Creating a Database of Religious Nonconformity and Performance in Britain (circa 1620-1680)

Alison Searle, Ian Johnson

University of Sydney, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

aaDH Perth 20th March 2014
Overview of the project


Key concepts in theoretical approach:

- Spectator/witness
- Space
- Dissimulation
- Conversion
- Belief
Questions arising from our collaboration:

• How does one define an ‘event’ in bibliographical and performance terms?
• Can a digital entity such as ‘event’ transcend the traditional distinctions made in humanities research between the process of print publication and the performance of a sermon or play?
• What types of agents were involved in different kinds of events over the chronological period under consideration (1620-1680)?
• What do non-linear, non-narrative forms of data-modelling add to our understanding of the early modern period and the theoretical and historical concepts we use to explore and recreate it?
Blayney's theatre ontology


Two successful digital projects focusing on the early modern period that act as catalysts, rather than models include:

• The attempt to recreate the experience of hearing a sermon by John Donne at St Paul’s Cross, London: http://vpcp.chass.ncsu.edu/framework/

• The interactive Map of Early Modern London which links an online map with sources, encyclopedia entries, organisations and a bibliography: http://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/
Geographical and Spatial ‘Turn’

Julie Sanders, *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama* (CUP, 2011)

Kristen Poole, *Supernatural Spaces in Shakespeare’s England: Spaces of Demonism, Divinity, and Drama* (CUP, 2011)
FRBR

Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (IFLA 1998)


Luke Blayney (Culture Hack Day 2011) moving towards FRBR

- Instead of a Show class, the ontology now refers to FRBR’s Work class
- A move away from the use of foaf:Project in favour of FRBR terms.
## Summary of record types and content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Work Type</th>
<th>Expression Type</th>
<th>Document Type</th>
<th>Performance Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lv 1</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lv 2</td>
<td>Expression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lv 3</td>
<td>Manifestation</td>
<td>Document set</td>
<td>Performance set</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lv 4</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Document</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Simplified item</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- We have found it unnecessary to differentiate performance and document streams at the Work and Expression level.

- For pragmatic reasons we have introduced a Simplified item which telescopes the Work-Expression-Manifestation-Item stack for singular events and one-off documents.
Other components

- 2nd level entities - persons, corporate bodies
- 3rd level entities - concept, object, event, place
- Other relationships
  - Relationship Marker fields
  - ontology in progress, extensible
  - mappings
1. Work

Textual

Event
2. Expression

Textual

Event
3. Manifestation

Performance series
4. Item Performance

Transcription: James Naylor of Wakefield in the County of York, a seduced and seducing Quaker and Impostor, rode October last through a village called Bedminster, about a mile from Bristol, accompanied with six more, one whereof a young man, whose head was bare, leading his horse by the bridle, and another uncovered before him, thorough the dusty way in which the Carts and Horses and none else usually goe. And with them two men on horseback with each of them a woman behind him, and one woman walking on the better way or path.

In this posture did they march, and in such a case, that one George Witherley noting their condition, asked them to come in the better roads, adding that God expected no such extreme; but they continued on their way, not answering in any other notes, but what were musical, singing Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabboth, &c. Thus continued they, till by their wandering they came to the Arms house within the suburbs of Bristol, where one of the women alighted, and she with the other of her own sex lovingly marcht on each side of Naylor's Horse. This Witherley saith, he supposed they could not be less deep in the muddy way then to the knees, and the faith they sang, but sometimes with such a buzzing mostodiuous noise that he could not understand what it was. This the said Witherley gave in upon his oath. Thus did they reach Rutcliffe-gate, with Timothy Wedlock of Devon bare-headed, and Martha Symonds with the bride on one side, and Hannah Stranger on the other side of the Horse; this Martha Symonds is the wife of Thomas Simonds of London, Bookbinder, and Hannah Stranger is the Wife of John Stranger of London Commbaker, who sung Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Israel. Thus did he ride to the high Cross in Bristol, and after that to the White-hart in Broadstreet, where there lies two eminent Quakers, by name Dennis Hollister, and Henry Row, of which the Magistrates hearing they were apprehended and committed to prison.

Taken from John Deacon, The Grand Impostor Examined: or, The Life, Trial and Examination of James Naylor, the Seduced and Seducing Quaker (London, 1666). B1-B2r.

For a modern re-enactment see: http://www.bnh.org.uk/site/articles/bristol-radical-history-week-2006-james-naylor-commemoration/
3. Manifestation

Print series
4. Item

Document
4. Simplified item
Technical conclusions

test set FRBR-style records
• 16,000 digital media
  o several hundred letters to and from Richard Baxter (secure access)
  o extraction of EXIF metadata
  o location images (GPS matched)

• Advantages of incremental model building
• Publishing the model as a template
• Retrieval - search, mapping, web publishing
Retrieval, searching, mapping
Strengths and limitations of Template/ Future Directions

• Strength - ability to map different kinds of relationships between entities in a flexible, yet theoretically robust way

• Weakness - a far more intensive process of data-entry and mark-up than initially anticipated

• The database template is not an inefficient attempt to replicate the work done by something like the English Short Title Catalogue, for example. It is a complementary tool.

• The database’s mapping of relationships between texts, events and agents promises [qualified by utopias/dystopian elements discussed in first conference plenary!] an innovative and complementary way of thinking about the production of texts, performance, nonconformist religion and drama in early modern Britain.
alison.searle@sydney.edu.au
ian.johnson@sydney.edu.au

Heurist: HeuristScholar.org

Acknowledgements:
- Australian Research Council DECRA grant
- Artem Osmakov, Programmer, University of Sydney