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## Aphra Behn Online : The Case for Early Modern Open-Access Publishing

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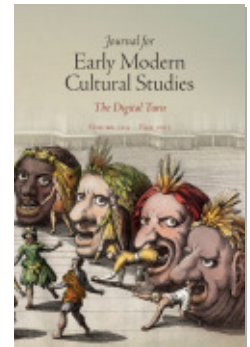
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Laura L. Runge

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## *Aphra Behn Online:*

### The Case for Early Modern Open-Access Publishing

LAURA L. RUNGE

An obvious and important advantage to the digital turn in early modern studies is the accessibility afforded by online academic publishing, but scholars of the Early Modern period (1500–1800) have been slower than their modern counterparts to take these opportunities seriously.<sup>1</sup> Though *The Early Modern Commons* now lists 305 blogs, and though many of our print journals have adopted a form of online presence, studies in the early modern period can claim roughly eleven peer-reviewed, open-access, online journals to date, including a large percentage of European-based, Spanish-language journals of interdisciplinary fields.<sup>2</sup> Given the current push to provide access to scholarly journals and given the financial pressures on print journals, the move toward online publication seems like a simple solution. So why is there apparent reluctance to do so? Perhaps the more conservative stance toward online publication among early modern scholars—who have studied the challenges of massive change resulting from print technology—points to underlying complexities.

The experience of the editors at *ABO: An Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640–1830* supports this theory. *ABO* is an open-access (OA), peer-reviewed, online journal that first went live in March of 2011.<sup>3</sup> Through the course of our first three years of publication, our understanding of what an online academic journal is and can be has radically changed, and the questions the editors at *ABO* have faced when establishing a new journal suggest a landscape of potential and uncertainty for early modern studies in OA publishing. Our story may be of interest in thinking about issues of vital importance at this moment.<sup>4</sup>

*ABO* is sponsored by the Aphra Behn Society, a small academic group committed to the study of fields related to Aphra Behn, namely women in the arts, 1640–1830. The society began in 1990 with the intention of holding an annual conference that challenged the standard, patriarchal way of organizing academic associations at the time. Like our namesake, the first woman to become a successful professional literary author, the society sought to contest the sexist hierarchies that structured our professional institutions. The meetings were focused on women authors and issues of gender. For the most part, the Aphra Behn Society downplayed the centrality of invited, plenary lectures,

and it welcomed graduate students, creating opportunities, such as the annual essay prize, for graduate students to gain recognition. The alternative structure of the society fostered women's creativity and scholarship and emphasized mentoring and productivity among generations of scholars interested in women's work. Serious talk of starting a society journal began in 2007, and in view of the perceived crisis in academic publishing, we decided to create an online journal.<sup>5</sup> The impulse was both financial and ideological. Unlike larger, more established academic associations for which subscriptions to bound journals supply needed income for their programs, our small academic society never felt a print journal would be sustainable. Moreover, the mission of the society, which involves breaking down barriers and creating discussion of women writers, artists and their concerns, seemed to fit naturally with OA practices.

When we began, we admittedly did not fully understand what it meant to create an online, OA, peer-reviewed journal. Launching a journal of any variety involves a tremendous startup and has a steep learning curve. We researched our professional standards through the Modern Language Association; we applied for an ISSN; we connected with the Directory for Open Access Journals (DOAJ); we joined the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ); and we established a credentialed and respected editorial board across disciplines that supported our mission. Drafting procedures and policies became, it seemed, a full-time occupation. We selected a timely theme for our first volume and sent out our call for submissions as widely as we could without a budget. Keeping with the innovative mission of the Aphra Behn Society, we created sections for the journal to emphasize pedagogical and professional issues alongside more conventional scholarly essays and reviews. We also created a section originally called Women on the Web to showcase the resources and synergistic potential for digital works on our subject. Our web team at the time was headed by Anne Greenfield (now our new media editor), who designed and wrote the initial site. Excited about producing a scholarly journal, we were less concerned with longevity and archiving code. With a slate of respected scholars gracing our table of contents, the production of the first volume was entirely celebratory.

