

Volksbildung durch Lesestoffe
im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert
Voraussetzungen – Medien – Topographie

Educating the People through Reading Material
in the 18th and 19th Centuries
Principles – Media – Topography

Philanthropismus und populäre Aufklärung

Studien und Dokumente

Herausgegeben

von

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Band 5

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Band 68

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Herausgegeben
von
Reinhart Siegert
in Zusammenarbeit mit
Peter Hoare und Peter Vodosek

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Vorwort

Vom 20. bis 22. September 2010 fand an der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel im Bibelsaal der Bibliotheca Augusta die 16. Jahrestagung des Wolfenbütteler Arbeitskreises für Bibliotheks-, Buch- und Mediengeschichte statt.

Dass sich diese Jahrestagung mit Volksbildung beschäftigen würde, stand schon seit Jahren fest. Die Idee, dass diese Tagung zugleich zur 5. einer erfolgreichen Kooperation mit der Library History Group der Library Association, jetzt Library and Information History Group von CILIP (Chartered Institution of Library and Information Professionals) gemacht werden könnte, kam hingegen erst relativ spät. Die Anregung zu einem solchen „joint venture“ war Anfang der 1990er Jahre aus Großbritannien gekommen (federführend u.a. Graham Jefcoate, Alistair Black und Peter Hoare) und hatte bereits zu vier ertragreichen Tagungen in London und in Wolfenbüttel¹ geführt.

Die Begegnung mit den britischen Bibliothekaren nicht unter ein dezidiert bibliotheksgeschichtliches Thema zu stellen, ist hingegen neu und entspricht der neuen Ausrichtung des Arbeitskreises, der 1998 vom „Wolfenbütteler Arbeitskreis für Bibliotheksgeschichte“ zu einem solchen für „Bibliotheks-, Buch- und Mediengeschichte“ mutiert ist. Freilich waren auch bisher schon deutsche Fachwissenschaftler für spezielle Themen willkommene Gäste bei den Bibliothekarstagungen gewesen, so unter den Teilnehmern der jetzigen Tagung Holger Böning und Reinhart Siegert. Jetzt umgekehrt englische Bibliothekare unter den Referenten zu haben, haben wir als Chance begriffen: zum einen, die Bibliotheksgeschichte mit einzubeziehen, zum anderen, die gesamte Tagung zweisprachig anzulegen und die Gelegenheit zu nutzen, mit Hilfe dieser Zweisprachigkeit den Blick auch in andere europäische Länder zu werfen und Einblick in deren Forschungsstand zu gewinnen.

Mit dem Tagungsthema

Volksbildung durch Lesestoffe im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert Voraussetzungen – Medien – Topographie

war eine gemeinsame thematische Basis gefunden. Die zeitliche Einschränkung entspricht dem gegenwärtigen Forschungsinteresse. In den letzten Jahren

¹ Den Anfang machte das Deutsch-britische Seminar „Bibliotheken in der literarischen Darstellung / Libraries in Literature“ 1994 in der Herzog August Bibliothek; das 2nd Anglo-German Seminar on Library History „The Universal Library: From Alexandria to the Internet“ fand 1996 im Deutschen Historischen Institut in London statt, das 3. „Mäzenatentum für Bibliotheken / Philanthropy for Libraries“ 2001 in Wolfenbüttel und das 4. „Libraries and Innovation“ 2005 wieder in London, in der British Library.

ist das Thema Volksbildung, speziell im 18. und in der 1. Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts und damit unter dem dominierenden, aber nicht ausschließlichen Einfluss der Aufklärung verstärkt ins Blickfeld der Forschung geraten; der Fokus verlagert sich jetzt auf das weniger geradlinige, unübersichtlichere 19. Jahrhundert. Die Jahrestagung greift – der Zielsetzung des Arbeitskreises gemäß – die Volksbildung durch Lesestoffe heraus.

Dass Volksbildung keineswegs selbstverständlich und überall durch Lesestoffe erfolgen konnte, ist Thema der ersten Sektion „*Voraussetzungen*“. Volksbildung durch Lesestoffe kann erst erfolgen, wenn genügend Lesefähigkeit vorhanden ist, wenn für Produktion und Distribution entsprechender Lesestoffe gesorgt ist und wenn eine Motivation dazu vorliegt, zu lesen, vorzulesen oder sich vorlesen zu lassen. Im deutschen Sprachraum hat insbesondere das Handbuch „*Volksaufklärung*“² die bibliographische Grundlage für die Erschließung gelegt; eine stattliche Zahl von Dissertationen und mittlerweile auch von Tagungen hat z.B. das Werk einzelner Volksbildner, die Bildungsentwicklung einzelner Territorien und die Indienstnahme einzelner Medien (u.a. Predigt, erzählende Volksschriften und Kalender) für die Volksbildung zum Untersuchungsgegenstand gemacht. Im einleitenden Beitrag geht es daher um die Weiterführung dieser Erschließung weit ins 19. Jahrhundert hinein und mit den Zugriffsmöglichkeiten einer Open-Access-Datenbank. – Katie Halsey stellt eine neue solche britische Datenbank vor, die ungeahnte Einblicke in das Leseverhalten auch literaturferner Schichten ermöglicht. – Piero Del Negros Beitrag samt buchgeschichtlichem Ko-Referat zeigt auf reizvolle Weise die Gedankenwelt der aufklärerischen Volksbildner, die hinter der Ausweitung der Alphabetisierung und Literarisierung des „Volkes“ in großen Teilen Zentraleuropas stand. – Peter Vodosek schließlich lenkt den Blick auf die Mutationen der aufklärerischen Volksbildungsbestrebungen im 19. Jahrhundert am Beispiel eines der Pioniere der Volksbibliotheken.

Die zweite Sektion „*Medien*“ greift zunächst zwei bisher wenig behandelte Medien der Volksbildung heraus: Volkszeitungen des 19. Jahrhunderts (Holger Böning) und Publikationen Ökonomischer Gesellschaften (Gerrendina Gerber-Visser). Volkslieder werden von Barbara Boock einmal nicht durch die romantische Brille gesehen, die dänischen „*Almanache*“ erweisen sich trotz abweichendem äußerem Erscheinungsbild als ähnlich in den Dienst der Aufklärung gestellt wie die – im Augenblick intensiv erforschten³ – deutschen (Beiträge von Henrik Horstbøll und Laura Skouvig).

² Holger Böning/ Reinhart Siegert: *Volksaufklärung. Biobibliographisches Handbuch zur Popularisierung aufklärerischen Denkens im deutschen Sprachraum von den Anfängen bis 1850*. Bd.1–4: Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog 1990 ff. Bisher erschienen: Bd.1: Holger Böning: *Die Genese der Volksaufklärung und ihre Entwicklung bis 1780*. 1990. Bd.2.1–2.2: Reinhart Siegert/ Holger Böning: *Der Höhepunkt der Volksaufklärung 1781–1800 und die Zäsur durch die Französische Revolution*. 2001.

