

Exhibiting Early Women's Writing

Collaboration and Context in Digital Archives

Anna Fisher & John Melson | Brown University Women Writers Project



About the Women Writers Project

The Women Writers Project (WWP) is a long-term research project devoted to the study of early modern women's writing and electronic text encoding. Women Writers Online (WVO), an extensive collection of XML-encoded documents by women who wrote before 1850, is currently available to a wide audience of teachers, students, and scholars.

Technology

XML encoding of primary source documents

XSLT

HTML for Web viewing

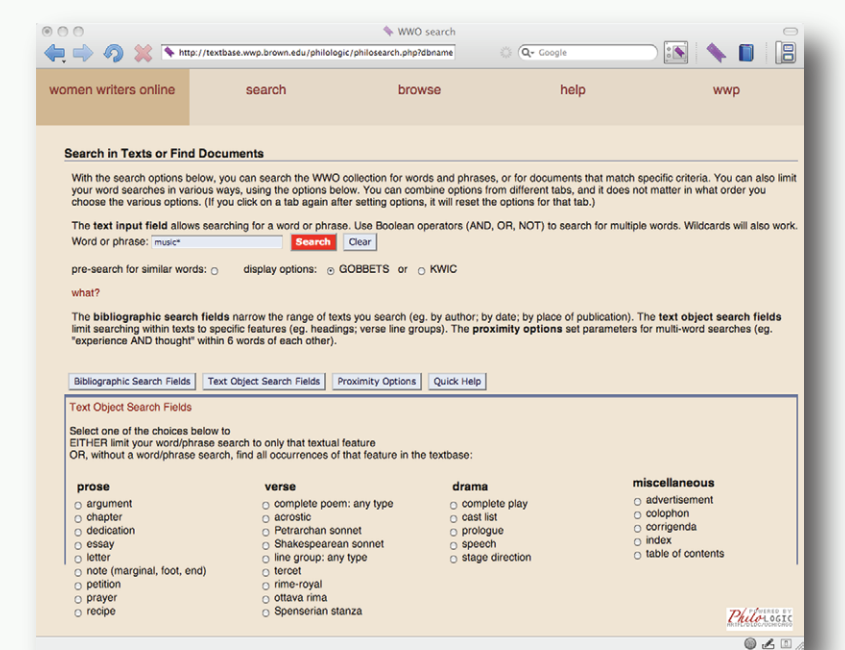
MySQL and PHP permit advanced indexing and searching

JavaScript, AJAX allow greater interaction

Web services provide additional visualization features (Google maps, SIMILE timelines, TAPoR, SEASR)



An XML-encoded document



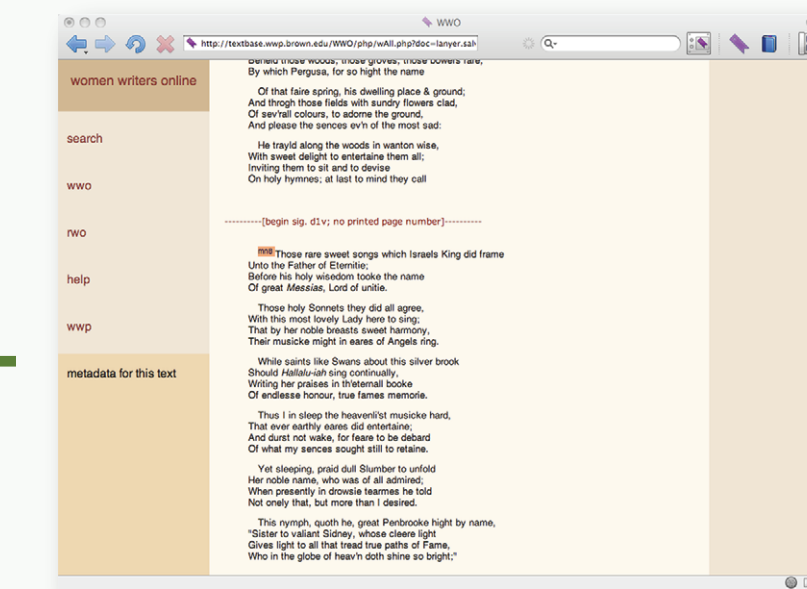
Sample search page in WVO, powered by PhiloLogic