We announced our new publication at the March 2011 American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conference (in Vancouver, B.C.), and the feedback we received indicated that scholars were pleased that we had created an online journal that focused on women and gender issues in the eighteenth century, something that did not exist before. They were also excited that it was freely available for research and teaching support. We measured the impact of

the first issue largely on the face-to-face or email responses we received during or after the conference, which were positive but small in scale. After meeting our initial production goal with the first issue, the larger implications of our project began to register. With the Internet as our publisher, a far greater reach was possible, and we needed to learn how to tap the resources “out there.”

Our challenges at the time were to expand our readership (as we understood it then) and increase the scholarly reputation of the journal so as to increase the submissions. In the meantime, we wanted to capitalize on the excitement generated by the accessibility and innovation of the online journal. The advantages of being new and online include being responsive to audience and quick to adapt. We discussed the journal’s reception and planned changes accordingly. We immediately created three new sections: Notes and Discoveries—a renovated form of the traditional note that can take advantage of the speed and crowdsourcing of the Internet; Ask Aphra—a professional advice column in the lineage of the *Female Spectator*; and Pedagogy Share—a space for publishing useable teaching documents. We brought in an innovative group of young digital humanists led by Adrienne Wadewitz, who redesigned the journal using WordPress, and we reimagined our mission as one intimately connected to changing forms of scholarship.

In moving to the WordPress platform, our journal received a hip facelift, not an insignificant thing in digital publishing, and it enabled a host of functions that we had imagined, including interactive discussions for every published piece, PDF downloads, easy cross-referencing, archiving, and site statistics. The plug-ins on the site allowed for more sophisticated interactions, such as contact forms, audio/visual links, and a Facebook badge to link us to broad social networks. Concerns about longevity and archiving, not to mention labor, were met when the Web team created a CSS template for the entire site and a versioning system to manage site revisions over time. Because of the intensive work and specialized knowledge required in site planning, we tried to build in the potential for growth and development of the journal at the start. We were not simply planning for the present but trying to imagine the future for this enterprise. This exercise in reading tea leaves led to questions that brought us into the tangled zone of digital humanities. While fortune-telling has always been a risky business, seeing into the future of academic publishing at the moment is particularly fraught because of the dramatic changes taking place on virtually every front: institutional, technological, economic, social. These changes affect what we know and how we know it, the very infrastructures and

epistemologies we engage in doing early modern work. In this environment of potential and uncertainty, it is refreshing to realize that traditional academic posturing is ineffective. Instead, a questing (quixotic?) attitude, experimentation, and collaboration help forge the new pathways we need in order to adapt and grow. For the remainder of this essay, I will offer some insights into what was often a vague and serendipitous process of figuring out what it means to publish an early modern digital humanities journal.

### What Do We Mean by Open Access?

At first blush, the term open-access appears self-evident. What could be clearer than having access to scholarship online? We Google a subject and point our browser to the content: voilà. Students have certainly keyed into OA as though there were no other type of scholarship available.<sup>6</sup> We tend to think of OA as simply meaning free and open to the public, and this is the understanding with which the editors for *ABO* started. In terms of constructing a journal, we saw OA as the main distinction of online publication; otherwise the journal would be the same as print. We initially imagined moving the platonic form of the print text and all its conventions directly online. (Recall the surprise of seeing for the first time early print forms that mimicked script. It does not seem like such a strange thing to do now.)

The MLA appears to share an understanding of the equivalence of print and electronic scholarship in their documentation for publishing in online journals: “When departments evaluate scholarly publications for purposes of hiring, reappointment, tenure, and promotion, the standing of an electronic journal should be judged according to the same criteria used for a print journal. These criteria include the journal’s peer review policy, its rate of acceptance, the nature of its editorial board and publisher, and its general profile in the field it covers” (“MLA Statement”). The intentions of this statement are laudable, in that it validates the new venue so that academics get appropriate recognition for their scholarship if it appears in a digital format. The MLA suggests that if the criteria of reference are the same, online publication is equivalent to print. Over time, however, it has become clear to us that the desire to see print and electronic journals as equivalent actually undermines the potential for online publication and in any event cannot be maintained. In addition to the ways in which format changes scholarship, issues of OA (which are separate but related to being online) have the potential to affect every one of the MLA criteria. For