³ Ein substantieller Tagungsband zu den Schreibkalendern der Frühen Neuzeit ist gerade er-

Die dritte Sektion „*Topographie*“ profitiert am meisten von der Teilnahme der Library and Information History Group. Nachdem frühere und laufende Tagungen den Anteil der Habsburgerländer an der Bildungsentwicklung vor allem des 18. Jahrhunderts untersucht haben und auch zu den deutsch-französischen Kulturbeziehungen eine Reihe von Veranstaltungen stattgefunden haben, werfen die Beiträge dieser Sektion ein vergleichendes und differenzierendes Schlaglicht auf die Volksbildungsbestrebungen der Zeit im Baltikum (grundlegend und in innovativer Sichtweise zu Lettland und Estland), in einer gemischtsprachigen Beuteprovinz Preußens und in England, Schottland, Wales und Irland. Dabei geraten aber nicht nur die verschiedenen Ausprägungen in den Blick, sondern vor allem die enorm differierenden Ausgangsbedingungen: stark unterschiedliche Alphabetisierungsgrade, unterschiedliche Konfession mit unterschiedlicher Beziehung zur Aufklärung, unterschiedliche Sprachen (zum Teil unterdrückt, zum Teil erst am Beginn einer nationalsprachlichen Entwicklung), rein agrarische und stark gewerbliche Strukturen, städtisches Umfeld und Provinz, selbstbewusste Selbstbildungsbestrebungen (die frühesten Arbeiterbibliotheken der Welt) und aufklärerische „Herablassung“ (im besten Sinn), z.T. in Annektions- und gar Kolonisations-Situation werden in den unterschiedlichsten Kombinationen vorgeführt von Peter Hoare, John Crawford, Wyn James, Shauna Barrett, Liliana Górka und Thomas Tatterka.

Auf diese Weise wird von AutorInnen aus Deutschland, der Schweiz, Italien, Polen, Dänemark, Schweden, Lettland und England, Schottland, Wales und Irland (die hier durchaus erkenntnisträchtig separat auftreten) ein unerhört weites Gesichtspunktspektrum ausgebreitet, für das wir all den Teilnehmern und Autoren herzlich danken.

Dank gebührt auch dem Hausherrn der Herzog August Bibliothek, Prof. Dr. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer. Dr. Werner Arnold und sein Nachfolger Dr. Thomas Stäcker haben sich wie immer bei allen Planungs-, Organisations- und Finanzierungsfragen als unentbehrliche Partner des Arbeitskreises erwiesen. Der Dr. phil. Fritz Wiedemann-Stiftung danken wir herzlich für einen namhaften Druckkostenzuschuss, der es uns u.a. ermöglicht hat, die reizvollen rot/schwarzen Seiten (in der Volksschriftentheorie ein wichtiges Thema!) aus dänischen Almanachen zusätzlich auf Farbtafeln zu präsentieren.

schienen – Klaus-Dieter Herbst (Hrsg.): *Astronomie – Literatur – Volksaufklärung. Der Schreibkalender der Frühen Neuzeit mit seinen Text- und Bildbeigaben*. Bremen: edition lumière und Jena: HKD 2012. Der Band dokumentiert die unterschiedlichen Erscheinungsformen des Kalenders (mit zahlreichen Farabbildungen) ebenso wie den gegenwärtigen Forschungsstand.

Der vorliegende Band ist ein Sammelband mit Vorträgen einer Tagung⁴, kein Handbuch. Wir haben uns daher nicht bemüht, letzte Einheitlichkeit herzustellen.

Reinhart Siegert (Freiburg i.Br.)

Peter Hoare (Nottingham)

Peter Vodosek (Stuttgart)

⁴ Die Beiträge von Piero Del Negro (samt Ergänzung), Henrik Horstbøll und E. Wyn James wurden bei der Tagung nicht vorgetragen, sondern wurden uns dankenswerterweise zur Verfügung gestellt, um das Spektrum des Themenbandes zu erweitern.

Preface

The 16th annual conference of the Wolfenbüttel Circle for the History of Libraries, the Book and Media took place on 20–22 September 2010 in the Bible Room of the Bibliotheca Augusta of the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel.

It had been agreed some years earlier that in 2010 the annual conference would be on the topic of *Volksbildung* or Popular Education. It was a relatively late development that led to the Wolfenbüttel Circle using the occasion to repeat, for the fifth time, its successful co-operation with the Library History Group of the Library Association, now the Library and Information History Group of CILIP (Chartered Institution of Library and Information Professionals). This collaboration had begun in the early 1990s, on the initiative of our British colleagues (notably Graham Jefcoate, Alistair Black and Peter Hoare) and had already achieved four productive conferences in London and Wolfenbüttel.¹

Working with British librarians on a topic that was not specifically “library history” in nature was however something new, reflecting the changing priorities of the Wolfenbüttel Circle, which in 1998 moved from being a group concerned only with library history to one extending to book and media history as well. It is true that earlier conferences had welcomed German scholars with other special interests, such as Holger Böning and Reinhart Siegert, both participants in 2010. In a similar way we were able to build on the opportunity of having English librarians and scholars among the speakers, both to include library history in our theme and to plan the whole conference on a bilingual basis. This use of the German and English languages also allowed us to widen the perspective to include the history of other European countries and to become aware of the state of research in those countries.

The topic of the conference was agreed on as

Educating the People through Reading Material in the 18th and 19th Centuries: Principles – Media – Topography

and this provided a common thematic base, with the chronological limits aligned with contemporary research interests. In recent years Popular Educa-

¹ The first joint effort was the Anglo-German seminar on “Bibliotheken in der literarischen Darstellung / Libraries in Literature”, held in 1994 in the Herzog August Bibliothek. The second was held in 1996 in the German Historical Institute in London, with the title “The Universal Library: from Alexandria to the Internet”. The third, on “Mäzenatentum für Bibliotheken / Philanthropy for Libraries” took place in Wolfenbüttel in 2001, and the fourth, on “Libraries and Innovation” again in London in 2005, in the British Library.

tion has been a frequent subject for research, particularly with regard to the 18th century and the early 19th century, when it was strongly (though not exclusively) dominated by the Enlightenment. Interest is now being extended to the 19th century, which presents new problems of comprehensive interpretation and with a less predictable history. The conference has followed the aims of the Wolfenbüttel Circle and the LIHG in seeking to draw out the part played by reading material in popular education.

The first section, *Principles*, takes the fundamental view that popular education could not be self-sufficient and required the use of reading material for its success. Education of the people through reading material could only be achieved when there was an adequate level of literacy, when systems for the production and distribution of reading material were adequately in place, and when there was also motivation to read (to oneself or to others) or to be read to. As far as the German-language area of Europe is concerned, the bibliographical basis has now been established by Böning and Siegert's four-volume bio-bibliographical handbook on the popularization of Enlightenment thought.² This records as well as primary material a remarkable number of dissertations and conference papers, which have opened up research possibilities on the efforts of individual educationalists, on the educational development of different geographical areas, and on the way different media (such as sermons, chapbooks and almanacs) were brought into use for popular education. The first contribution to the present volume goes into more detail on the construction of this catalogue and the access possibilities that could be offered by an on-line database. – Katie Halsey gives an account of a new British database of this type, which has given quite unexpected insights into the relationship with reading of even those classes thought to have been remote from the reading experience. – Piero Del Negro's paper (with a pendant from a book-history perspective) gives a charming view of the mental world of Enlightenment educationalists which lay behind the expansion of literacy and the provision of literature for the people in large areas of central Europe. – Finally Peter Vodosek illustrates the variety of methods used by supporters of Enlightenment popular education, using the example of a pioneer of public libraries.

The second section, *Media*, starts by picking out two little-studied types of material used in popular education: popular newspapers of the 19th century

² Holger Böning/ Reinhart Siegert: *Volksaufklärung. Biobibliographisches Handbuch zur Popularisierung aufklärerischen Denkens im deutschen Sprachraum von den Anfängen bis 1850*. ("Popular Enlightenment: a bio-bibliographical handbook on the popularisation of Enlightenment thought in German-speaking Europe, from the beginnings to 1850"). Vols. 1–4: Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog 1990 ff. Volumes published so far: Vol. 1: Holger Böning: *The genesis of Popular Enlightenment and its development to 1780* (1990). Vol. 2.1–2.2: Reinhart Siegert/ Holger Böning: *The Popular Enlightenment at its height and the break caused by the French Revolution* (2001).