Future Development

- Robust exhibits framework to support the collection and display of user-contributed content
- Enhanced interface options for interacting with full WVO collection
- Scalable visualization and multimedia capabilities

Women Writers Online

Full-text transcriptions of more than 300 printed documents in a Web-accessible collection



Sample Web view of a text in Women Writers Online

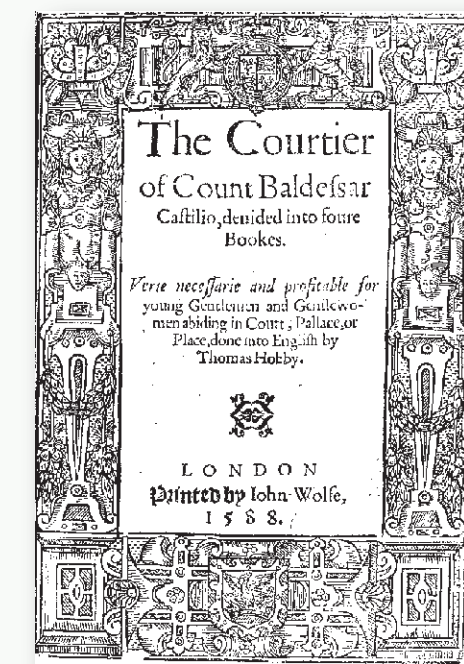
Users can find related exhibits, search exhibit content, and move between exhibits and the WVO's collection of primary documents



Community

Scholars

- Contribute research questions and ideas
- Provide expert knowledge and access to specialized content



Scholars contribute information, texts, images, and multimedia content

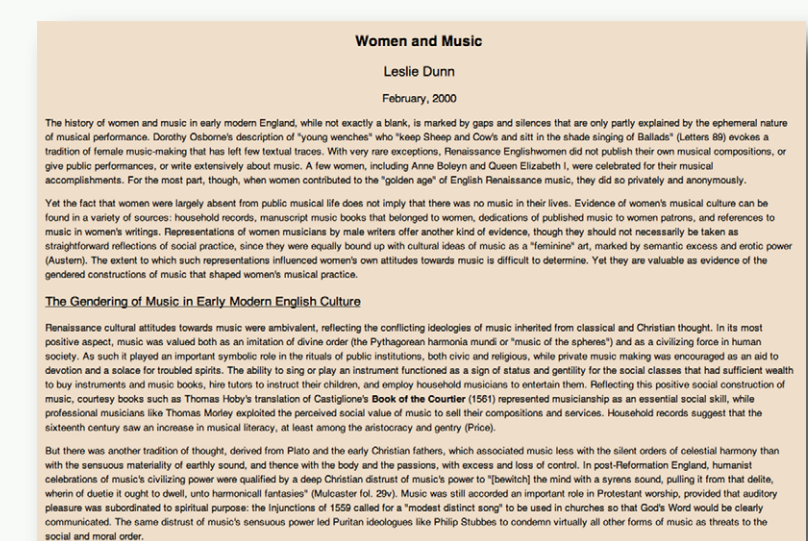
Audience

- Existing users engage and encounter WVO in new ways
- New users (students, teachers)
- Exposure to exhibits generates new ideas for research and teaching