example, the rate of acceptance for OA journals may be higher for valid reasons, because online formats are not limited by space constraints. The reputation of editorial boards is important but may differ with respect to who has comfort in the new forms. Publishers of OA work will certainly differ from those of print formats when the latter are organized for financial profit or sustainability. Most problematically, peer review, the cornerstone of academic scholarship, can operate differently in OA journals, something to which I will return in the next section. OA online journals may have very different criteria than print journals, and it is perhaps a mistake to work from the assumption that print and OA, online journals function in the same ways.

Leaving aside for the moment how print and online journals functionally differ, the editors at ABO retained the idea that OA was a fairly straightforward matter of choice for publishing our work. The controversies that arose in summer 2012, however, illustrate how contentious the choice actually is. In the US and Great Britain, the government push for OA for publically funded research is not brand new, but the British release of the 2012 Finch Report raised the stakes of public access to scholarly publications.<sup>7</sup> The Finch Report analyzes the production and availability of scholarship in Great Britain, and it ultimately recommends that all state-funded scholarship become publicly available without cost to the viewer. Though largely concerned with research in the sciences, the report extends its recommendations to all journals. In July the Research Councils of the United Kingdom (RCUK) published a revised policy mandating a “gold” standard of OA for all journals that publish publically funded research; journals and authors have until 1 April 2013 to comply. This requires journals either to make published articles immediately and freely available online without restrictions on reuse or to do so within a defined period (e.g., six months for science journals). The RCUK recognizes that OA affects the business model for print journals for which subscriptions supply the majority of funds required for the cost of production, including peer review, copy-editing, layout, and distribution. This puts pressure on creating—or in the case of many science journals increasing—the author publication charge (APC). The journals would be free, then, to users, but not to authors. To offset the decline in revenue for journals, the RCUK will pay the APC through funds supplied to institutions or organizations who will reimburse the scholars. As might be expected, this mandate forces journals to change immediately, and some feel that the shift to author-fees will create or enhance problems of journal quality and equitable access to publication.<sup>8</sup>

In September the American Historical Association delivered a strong statement against adopting the APC in the US, particularly because research for humanities scholars is not generally funded by large federal grants, and subventions for publication are not generally feasible. The APC is not something many journals in the humanities currently have, and it carries with it the implication of a vanity press or worse. It appears to be more common in science fields, and the opportunity for online journals to charge enormous fees to publish substandard work, a phenomenon known as predatory journals, has already produced some questionable new venues, jeopardizing the authority of online journals.<sup>9</sup> The goals of OA are worthy, but the details of changing from a costly print-based form of scholarship have yet to be worked out thoughtfully. One response that is gaining traction comes from a number of research libraries in the US, including Harvard, Cornell, University of Oregon, and University of South Florida. These libraries have developed plans to pay the publication fees for their faculty in lieu of paying journal subscriptions. This may ease the burden for some humanities faculty if we make the shift to author-funded publication, even while it creates new hierarchies of privilege in access to publication. Obviously these developments have implications for the scholars of early modern studies.

Another part of the contention over OA derives from the scope of freedoms it allows. The 2002 Budapest Initiative offers a definition that is widely acknowledged though still controversial:

By “open access” to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.

This is the “gold” standard that the RCUK insists upon. The idea of free redistribution of scholarship violates traditional forms of copyright, and so print journals that have entered into copyright agreements with their authors and with commercial aggregators who redistribute their work online, such as



Project MUSE, cannot legally or financially afford to grant complete open-access as defined here. Scholars themselves may take umbrage with the loss of control over their published work under this definition. Paul Royster, generally supportive of OA initiatives, balks at allowing unrestricted rights for reuse: "My imagination runs wild over the possible uses of my own material that I would seek to prevent, but could not under an unrestricted re-use license: it could be set to music and recorded by Justin Bieber; it could be made into a syndicated cartoon series promoting children's toys and sugary cereals; it could be used as dialogue in an episode of "C.S.I. Omaha"; it could be excerpted and re-licensed to Georgia State by Oxford UP, Cambridge UP, or Sage Publications"(2). Royster appeals to the idea of intellectual property that emerged with print culture, one that is exploded by the infinite potential for duplication and distribution on the Internet.