(Holger Böning) and the publications of Economic Societies (Gerrendina Gerber-Visser). Folksongs are considered by Barbara Boock – though not through the lens of Romanticism. Danish almanacs are shown, in papers by Henrik Horstbøll and Laura Skouvig, to play a remarkably similar Enlightenment role to their better-studied German equivalents, though their external appearance was very different.³

The third section, *Topography*, owes most to the participation of the LIHG. While earlier conferences have studied the contribution of the Habsburg lands to the development of education, particularly in the 18th century, and cultural relations between Germany and France have been well covered, the papers in this section illuminate – from comparative angles, and bringing out the differences – the efforts towards popular education in the Baltic area (notably in Latvia and Estonia, where a completely new point of view is presented), in a mixed-language vassal province of Prussia, and in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. These papers illustrate not only the different historical practices, but also – and most remarkably – the hugely different conditions from which developments sprang in the various countries of Europe. We see great differences in literacy, different linguistic situations (with “minority” languages sometimes being suppressed, or sometimes presenting early stages in the development of national languages), economic structures ranging from the purely agrarian to the heavily industrialized, urban and provincial environments, conscious efforts towards self-education (such as the world’s earliest working-men’s libraries), and Enlightenment “condescension” (in the best sense of the word), partly when areas were taken over or indeed colonized by other states – all these are presented in the most varied combinations by Peter Hoare, John Crawford, Wyn James, Shauna Barrett, Liliana Górska and Thomas Taterka.

In this way contributors from Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Latvia and Estonia – and from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, which are (significantly) treated quite separately from one another – have provided a spectrum of viewpoints which exceeds all our expectation. We thank them all most sincerely.

We are also very grateful to the director of the Herzog August Bibliothek, Prof. Dr. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, and his colleagues. Dr. Werner Arnold and his successor Dr. Thomas Stäcker have performed, as they have done so often before, as indispensable partners of the Wolfenbüttel Circle in matters of

³ A substantial volume of conference proceedings has just been published – Klaus-Dieter Herbst (Ed.): *Astronomie – Literatur – Volksaufklärung. Der Schreibkalender der Frühen Neuzeit mit seinen Text- und Bildbeigaben*. Bremen: edition lumière / Jena: HKD 2012. This volume gives a good account of the various manifestations of German almanacks (with numerous illustrations in colour) and of the present state of research.

planning, organization and finance. We are most grateful to Dr. phil. Fritz Wiedemann-Stiftung for a significant contribution to the printing costs, which has allowed us, for example, to use colour plates to display the delightful red and black pages from Danish almanacs (such colour printing is an important element in the theory of popular printing).

The present volume is a collection of lectures delivered at a conference⁴, not a handbook. Hence we have not striven for ultimate uniformity.

Reinhart Siegert (Freiburg i.Br.)

Peter Hoare (Nottingham)

Peter Vodosek (Stuttgart)

⁴ The essays by Piero Del Negro (along with the addendum), Henrik Horstbøll and E. Wyn James were not delivered at the conference but were commissioned for this volume in order to increase the range of the discussion.

Working Class Readers in the Nineteenth Century: An introduction to the *Reading Experience Database*, 1450–1945 (RED)

What is the Reading Experience Database?

In his “First Steps Toward a History of Reading”, Robert Darnton suggested that “it should be possible to develop a history as well as a theory of reader response”.¹ The *Reading Experience Database* (RED) plays a part in this attempt to develop a history of reader response, through collecting, collating and making accessible the material that allows us to answer some key questions about the habits and practices of readers in the past, from 1450 to 1945. Darnton identifies these as the “‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, and ‘when’ questions”, as well as the “more difficult ‘whys’ and ‘hows’”.²

The RED project was conceived in 1990. Its founder, Simon Eliot, describes the motives behind it:

“A couple of years ago I attended one of the first international conferences on the history of reading. It was a highly instructive event with some quite outstanding papers: one on the function of John Dee’s library; one on the reading of a particularly lively eighteenth-century woman, Anna Larpent; and an excellent study of the clientele of one particular provincial English bookseller. [...] But the ones that interested me the most were those that attempted to generalise the historical experience of reading; they were interesting because they were such catastrophic failures: failures for no other reason than their generalisations were based on one, narrow piece of evidence, or on no evidence at all worth speaking of. What this conference vividly demonstrated was the emergence of a new subject where the methodology was still unformed and the resources needed still undefined. I looked forward to the concluding plenary session of that conference in the full expectation that the methodological problems would be highlighted and some proposals put forward that might eventually solve them, or at least render them more soluble. In fact the session was devoted to the need for more close studies, more individual reader’s diaries to be investigated, more late medieval glosses to be disinterred. It was the pragmatic view of a Victorian naturalist: go away and fill another twenty cabinets full of the most elegantly mounted moths and a solution is bound to emerge. But, of course, it won’t; not unless you create

¹ Robert Darnton: First Steps Toward a History of Reading, in: The Kiss of Lamourette, London and New York 1990, pp. 154-187 (p. 157).

² Ibid, p. 157.

some common ground between all those armed with butterfly nets. As a minimum, firstly you need to define the common and significant characteristics of a reading experience so that, whatever else you record, and however unique the situation, you note down factors that can be compared, example by example; secondly, you create a system that, however many cases of butterflies you collect, you can call up any selection, from any case, in any order you choose. These two necessities seemed to me to characterise a database management system.”³

The project was formally launched in 1996 by Simon Eliot, then of the Open University, with the assistance of Michael Crump of the British Library. The project’s mission was (and is) to accumulate as much data as possible about the reading experiences of British subjects and overseas visitors to Britain from 1450 to 1945, and to make this material freely available in a simple and user-friendly format for the use of scholars and other researchers. It has now (2011) become an international network of linked databases which collects information about the reading experiences of citizens of the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the Netherlands. This international network is set to expand further in the coming years.

Although each national RED has its own research priorities, which vary according to the historical circumstances of each nation, the information in all the databases is presented in a way that is designed to shed light not only on the historical act of reading, but also on the various agencies and networks that permitted and shaped that act, in other words, created the experience. RED records, for example, not just the title of the text read, but anything that is known about the physical details of the artefact – was it print or manuscript? What sort of text was it – book, magazine, broadsheet, poster, ticket, handbill, advertisement, even cereal packet? Was it read as serialised instalments, three-decker Victorian novel, or an abridged illustrated children’s version? Who published it? Where did the reader get hold of the text – from a circulating library, a bookseller, a friend? Did the reader just find it, or read it surreptitiously in a bookshop? We record details too, of the reader, and the circumstances of the reading experience, including the reader’s name, date of birth, socio-economic group, occupation, religion and nationality. We are interested in the location of the reading experience – was the reader at home in bed? on the train? on a Grand Tour around Europe? – and in the time of day or night it took place. We are also interested in what sort of reading experience it was – was the reader alone, or in company? Was he or she reading aloud, or alternatively being read to? Was the reader participating in a reading group, and reacting not only to the text itself, but to the ideas of other members of the group? And we also, of course, record the reader’s responses to what he or she read. To return to Darnton’s questions, then, the RED project is interested in not only what, but why, how, where, when and with whom readers of the past read

³ Simon Eliot: The Reading Experience Database; or, what are we to do about the history of reading?, <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/redback.htm> (accessed 20 May 2011).