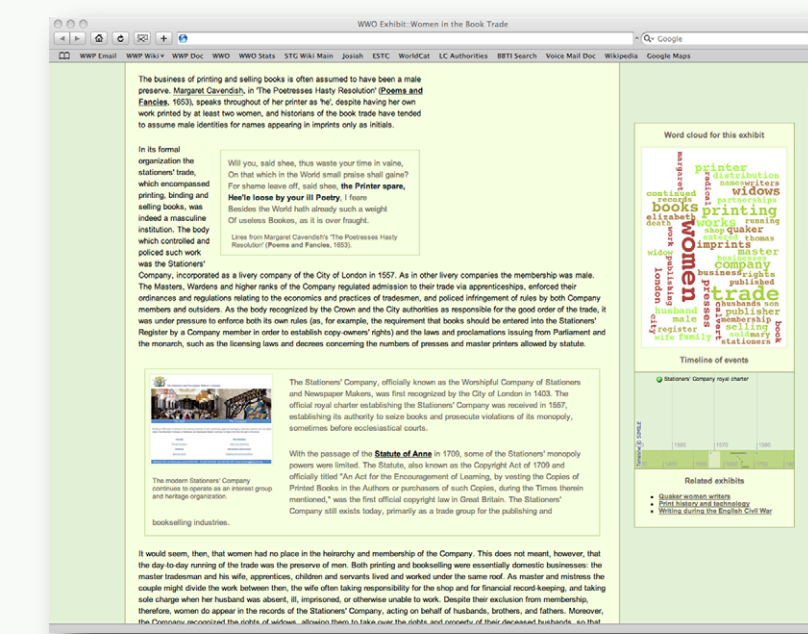
Exhibits

Exhibit Components

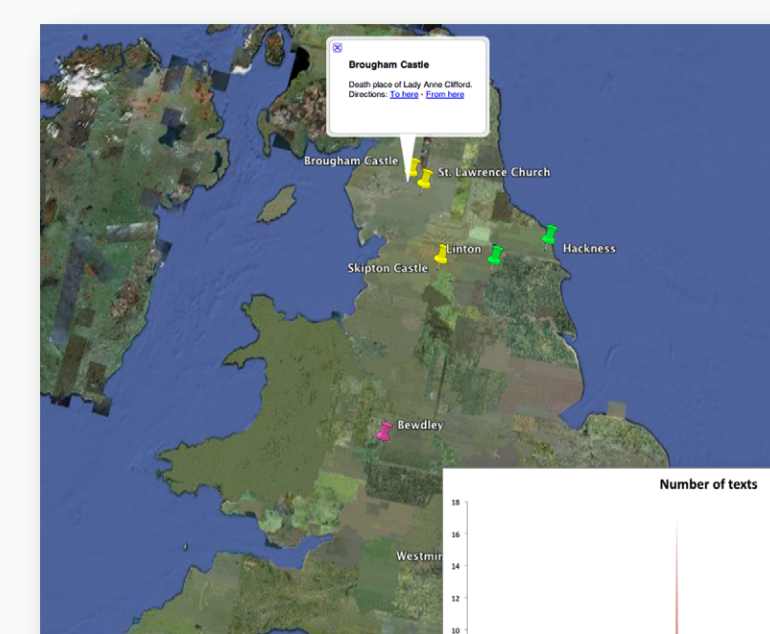
- Edited **content** from contributing scholars



- Enhanced **HTML** output . . .