Set against this defense of intellectual property, Dave Parry argues for the ethics of free distribution of our knowledge and the break-up of the stranglehold that journal-publishers have over knowledge dissemination, what he calls the "knowledge cartel." In some fields, namely the health sciences, the economics of publishing are phenomenally profitable; a single university library can spend up to ten million dollars in subscription fees for science journals. Scholars, universities, and students are rarely the ones benefiting from this sale of property. Because the general public is denied access to this knowledge, much of which is supported by federal dollars, it is getting particularly noisy about access. The changes to publishing in science journals will have an impact on what happens in the humanities, as is already apparent in the UK. We face both a financial argument over who pays for the production of knowledge and an ethical problem deciding who should benefit from the knowledge.

In this environment, the peer-reviewed, OA, online journal is situated to provide a viable future for humanities scholarship. The editors at *ABO* have considered the various problems and concerns of OA, and we remain committed to the practice of the free circulation of knowledge. *ABO* adopts a Creative Commons non-commercial No Derivs license, and our publishing agreement states the following: "anyone is free to copy, distribute, display, or perform *ABO* under the specific conditions."<sup>10</sup> These conditions require proper attribution and forbid commercial use or change to the original. (By forbidding commercial use, *ABO* has opted to take the middle road on CC licenses.) The license covers standard fair use, moral rights, and publicity or privacy rights for the author. It does not grant others the right to sell the open-access work in other

venues. Scholars familiar with restricted copyright and print forms sometimes raise objections to the idea of the Creative Commons license because they fear it enables plagiarism; they fear that their scholarly work will be used without attribution by others.

While that certainly might happen, two considerations ought to be heard. The first is that plagiarism or unattributed use of a scholar's work would be in violation of the CC license, and a scholar would have grounds to challenge it. Such violations happen with printed documents as well. It may seem that online publication would accelerate the incidence of misuse, but in this age of digital reproduction of print material, a person who wants to plagiarize has ample opportunity to do so with printed scholarship now available on the web. The horse has left the barn. A second consideration concerns the motives of publication. Our choice to use the Creative Commons license stems both from our shared belief, like Parry, that scholarship should be free, but also from the specific mission of the Aphra Behn Society and *ABO*: to promote discussion of women in the arts, 1640–1830. We want to extend the widest reach possible, and the free circulation of our articles takes higher priority over fears of misuse. The more viewers, the better. Scholars who publish with *ABO* additionally have the right to publish their articles in their own institution's open-access repository (IR), which increases their visibility and enhances the institution's reputation.

### How OA Online Journals Function Differently from Print

As Dan Cohen, professor of history and director of the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, recently suggested, the AHA response to the Finch report indicates a limited view of the potential of online publishing. Like the AHA, the MLA's now very dated statement on publishing in online journals only cautiously supports digital publication, primarily "because of the ease of distribution, discovery, and retrieval in these formats—which is a significant aid to research—and because of the multimedia features that the electronic environment affords." The MLA concludes that online publication "offers exciting possibilities and a new medium for the dissemination of scholarly work" ("Statement"). The benefits of online publication are thus limited to dissemination and retrieval, and the possibility of multimedia features enabled by the online environment. What is missing in this articulation of digital scholarship is the way in which the online environment fosters interaction, not just reception.