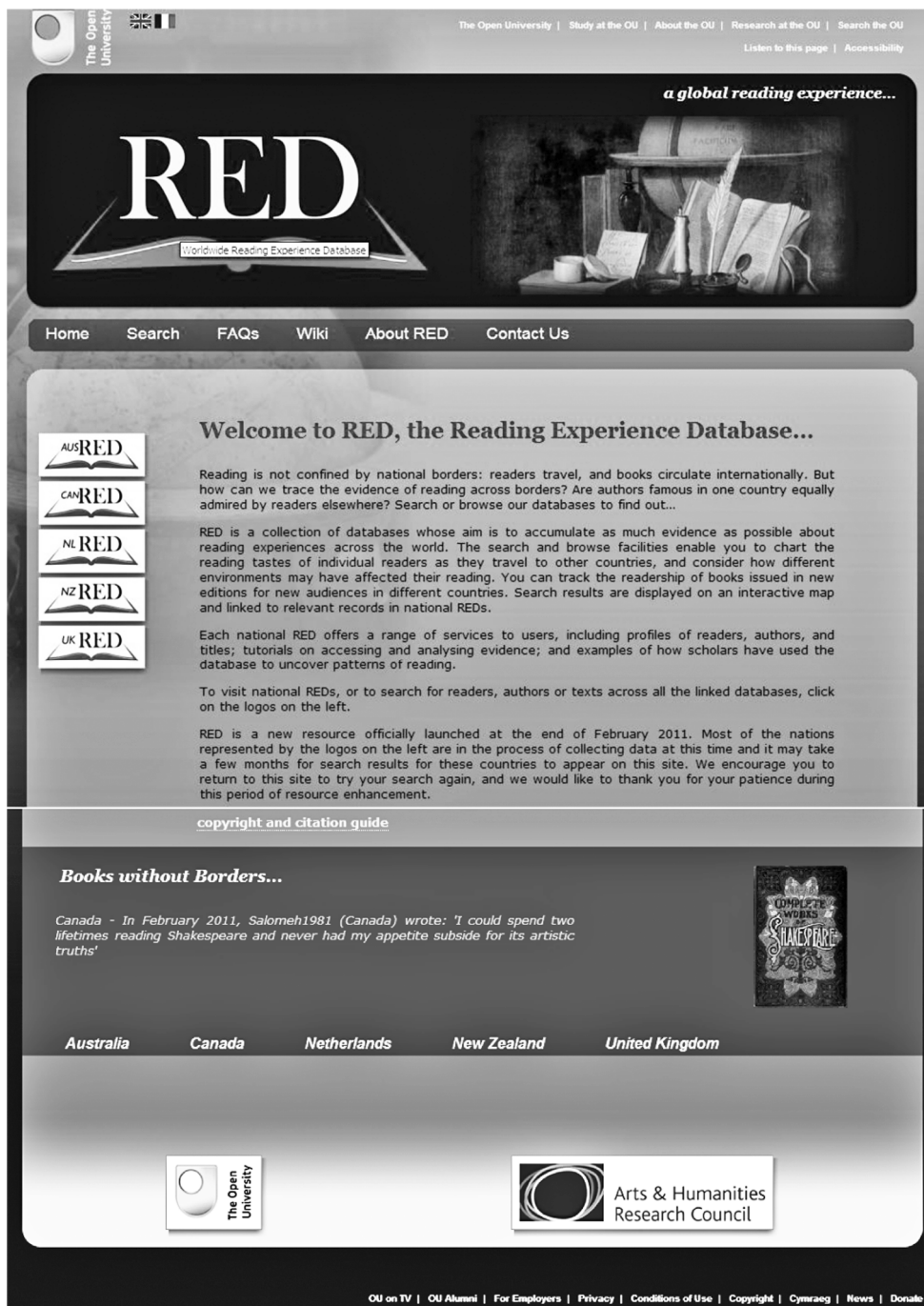


Figure One: The *Reading Experience Database* Homepage (www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading)

their books and other texts. The accumulation of this range of detail is crucial: to understand readers of the past and, by extension, something about readers of the present and the future, we need the fullest possible picture of their reading experiences. Moreover, in a discipline that has historically been characterised by case studies of unrepresentative (elite and bourgeois) readers, the accompanying focus on breadth in the construction of RED means that the database is designed to uncover important patterns and commonalities in reading experiences across time.

There is, at least in principle, no literary bias to RED – we collect data about the reading of newspapers, playbills, penny dreadfuls, advertisements, chapbooks and ephemera, as well as about the reading of works of literature. And we record the reading of books in many different languages. The database contains information about the reading of texts in both ancient and modern languages, such as Italian, Spanish, French, German, Greek, Latin, Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, and many others. Our data is drawn from a wide range of sources, including, most obviously, letters, journals, diaries, reading notebooks, autobiographies and commonplace books, and perhaps less obviously, court reports, social investigation studies, Parliamentary reports, the Mass Observation Archives; in other words, situations in which ordinary people (including the working classes) are encouraged to discuss their reading. There is inevitably a class bias in the evidence that we have recorded, for reasons that are obvious: the evidence of the reading of the working-classes is far scantier than that of the historically more literate upper and middle classes, and it is also more difficult to find. Darnton found a “vast silence” when he attempted “to penetrate the mental world of ordinary persons as well as philosophers”.⁴ Nonetheless, as Jonathan Rose demonstrates in *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (2001), such evidence does exist, and in constructing RED, we have attempted not only to seek it out, but also to organise our data in such a way as to make analysis by socio-economic group possible (this is discussed further on pp 56-63).

Why do we need such a resource?

We must begin with what Simon Eliot calls “the first and greatest caveat in the history of reading: to own, buy, borrow or steal a book is no proof of wishing to read it, let alone proof of having read it”.⁵ This may seem to be obvious, but one of the great limitations to our knowledge of the history of reading is that the kinds of evidence relating to the intention to read, manifested by the buying, owning, borrowing and even stealing of books, are much more plentiful, more accessible and seemingly more reliable than the sorts of anecdotal

⁴ Darnton: *First Steps*, 1990 (see fn. 1), p. 212.

⁵ Eliot: Database (see fn. 3), <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/redback.htm> (accessed 20 May 2011).

evidence (diaries, letters, autobiographies, marginalia, memoirs) that actually record whether or not a person has read a book. Statistical and other evidence, related to intended reading, in the shape of private library catalogues, lending library records, publishers' and booksellers' accounts, court records, and school or university reading lists, is, of course, useful to the historian of reading, as William St Clair demonstrates in *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (2005). Reading lists tell us about the processes of canon formation, revealing which books individuals and institutions considered worth reading. Library statistics can reveal which books were owned by families, institutions or groups of subscribers. They can show us which titles were most (and least) popular with borrowers in a specific time period or geographical location. Sometimes, over time, they can help us to determine which books an individual borrowed in a given period. Occasionally they can even provide details about that individual, such as his or her age, marital status, occupation, address and gender. Very occasionally, library records may include comments from readers about the book they borrowed, though such examples are very rare. Court records detailing the theft of books are another valuable resource, providing evidence about the price and resale value of books. Publishers' and booksellers' records may tell us how many copies of a particular text were printed and distributed, and where and how many were sold. They can tell us the price of production, and sometimes, as in the case of the John Murray ledgers, now held in the National Library of Scotland, how many copies were remaindered or destroyed. They can tell us, in other words, about the destined audience for a particular book, and even sometimes about the book's success (or failure). Nevertheless, publishers' figures, however full, can still only tell us about intended, rather than actual readers. Even sales figures, though they do obviously deal with real readers, do not tell us whether a book was actually read, or whether it remained unopened for generations. Nor do these types of evidence tell us about the many invisible acts of reading, such as those by servants who clandestinely read the books in their employers' libraries, or by groups of friends who informally lent and borrowed each others' books without ever leaving a record of the loan.

