

CASE STUDY

Eighteenth Century Collections Online & Gale Historical Newspapers

Digital Humanities is a new approach to the discipline which signals the future.

THE RESOURCES

Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) from Gale, a Cengage Company, is the world's premier online library of 18th century printed works; over 180,000 titles and editions (200,000 volumes), published between 1701 and 1800, and printed in English-speaking countries, or countries under British colonial rule. The majority of works in *ECCO* are in the English language but there are also works printed in Dutch, French, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish and Welsh. Full-text searching of 33 million pages takes the user directly to facsimile copies of the originals.

Gale Historical Newspapers provides a unique view into more than 400 years of history and supports in-depth scholarly research with a fully cross-searchable and cross-browsable platform of global historical newspapers and periodicals, providing access to more than 2,000 titles from a single interface.



ABOUT

Professor Joris van Eijnatten, Head of the Department of History at Utrecht University, is interested in Digital Humanities and focusses on a variety of topics including 20th century history, Europe, modernity, and religion. In the near future, Professor Eijnatten will also be teaching a Masters-level course in Digital Humanities.

THE CHALLENGES

Professor Eijnatten spoke on how research was carried out prior to acquiring Gale resources, *"Newspapers, including The Times, were often the go-to resources obtained off the shelf in the library. Whilst the problem wasn't getting this information from the library and using the newspapers themselves, it was more about what you could do with them. It's the actual scale and importance of what you can achieve with digital material in Gale Historical Newspapers, Nineteenth Century Collections Online and Eighteenth Century Collections Online, which can otherwise be very time consuming with print."*

Professor Eijnatten continued, *"the greatest challenge is getting students to better engage with Digital Humanities, but they need to be trained. It's not just scrolling through digital material, but using the interface to research and find specific points of reference, to use word counts and interpret the results in a graph."*





He went on to explain, “Students need to be involved in digital history and reference, they need to learn to write code and understand it. This is an important factor in history and this type of teaching is gradually being introduced into the curriculum. It’s a new approach in a discipline, not only for students but for academics too, but it’s also the future. It’s like getting new skill sets to deal with emerging real world challenges.”

THE BENEFITS

According to Professor Eijnatten the benefits to students and researchers are significant: “Students have been able to extend their research, including supplements from newspapers, and relevant periodicals, where there are a wide range of subjects to choose from. Using newspaper results to scroll through quickly and discover relevant information is very valuable.”

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Professor Eijnatten explained, “You can view 18th or 20th century digitalised material by simply clicking on a button and scanning through a huge amount of material in a short period of time. To use digital resources instead of print, you can discover a broad range of texts and analyse them far more quickly.”

Professor Eijnatten himself has used *Gale Historical Newspapers* to help with his research into analysing definitions of Europe over a wide period of time, as well as researching the whole story of Brexit and how British newspapers reflect popular perceptions of Europe.

Discussing the benefits of having a cross-search platform like *Gale Primary Sources*, Professor Eijnatten commented, “it is useful if you are searching, because you can quickly see the results and compare them. The individual collections covering the 20th century are also very useful for data analysis and researching specific subjects.”

Commenting on how digital humanities resources might help attract prospective students and researchers, Professor Eijnatten stated, “It isn’t just the material that attracts prospective students and academic researchers, it is also important to have the software that supports the material, and what you can do with this software. *Gale Primary Sources* has a useful interface which helps us to discover the content we need.”

In conclusion, Professor Eijnatten felt that “Digital resources can be used to advance scholarship, as they allow for greater flexibility of approaches, enabling researchers to do different things to resolve complicated research questions and analyse large quantities of documents.”