide access to it. I have been using it extensively for over a month now, preparing explanatory notes for my Pickering & Chatto edition of Defoe's *Religious Courtship*.

Even without a search function, this body of material would constitute a splendid database for everyone working in the Eighteenth Century. Even if we had to use it as most of us (I believe with the exception of colleagues at UCSB) have to use EEBO, simply as an electronic version of a very broad and extensive collection of microfilms, it would be extremely useful for various research purposes; perhaps not preferable to the microfilms for *all* purposes, but having definite advantages for many and probably most kinds of research. Chief of these advantages, I suppose, is being liberated from the cumbersomeness, and the fixed locations, of microfilm reader-printers; or to put it in more positive terms, the ability to do basic research in one's office, or home, or wherever there's internet access.

But of course ECCO's most salient feature is that it *is* fully searchable, and that it offers various means of broadening or narrowing searches, of which level-of-fuzziness is most notable. This gives it a power that many of us first encountered *via* Chadwyck-Healey's LiOn, and were initially dazzled by. Since LiOn is already in place, and partly overlaps with ECCO in coverage, it may be helpful if I point out the differences between the two, as they strike me.

The biggest difference is that LiOn is based, in all too many instances, on faulty transcriptions of unreliable later editions, with the result, as I have come to realize, that many LiOn searches fail to turn up words that are in fact present in texts that are in its database. Because ECCO uses microfilms rather than transcriptions, it has largely overcome this very serious problem. Not entirely, however; when ECCO has had to work with microfilms of poor quality, or high-quality microfilms of texts that were badly printed, or printed on bad paper, or printed in small

typeset or in foreign languages, it too can yield misleading results--both false finds and failures to find. But in my experience so far, these are less frequent or blameworthy than the errors with which LiOn's Eighteenth-Century texts are riddled.

One could also contrast the narrowness of LiOn's subject-matter, which is almost exclusively literary, with the impressive range already included in ECCO's coverage. It is true that ECCO is limited to publications of a single century, but I do not see this as a drawback--and not only because my own work is largely in the Eighteenth Century. My opinion is that relatively few scholars searching in these databases will be concerned with (for example) the way the meaning of a word changed over the course of several centuries (for which the *OED's* usage-citations provide ampler evidence than LiOn anyway). More scholars, it seems to me, will be seeking to investigate a topic in depth, within a period rather than across periods, and for this ECCO is invaluable. Within its period it does have coverage limitations: despite the very large total number of texts, a not negligible percentage of them are multiple editions of single works, and there are some significant areas that seem scarcely represented as yet; for example, journals other than those containing belletristic essays, such as *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, but containing much information not to be found anywhere else. Nevertheless on this count too, ECCO appears to be greatly superior to any searchable, electronic rival known to me, and I gather that you plan to continue expanding its coverage of Eighteenth-Century imprints.

Obviously the people responsible for allocating acquisition funds, both on the campus level and at the CDL, have to take into account the price-tags attached to ECCO and other electronic resources, and to weigh these against one another and against budgets for traditional monograph purchases and periodical subscriptions. In fact, I am happy *not* to have the information about costs, or the responsibility of trying to balance all the competing claims for limited resources. All I need to do is give you my personal opinion of ECCO, and this, as should by now be clear, is very positive indeed. I strongly hope the CDL will find itself able to make this valuable scholarly resource available to what I believe will be a large group of faculty and graduate students, from a diverse array of disciplines. I would not be sanguine about very many undergraduates using it, even though the EEBO-TCP undergraduate essay prize for work based on its analogous pre-1700 database is the kind of thing that might help foster undergraduate use. But I am confident that for more advanced research of various kinds, ECCO will be welcomed at once, widely and warmly, and that as its database expands and more and more scholars become aware of what can be done with it, it will establish itself as an indispensable tool.

My best wishes to you--and for the success of this admirable project.

--George Starr