It is useful for a scholar of Jane Austen to know that John Murray published 2000 copies of the first edition of *Emma*, and advertised them at a price of 21s. In conjunction with knowledge of the prices of comparable works, this tells us immediately a great deal about a contemporary publisher's assessment of the worth of Austen's work. It may be even more useful to know that of those 2000 copies, 1, 248 copies had been sold in nine months, 1, 437 after four years, and the rest were remaindered, since this might tell us something about their popularity with their Regency readership.⁶ But we cannot equate numbers of books sold with the number of people who read them. We have to take into

⁶ Jan Fergus: The professional woman writer, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*, eds. Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster, Cambridge 1997, pp. 12-31 (p. 25).

account not only the fact that some people buy books without ever reading them, but conversely that one copy of a three-volume novel sold to a circulating library might have, at a conservative estimate, between twenty and forty readers in the first year, some of whom might read only one or two of the three volumes. We certainly cannot draw conclusions about responses to novels based on how many were sold; we have to look beyond these statistics to know what interest *Emma* aroused. It is perhaps more helpful in this case to turn to a first-hand description of a reading experience, such as Susan Ferrier's comment in a letter of 1814 to her friend Miss Clavering, for example:

"I have been reading *Emma* which is excellent; there is no story whatever and the heroine is no better than other people; but the characters are all so true to life, and the style so piquant, that it does not require the adventitious aids of mystery and adventure."⁷

Susan Ferrier's comments tell us not only what she thought of *Emma*, but also reveals what readers expected of the novel in that period – *i.e.* a strongly plot-based, rather than character-driven work. We are thus able to see that one of Austen's early readers was clearly able to analyse what differentiated Jane Austen from her contemporaries, and therefore to understand a little about how she was received at that time.

In July, 1831, Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote to his sister, Hannah, including a snippet that charts some responses to Austen's novel:

"We chatted about novels. Every body praised Miss Austen to the skies. Mackintosh said that the test of a true Austenian was Emma. 'Every body likes Mansfield Park. But only true believers—the select—appreciate Emma.' Lord and Lady Lansdowne extolled Emma to the skies. I had heard Wilber Pearson call it a vulgar book a few days before."⁸

This quotation helps to identify how Austen's different works have appealed to readerships over time, chronicling the changes in opinion between Austen's early readership and those generally held by a modern readership of the relative appeal of *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*. It also provides a number of different perspectives, and shows the kind of discussion that *Emma* generated in the 1830s. Hence the need for the *Reading Experience Database*. The anecdotal evidence collected in the database allows us to begin to flesh out the bones of the statistical evidence already in existence, to answer the "how" and "why" questions identified by Darnton.

Although it is the only sort of evidence that comes from real readers, anecdotal evidence from diaries, letters, autobiographies, memoranda, witness testimonies, marginalia and other annotations, and memoirs (such as that collected in the *Reading Experience Database*) does bring its own problems.

⁷ Quoted in John A. Doyle (ed.): *Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier 1782–1854*, London 1898, p. 128.

⁸ G. O. Trevelyan (ed.): *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols., Oxford 1961, vol. 2, pp. 71–72.

As I have discussed elsewhere, people are not always truthful either about what they read, or about their interactions with texts.⁹ Readers sometimes lie, if only by omission. Sometimes, they exaggerate, or misremember. First-hand accounts of reading are not transparently truthful, because evidence is never unmediated by the form in which it appears. The “I” of a journal, letter or autobiography is not necessarily (although it may be) more reliable than the “I” of the omniscient narrator of a novel, or the posturing persona of a poet.

As *Tristram Shandy* reminds us, a second difficulty in the interpretation of anecdotal evidence is that quoting or misquoting a text is actually no proof of having read it, let alone of having understood it:

“Pray, Sir, in all the reading which you have ever read, did you ever read such a book as Locke’s *Essay upon the Human Understanding*? – Don’t answer me rashly, – because many, I know, quote the book, who have not read it, – and many have read it who understand it not.”¹⁰

A yet more significant problem for the readership historian than the caveats about interpreting evidence outlined above is the undeniable fact that many, possibly most, experiences of reading are never recorded. Reading the newspaper, skimming advertisements, reading a little of a poster or a playbill that catches the eye while walking past, looking through a list, or a bill, plodding through an unmemorable novel, or poem, or sermon – all these acts of reading are too ordinary to seem worth recording, except in a very few cases. Reading experiences that are recorded tend to be the transformational or extraordinary, and the records that have survived from the past tend to be by readers who are, themselves, in some way distinguished. The letters, diaries, manuscripts of the famous tend to be kept; those of less august mortals are often destroyed or lost. As Eliot points out, throughout the past, “any reading recorded in an historically recoverable way is, almost by definition, an exceptional recording of an uncharacteristic event by an untypical person”.¹¹ One way in which the RED project has attempted to address this difficulty is by extending the range of sources used to investigate the history of reading, considering not only the autobiographies of working-class readers (as in the work of Jonathan Rose and David Vincent)¹², but also social investigation reports and publications such as those found in the Mass Observation archives, and prison and court records. Testimonies of both witnesses and criminals appear in the database. Researchers on the project have also sought out manuscript material belonging to ordinary members of the public

⁹ See, for example, Katie Halsey: Reading the Evidence of Reading, in: Popular Narrative Media, 2 (Autumn 2008), pp. 123-138.

¹⁰ Laurence Sterne: The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, ed. Tim Parnell, London 2000, p. 70.

¹¹ Eliot: Database (see fn. 3), <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/redback.htm> (accessed 20 May 2011).

¹² Jonathan Rose: The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes, New Haven/London 2001; David Vincent: Bread, knowledge and freedom. A Study of nineteenth-century working class autobiography. (= University paperbacks, 790), London [u.a.] 1982.

(such as the letters and diaries of their ancestors and relatives), which has not previously been published, and which is now available in the database.

The information about reading often appears in these records elliptically, but once organised into our database fields, can offer a surprising degree of illumination into the reading habits of ordinary readers, as well as the availability of different types of printed matter in particular historical periods. For example, in 1832, Jonathan Smithies was accused of murder. The transcript of his trial appears in the Old Bailey Sessions Papers, and provides some useful information to the historian of reading. In response to a question about the length of time spent in the water closet of the public house in which both he and the defendant were drinking, Samuel Davis replied: "Some few minutes – I cannot say how long, not longer than was necessary ... I had a newspaper reading there ..." In his defence, Jonathan Smithies claimed that Davis "asked me for my Sunday's newspaper, saying he wished to use the watercloset – he took the newspaper". Smithies then said that he had waited "sufficient time for him to come out" before wishing to visit the facilities himself: "I then went down again, having occasion to go to the watercloset myself, and asked him if he was coming out, when he said, 'I shall be half an hour yet' – he had the newspaper with him and I suppose he was reading it ..." ¹³ While this brief extract from Smithies' trial tells us very little about what either Davis or Smithies made of the newspapers they were reading, it does give us some data about the way in which men like Davis, members of the tradesman class, got access to print culture, and in doing so it begins to answer two of Darnton's questions, the "how" and "why" questions. Like many others of his socio-economic status, Davis read newspapers at the public house or the coffee house, and expected to have to share them. We are also able to draw some conclusions about the time this sort of reader expected to take over reading a newspaper – about thirty-five minutes – which, in addition to knowledge of the length and density of a newspaper of this period, could tell us something about his level of literacy or fluency of reading.