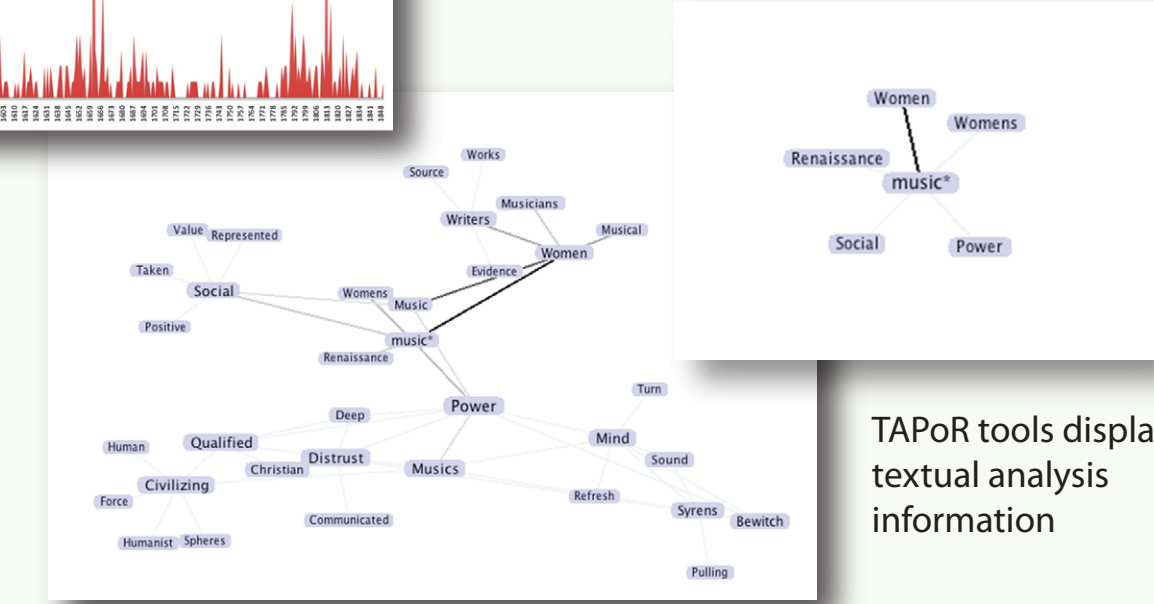
. . . that incorporates **multimedia content** and **dynamic visualizations** such as timelines, maps, and text analysis tools



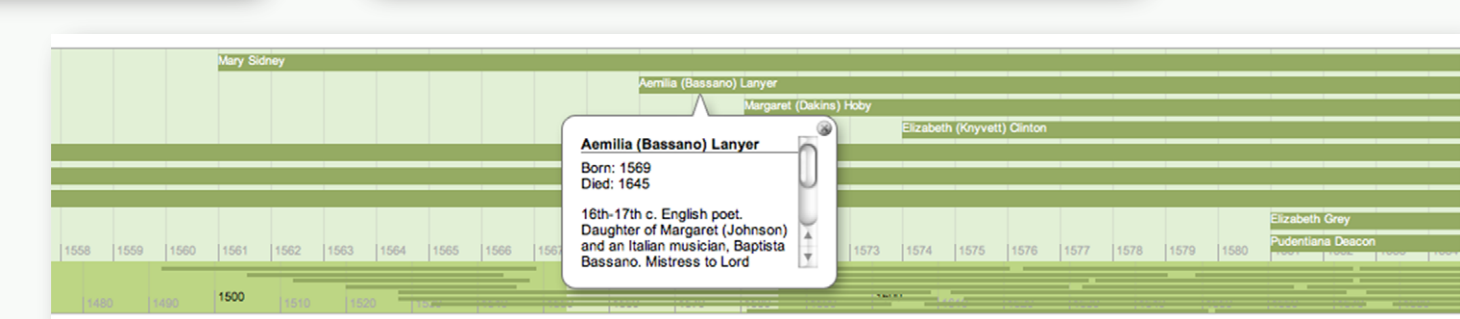
Maps locate information spatially



Word clouds provide overview of textual content



TAPoR tools display textual analysis information



SIMILE timelines display biographical information

1 Problem

Despite the ongoing expansion of online resources like WVO, historical texts can seem inaccessible to students, general readers, and even scholars who are unfamiliar with the historical period or the conventions and themes the texts address.

The WWP has approached this problem as an opportunity to add new features to our collection in the form of **exhibits** that contextualize our material and make it more functionally dynamic for non-experts.

WVO exhibits can:

- make WVO a collaborative space for users
- promote greater awareness of the depth and breadth of our holdings
- deepen our relationship with scholars whose research supports and is supported by our collection
- provide scholars and students a place to publish and engage with original work in a non-traditional format
- offer new tools for exploration and discovery of primary documents and contextual material

2 Outcomes

WVO exhibits make use of established and experimental Web and XML technologies to help users re-imagine the possibilities for visualizing, interacting, and thinking with electronic collections.

Exhibits also:

- contextualize traditions in women's writing and serve as scholarly resources
- highlight important currents in contemporary scholarship
- promote exchange of knowledge among students and teachers

We are grateful for the support of the Brown University Library and Computing and Information Services.