The radical idea that online scholarship is participatory is something we have only realized through the process of establishing this venue. When we made the move to the WordPress platform, the differences between simply re-creating a print journal in an online medium versus creating a digital form of scholarship became clearer. Digital scholarship invites participation, and participation means user-built content. It means reconceiving “readers”—passive consumers of scholarship—as “users”—people who want to do something with our publication. From the start *ABO* editors agreed that we wanted interaction in the form of comment features for each of the articles published. When I first looked into having my university host the website for the journal, I talked with the managers in information technology about interactive features. They were uniformly discouraging. “You don’t want that,” they told me. “People could write anything; you could have lots of spam.” In the first iteration of the journal, fear of universal spam dictated controls we put in place. We created a complicated system where a site-user could submit a comment but it had to be approved by us before it was posted. We were worried about an avalanche of irrelevant or damaging posts. Even though that response failed to materialize, suspicion of the derelict public continued to guide our process when we made the move to the new site.

We expanded our conception of what users could do with our publication, but we had questions about how much access we wanted to give them. Do we want users to be able to upload content? Do we want them to be able to talk to one another or just leave isolated comments? How much space do we give to our users? For example, we discussed building a place where anybody could upload teaching documents to share and discuss. While we perceived that this would fill a user need, the editors in this case felt that we would have insufficient control over the content, which might jeopardize the journal’s authority. As the MLA guidelines clearly indicate, a journal relies on its peer-reviewed status for authority, and as a new journal in the field, we felt the need to protect and develop this authority. We decided that editors have to vet the content before it can be presented under our title, and so we have limited user-generated content to comment forms for now. Plans for the future, however, include more interactive spaces, including reader forums, places to upload teaching documents, and more user-generated ideas.

### Peer Review

One of the practices with the greatest potential for change in the online environment is peer review and what that actually means in an OA journal. To begin, the editors at *ABO* agree with the MLA's recommendation that peer review is essential for the maintenance of standards in academic discourse, for validity and for measuring value. There is a direct connection between peer review and another category the MLA considers essential to the journal's standing: the "general profile of the journal in the field," or the perceived value of a journal built over time. At this point in history the perceived authority of print versus online resources is vastly different because issues of OA are frequently confused with peer review. Note the caution expressed in the 2002 MLA report on the "Future of Academic Publishing":

Most urgently, we need to address the issue of peer review for electronic publication in the humanities, whether of monographs and specialized books or of articles in online journals. It is crucial that electronic publications—including book-length studies, periodicals, editions, and scholarly Web sites—contain a statement about the form of review used to evaluate the quality of the work published and that such peer review be comparable in type and standard with that employed by university presses and reputable print journals. Electronic publications included in tenure and promotion dossiers will likely be viewed with suspicion unless a widely accepted system of quality control is in place. (180–81)

Although a decade old, this document expresses a still pervasive "suspicion" of digital publishing that characterizes the fields of early modern studies. Such perceptions change at a glacial pace; in *The Nature of the Book*, Adrian Johns documents precisely how this was done when handwritten documents ceded authority to print books. As in the past, a major shift in the production of knowledge requires work on the part of authors and publishers, and in our case, editors, to make the new form trustworthy. A clear discussion of peer review is key to this transition.

The editors at *ABO* developed a form of single-blind peer review that marks our innovative enterprise. The "peer" in the term follows a definition that is presumably standard; after initial editorial review, we look for two published scholars with authority to comment on the submission's validity, significance,

and contribution to the field. We put more pressure on the “review” part of the term in accord with our unique mission. Inspired by the review process in the field of composition studies, we see the review less as dictating judgment and more as mentoring the process of scholarship.” To that end, we ask reviewers to sign the review and supply a report that can be read by the author for her or his benefit. If the author and reviewer want to, they might collaborate further to improve the essay. The openness allows for a research process that is mutual, positive, and productive in the best cases. Looking to other models in OA online publishing, *ABO* may yet adopt more structured mentoring in the publishing process, such as a multi-tiered open review process, which appears to work effectively for journals such as *Kairos* and *Hybrid-Pedagogy*.