While the evidence in the database thus remains unrepresentative to a certain extent, efforts have been made to redress the inherent imbalance in source material, and the RED project has collected together substantially more evidence relating to "common readers" than any other resource. It is thus an extremely valuable repository of material which cannot be found elsewhere.

How to use the Reading Experience Database

The remainder of this essay will discuss some of the material specifically relating to working-class readers in the British database (UKRED), in order to provide a case study of how the database can be used. I will begin by outlining how the database is constructed and the ways in which it is searchable. The database contains a number of different data fields, which are organised into

¹³ *The Reading Experience Database*, Record ID 1106, <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/recorddetails2.php?id=1106> (accessed: 31 May 2011).

three main categories: Reader, Text and Experience. The first (Reader) category contains biographical information about the reader, such as his/her name, date of birth, socio-economic group, age, gender, occupation, religion and nationality. Information about whether this person was a reader or a listener can also be found in this category (see Figure Two).

Reader / Listener / Reading Group

Name

Search this in: ☒ Reader ☐ Listener ☐ Reading Group

Gender ☒ male ☐ female

Age ☒ Child (0-17) ☐ Adult (18-100+)

Socio-economic group

☐ Servant

☐ Labourer (non-agricultural)

☐ Clergy (includes all denominations)

☐ Gentry

☐ Other (please specify):

☐ Labourer (agricultural)

☐ Clerk / tradesman / artisan / smallholder

☐ Professional / academic / merchant / farmer

☐ Royalty / aristocracy

Occupation

Religion

Country of Origin

Figure Two: Reader search category

The second (Text) category includes information about the text being read: the author, title, genre, form, publication details and provenance of the text (see Figure Three).

Text Being Read

Author

Title

Genre(s) / Subject matter(s)

☐ Bible

☐ Fiction

☐ Poetry

☐ Biography

☐ Philosophy

☐ Textbook / self-education

☐ Arts / architecture

☐ Mathematics

☐ Natural history

☐ Agriculture / horticulture / husbandry

☐ Unknown

☐ Other (please specify):

☐ Sermon

☐ Drama

☐ Children's Lit

☐ Autobiog / Diary

☐ Education

☐ Conduct books

☐ Cookery

☐ Technology

☐ Miscellany / Anthology

☐ Other Religious

☐ Essays / Criticism

☐ Social Science

☐ Geography / Travel

☐ Sport / Leisure

☐ Law

☐ Medicine

☐ Emblem book

☐ Astrology / alchemy / occult

☐ Reference / General works

☐ Classics

☐ History

☐ Heraldry

☐ Politics

☐ Crafts

☐ Science

☐ Ephemera

Form of text

Print Select below or click ☒ Any Print

☐ Advertisement

☐ Handbill

☐ Serial / periodical

☐ Book

☐ Newspaper

☐ Ticket

☐ Broadsheet

☐ Pamphlet

☐ Unknown

Manuscript Select below or click ☒ Any Manuscript

☐ Codex

☐ Pamphlet

☐ Graffito

☐ Roll

☐ Letter

☐ Sheet

☐ Unknown

Any known publication details
e.g. year, edition, publisher, translation

Provenance

☒ Borrowed (circulating library)

☐ Borrowed (institution library)

☐ Borrowed (private library)

☐ Borrowed (public library)

☐ Borrowed (other)

☐ Found

☐ Owned

☐ Read in situ

☐ Reading group

☐ Stolen

☐ Subscription Library

☐ Unknown

Figure Three: Text search category

The third (Experience) category focuses on the details of the reading experience, and includes data about the time, date and location of the experience, as well as the more specific detail of whether the text was read aloud or silently, alone or in company (see Figure Four).

Reading Experience

Time of Experience of Reader / Listener ☐ Morning ☐ Afternoon ☐ Evening ☐ Daytime ☐ Night

Country of Experience of Reader / Listener

Places of Experience County Other "places of experience":

First, enter text you want to search: **other places:**

Second, select which of the four you want to search:

☐ City/Town/Village
☐ Specific address
☐ Location in dwelling
☐ Other location

This search will give you records that match all the text you enter here and the check boxes you tick; for example, if you a) enter "london" in County, enter "high street" in "other places" and tick b) "specific address" and c) "other location", only records that have "london" in County and "high street" in both "specific address" and "other location" will be listed in the results page (which probably will be none).

Figure Four: Experience search category

RED can be searched in two ways. By using the Basic search option it is possible to search for specific keywords or phrases across all text fields of the database. Alternatively, by using the Advanced search options, users can perform a more targeted search by entering terms or selecting values from as many fields as necessary.

For example, a researcher might begin with a broad search for information about reading in the eighteenth century, using the "century of experience" search field (see Figure Five).

Please enter search details: Number of records per page:

Keyword (in Evidence)
(To search for words contained in the evidence of the reading experience only. For further clarification, please visit our FAQs page.)

Century of Experience

☐ 1450-1499 ☐ 1500-1599 ☐ 1600-1699 ☒ 1700-1799
☐ 1800-1849 ☐ 1850-1899 ☐ 1900-1945

Figure Five: Century of Experience search

The researcher would then almost certainly wish to focus the search more narrowly, and could combine the "century of experience" search with a search for a particular reader, text, genre, socio-economic group, or gender. It is possible, for example, to search for female servants reading conduct books in the eighteenth century. Alternatively, a scholar might wish to know about the books read by a particular working-class reader (Thomas Carter, for example), or by a particular religious sect (such as the Evangelicals). Or a researcher might wish to start with an author (perhaps Goethe), and discover who was reading that author over a long historical period. Such a search would find

(among other facts) the perhaps surprising information that, on the 22nd June, 1932, a Quaker reading group based in Reading held an evening devoted to the reading of Goethe, which included songs, readings from his works, and two papers on his life and works, as well as a discussion of a number of other German writers: Herder, Klopstock and Lessing. A yet narrower search might be driven by the desire to follow a particular title – *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, for example – through time, and this would be possible using the Title of Text search (see Figure Six, which shows a selection of the results of a search for *The Sorrows of Young Werther*).

You searched for: Title of text being read: Sorrows of Young Werther Search again: Click the 'Basic Search' or 'Advanced Search' tabs above. To compile your own list, tick the checkboxes and then click the "my list" button.

7 records found. (20/page) Go to: [1] 1 [1]

☒ my list To select all on this page, click this box: ☐

✓	Century of Experience	Evidence	Name of Reader / Listener / Reading Group	Author of Text	Title of Text	Form of Text
<input type="checkbox"/>	1800-1849	'at ten o'clock yesterday evening little Jem Parsons (the cabin boy), and his friend the black terrier, came on deck, ...	Jem Parsons	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	Sorrows of Young Werther	Print: Book
<input type="checkbox"/>	1700-1799	Robert Southey to Horace Walpole Bedford, 24 January - 18 February 1794: 'I need not tell you with what pleasure my f...	Robert Southey	Johann Wilhelm von Goethe	The Sorrows of Young Werther	Print: Book
<input type="checkbox"/>	1800-1849	Elizabeth Barrett to Robert Browning, 15 January 1846: 'Papa used to say .. "Dont read Gibbon's history -- it's not...	Elizabeth Barrett Barrett	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	The Sorrows of Young Werther	Print: Book
<input type="checkbox"/>	1900-1945	Meeting held at Redkitt House, Leighton Park: 22.6.32 Reginald H. Robson in the Chair. 1. Minutes o...	Mary E. Robson	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	The Sorrows of Young Werther	Print: Book
<input type="checkbox"/>	1900-1945	Meeting held at Redkitt House, Leighton Park: 22.6.32 Reginald H. Robson in the Chair. 1. Minutes o...	Mary E. Robson	Mary, E Robson	[a description of Goethe's novel The Sorrows of Young Werther]	Manuscript: Unknown
<input type="checkbox"/>	1900-1945	Meeting held at Redkitt House, Leighton Park: 22.6.32 Reginald H. Robson in the Chair. 1. Minutes o...	Janet Rawlings	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	The Sorrows of Young Werther	Print: Book
<input type="checkbox"/>	1850-1899	'While he read little but the Bible and religious periodicals, his son was working his way through the Rhymney Workmen...	Thomas Jones	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	The Sorrows of Young Werther	Print: Book

☒ my list

Figure Six: Results of a search for *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

The results shown above include the aforementioned Quaker reading group's readings of extracts from *Werther*, as well as a variety of other readings of the text in Britain. To see the expanded version of each result, it is necessary to click on the individual piece of evidence, which provides the full details of that particular experience.

(See Figure Seven)

Reading Experience:

Evidence:	'at ten o'clock yesterday evening little Jem Parsons (the cabin boy), and his friend the black terrier, came on deck, and sat themselves on a gun-carriage, to read by the light of the moon. I looked at the boy's book, (the terrier, I suppose, read over the other's shoulder,) and found that it was "The Sorrows of Werther". I asked who had lent him such a book, and whether it amused him? He said that it had been made a present to him, and so he had read it almost through, for he had got to Werter's dying; though, to be sure, he did not understand it all, nor like very much what he understood; for he thought the man a great fool for killing himself for love. I told him I thought that every man a great fool who killed himself for love or for any thing else: but he had no books but "The Sorrows of Werter"? - oh dear yes, he said, he had a great many more; but he had got "The Adventures of a Louse", which was a very curious book, indeed; and he had got besides "The Recess", and "Valentine and Orson", and "Roslin Castle", and a book of Prayers, just like the Bible; but he could not but say that he liked "The Adventures of a Louse" the best of any of them.'		
Century:	1800-1849		
Date:	11 Dec 1815		
Country:	at sea		
Time:	evening: 10pm		
Place:	other location: ship travelling to Jamaica		
Type of Experience (Reader):	silent	aloud	unknown
	solitary	in company	unknown
	single	serial	unknown
Type of Experience (Listener):	solitary	in company	unknown
	single	serial	unknown

Reader/Listener/Reading Group:

Reader:	Jem Parsons
Age	Child (0-17)
Gender	Male
Date of Birth	n/a
Socio-economic group:	Labourer (non-agricultural)
Occupation:	cabin boy
Religion:	n/a
Country of origin:	England?
Country of experience:	at sea
Listeners present if any: (e.g. family, servants, friends, workmates)	n/a

Text Being Read:

Author:	Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe
Title:	Sorrows of Young Werther
Genre:	Fiction
Form of Text:	Print: Book
Publication details:	n/a
Provenance:	owned

Source Information:

Record ID:	10129
Source -	Print
Author:	Matthew Lewis
Editor:	n/a
Title:	Journal of a West India Proprietor, Kept During a Residence in The Island of Jamaica
Place of Publication:	Oxford
Date of Publication:	1999
Vol:	n/a
Page:	20
Additional comments:	n/a
Citation:	Matthew Lewis, <i>Journal of a West India Proprietor, Kept During a Residence in The Island of Jamaica</i> (Oxford, 1999), p. 20, http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/recorddetails2.php?id=10129 , accessed: 07 June 2011

Additional comments:

Matthew Lewis chanced upon the boy reading the book as he went for a walk round the ship during the trip to Jamaica.

Figure Seven: Reading Experience 10129. Jem Parsons, a young cabin boy, reads *Werther* on board a ship to Jamaica in December 1815

In this record we gain a brief insight not only into a very ordinary act of reading, but also into the kinds of reading material that appealed to a young working-class reader, and the way in which he spent his leisure time during the voyage to Jamaica.

Naturally, as well as searching for specific terms, it is also possible to browse the database, using the Browse function, which allows users to discover

information in slightly different ways. One can browse alphabetically by author or by reader.

For those interested in the reading of the working classes, the most efficient way to search the records is by socio-economic group. The socio-economic categories are reasonably broad, and are shown in Figure Eight.

Socio-economic group

☐ Servant
☐ Labourer (non-agricultural)
☐ Clergy (includes all denominations)
☐ Gentry
 Other (please specify):

☐ Labourer (agricultural)
☐ Clerk / tradesman / artisan / smallholder
☐ Professional / academic / merchant / farmer
☐ Royalty / aristocracy

Figure Eight: Socio-economic group categories

Of the approx. 30,000 records currently in the database (May, 2011), the percentage of records by social class is broken down thus:

Professional/Merchant/Farmer	63%
Working classes	17%
Gentry	13%
Aristocracy	6%
Clergy	5%

The majority of the data in the UK database relates to readers from the professional, academic, merchant and farmer class, which reflects the general bias in the sources available to the historian of reading. The working classes also, however, feature prominently, constituting the second-largest category in the database. Breaking the working-classes into their smaller class groupings, the percentages are as follows:

Clerk/Tradesman/Artisan/Smallholder	61%
Labourer	30%
Agricultural Labourer	6%
Servant	3%

This breakdown holds few surprises – the traditionally literate clerk/tradesman/artisan class has substantially the largest number of records, while non-agricultural labourers, such as mill workers, shopgirls, factory hands, form the second largest group. It is a little surprising that agricultural workers appear to read more than servants, explicable perhaps by the lesser degree of supervision and thus the greater freedom of the agricultural worker. Alternatively, it is

possible that the records of servants’ reading have been lost or destroyed over time, or that the act of reading was simply less often recorded by servants.

It is also possible to analyse the data by region. Turning now to look more specifically at Scottish working-class readers in relation to working-class readers in the whole of the British Isles, we discover that 7.5% of the working-class readers in the database were born in Scotland. Of these, 8% were general labourers, 27% agricultural labourers and 65% clerks. The database contains no records of Scottish servants’ reading, though this does not necessarily mean that Scottish servants did not read – again, it is possible that records were lost or destroyed, or that the acts of reading were simply not recorded.

Working-class readers by region

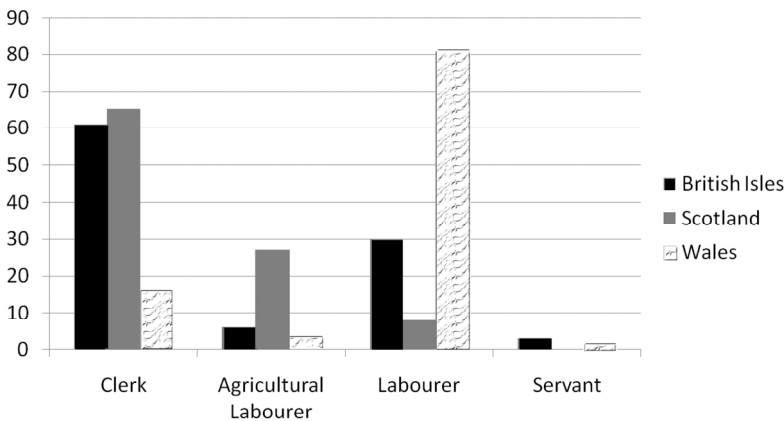


Figure Nine: Working-class readers by region

The graph depicted in Figure Nine compares the data on working-class readers by region, using Wales, a country of comparable size, as a comparison to Scotland. We can immediately see that it is possible to identify regional differences in the reading of the various socio-economic groups within the working classes. In Scotland, we see a much larger number of agricultural labourers reading than in either the British Isles as a whole, or in a comparable country, Wales. Wales shows a much lower level of reading in the clerk/artisan classes than either the British Isles as a whole or Scotland. There might be many explanations for these regional variations, of course, and at this point it is

important to look at evidence from other sources to try to understand the patterns that are shown up here. While Wales' economy historically depended on both agriculture and coal mining, Scotland has been, for most of its past, a primarily rural, agricultural country, which would to some extent explain the larger number of readers in the agricultural labourer class, though it does not explain how agricultural labourers managed to obtain the books they read. We could hypothesise that such labourers had access to lending libraries in rural areas, and such a hypothesis is borne out by the extant lending library records of such libraries as Innerpeffray, in rural Perthshire. We could consider the possible influence of Scottish Enlightenment beliefs in democratic education, and cross-check with any school records still in existence, as well as as many autodidact memoirs and letters as possible. We could, for example, consult the individual testimonies of such readers as the "Ettrick Shepherd", James Hogg, to find out what they read, and how they obtained books and other printed matter. We discover in the database that Hogg frequently borrowed books from his employer, William Laidlaw, who seems to have had a liberal and generous attitude towards his workforce: "Mr Laidlaw having a number of valuable books, which were all open to my perusal, I about this time began to read with considerable attention; – and no sooner did I begin to read so as to understand, than, rather prematurely, I began to write."¹⁴ We might also look into the ways in which books circulated informally among remote rural communities through the agency of other enlightened employers, or the lairds who lent out their books to factors, shepherds and cowmen, and to do that, we would need to consult the extant private library records of the great houses and castles of the North, such as Craigston Castle and Kilravock.

Conclusion

There are many questions that the database cannot answer, of course, and it is important to stress that a variety of source materials must always be used when attempting to build up a picture of reading in the past. The *Reading Experience Database* can, however point towards suggestive avenues of enquiry, and can itself be used in a number of different ways, as outlined above. The *Reading Experience Database* remains a work in progress. In addition to searching and browsing the database, anyone may also contribute material to it, using the contribution form on the website (www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/). Once a contribution is received, it is verified and, if necessary, edited by the team of researchers on the RED project, before being released into the searchable database. It is therefore a truly collaborative project, which benefits from the knowledge and expertise of scholars from across many different countries and disciplines. In its current phase, the project welcomes expressions of interest from those who wish to create their own national database. There is, to date (May, 2011), no Reading Experience Database for Ger-

¹⁴ *Reading Experience Database*, Record ID 23841, <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/recorddetails2.php?id=23841>, accessed: 31 May 2011.

many. Expressions of interest in the creation of such a resource should be directed to the Project Director, Dr Shafquat Towheed of the Open University (S.S. Towheed@open.ac.uk).

Katie Halsey

Leser aus der Arbeiterklasse im 19. Jh.: Eine Einführung in die Datenbank „Reading Experience Database, 1450–1945“ (RED)

Die „Reading Experience Database“ [Datenbank Leseerlebnis] wird durch die britische Forschungsgemeinschaft für Geisteswissenschaften finanziert. Sie hat den Zweck, möglichst viel Zeugnisse über das Lesen von Briten 1450–1945 zu sammeln und will diese Daten in einer recherchetauglichen, benutzerfreundlichen Web-zugänglichen Datenbank vorlegen (www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading). Die Datenbank wächst ständig; zur Zeit enthält sie über 30.000 Einträge zu individuellen Leseerlebnissen, die aus einer großen Vielfalt von Quellen (handschriftlich, gedruckt und mündlich) zusammengebracht sind. Alle sind jetzt durch das Internet recherchierbar.

Das Projekt konzentriert sich auf die Erlebnisse sowohl von „berühmten Lesern“ als auch des „Alltagslesers“, einer Gestalt, die öfter bei der Disziplin Lesegeschichte wegen vermeintlichen Quellenmangels unabsichtlich vernachlässigt wird. Die Datenbank bietet eine einmalige Gelegenheit, nicht nur individuelle Lesegewohnheiten, sondern auch allgemeine Lesemuster zu studieren und insbesondere Veränderungen bei der Zusammensetzung der Lesergruppen und der Leserschaft einzelner Texte. In diesem Beitrag will ich mich auf schottische Leser aus der Arbeiterklasse konzentrieren.

Vorführung der Suchfunktionen der Datenbank

Ich will demonstrieren, wie man die Datenbank in verschiedener Weise durchsuchen und durchschmökern kann. Suchmöglichkeiten lauten z.B. nach Zeitabschnitt, nach Lesername, Staatsangehörigkeit, Geschlecht, sozioökonomischer Gruppe, Beruf, Konfession; für den gelesenen Text nach Verfasser, Titel, Genre, Form und Provenienz; oder auch nach Einzelheiten des Leseerlebnisses (Zeit, Ort). Die vielfältigen Suchmöglichkeiten erlauben den Forschern, sehr unterschiedliche Untersuchungsfragen aus demselben Datencorpus zu beantworten.

Diskussion der Problematik der verschiedenen Quellenarten, die zur Erforschung der Lesegeschichte verfügbar sind

Die verfügbaren Quellen werden beschrieben und besonders ihre Problematik in Zusammenhang mit ihrer Auswertung auf absichtsvolles Lesen hin: Lese-listen, Bibliotheksstatistiken, Daten aus der Verlags- und Buchhandelswelt wie Verkaufsstatistiken. Ich führe zwei Beispiele dafür vor, wie diese mit anderen Quellenarten ergänzt werden müssen.

Fragen der Auswertung von „anekdotischen“ Quellen (Quellen aus erster Hand)

Die Probleme und Chancen bei der Auswertung von „anekdotischer“ Quellen – wie sie in der „Reading Experience Database“ gesammelt sind – werden diskutiert. Die diesbezüglichen Fragen betreffen:

- Wahrheit und Durchsichtigkeit der Aussage*
- Motive zum Aufzeichnen von Lesenerlebnissen*
- Konventionen für das Aufzeichnen von Leseerlebnissen*
- Wie die vorgefundenen Zitate zu behandeln seien*
- Das Problem, dass die meisten Leseerlebnisse nicht aufgezeichnet sind*
- Das Problem nichtrepräsentativer Daten, da Quellen für das Lesen von Frauen, von Mitgliedern der Arbeiterklassen, ethnischen oder religiösen Minderheiten usw. schwer zu finden sind.*

Weitere Diskussion zum Problem der Suche nach repräsentativen Daten

Ich will an dieser Stelle referieren über die verschiedenen Arten von Quellen, die beim Erforschen der Lesergeschichte herkömmlich benutzt werden, und erklären, warum die aus diesen Quellen genommen Datentypen nicht soziologisch oder historisch repräsentativ sein können.

Lösungsvorschläge

Ich schlage einige alternative Quellen und Methoden zur Interpretation der vorhandenen Quellenaussagen vor und nehme die Beispiele aus der „Reading Experience Database“.

Diskussion und Interpretation der Beispiele

Hier wird u.a. vorgeführt:

- Beschreibung der relevanten Quellenmaterialien*
- Statistische Analyse der Leser in der RED nach sozioökonomischem Status*
- Statistische Analyse von Lesern aus den Arbeiterständen*
- Besondere Berücksichtigung der schottischen Arbeiterleser*
- Interpretation der statistischen Daten*

Schlussbemerkungen

Zum Schluss will ich die Methoden besprechen, wie die Forschungsergebnisse aus dem RED-Projekt in Verbindung mit anderen Erkenntnissen genutzt werden können, um die Standardvorstellungen zur Lesergeschichte zu überprüfen.