While open reviews take a variety of forms, they generally involve an online process in pre- or post-publication that allows many readers to comment openly and make suggestions to an author for changing a given work. These open reviews may be restricted to editorial staff and editorial board or they may be more daringly open to the public. In both cases it challenges the idea of what “peer” can be. In the case of pre-publication, the final published form benefits from an intense collaborative investment; in post-publication review the form of the document—and its dissemination of knowledge—remains in process indefinitely. The latter might be welcome to digital and media scholars, but early modernists may very well find it completely undermines the idea of scholarly production. It certainly destabilizes the fixed, thingness of a book-like product. Peer review in the OA online environment is an ongoing development, but at the core is the belief that peer review is essential to the production of first-rate scholarship. How the review takes place, however, may evolve with a growing trust in online formats in our fields.

Of the two terms in peer review, the former is perhaps more traditionally tied to issues of authority and trust. In double-blind review, the choice of peer is determined by the editor, and he or she is held to be authoritative by virtue of the office. The author generally knows nothing other than that an anonymous person was selected to judge the value of the piece. As a scholarly community, we place a good deal of stock in evaluation by the peer, though, frankly, we do not inquire too closely into what makes a peer a peer. What we do not value as much is the input of a public, a derelict public we fear. The gap between trust in peer review and distrust of public response may help explain why the interactive features of the online OA journal have been received less enthusiastically than we had hoped. Comments on an article are like a post-publication open

review. As such the interactive online journal could provide an expansive opportunity for developing one's ideas through authentic discussion. But we have no way of controlling the status of the commenters. In years to come, this openness may be seen as a positive attribute if it contributes to the enrichment of our knowledge and community of scholars, a vision not unlike that originally held by the founders of the Aphra Behn Society. In retrospect, all our fears of inappropriate commentary filling our website were completely unfounded. In fact, we have the opposite problem. No one is responding at all. In part, our fear of the "public" stymies our engagement with each other and the development of a truly collaborative and engaged form of scholarship.

### **Who Is Our Audience and What Will They Do with our Journal?**

The lack of interaction also points to a failure of communication with our users. To fix this we want to know who our users are, and once again the answer is not the same for print and online journals. It seemed obvious to us at the start that our "audience" for the journal would be people like the members of the Aphra Behn Society: academics and students interested in women in the arts, gender, and related subjects of the long eighteenth century. Our greatest concern at the one-year mark was to expand beyond those interested strictly in Aphra Behn and her works, and so we changed the title of the journal from *Aphra Behn Online* to *ABO*, and emphasized the subtitle. In re-designing the website, however, we had to ask ourselves if our audience included students doing Google searches for their class assignments, general readers interested in the field, specialists with scholarly interests but perhaps little experience in online environments, or digital natives with skills and savvy in negotiating a site. Preliminarily, we found that we have a combination of users, and we have to think about them all.

We have evidence of general readers from around the globe finding unexpected and rewarding reading in our journal, and we do not want to discourage them. Volume 3.1 includes an essay about how one of the authors from our first volume, Katharine Kittredge, was contacted by a descendant of the author about whom she wrote, Melesina Trench, something that never would have happened if she had published in a subscription-based print journal. The interaction between scholar and public eventually brought Kittredge to the privately held personal papers of the Trench family, a veritable goldmine for the literary scholar. Such stories lead us to consider how our readers come to us,

because the pathways are far more numerous than for print. In addition to Google research, readers might bookmark our site and browse, or more probably they will link to an article indexed in a database, such as the MLA International Bibliography or EBSCO. As editors of the open-access online journal we have to imagine what our users “do” with the journal.

I was caught off guard when our lead Web builder originally asked the editors what we wanted our users to do with the site. This is a question that print-journal editors today do not have to spend too much time thinking about. Back in the eighteenth century though, when books were relatively new, booksellers created a technology called a table of contents, and they invented indices at the back (or front) to aid readers in using print formats. In moving online, we have to innovate in ways like our early modern predecessors: to think about what our new media users need to make sense of the information they meet on our site. If the user is a traditional scholar reaching the homepage, she may treat it as a print journal, and so we designed a digital table of contents on the front page, which provides the title, author, and a snippet of the piece with a link to the full article and PDF. We want our users to stay awhile and browse the contents, so we provide various ways to get to the material, including searches and scroll-over menus. In keeping with the digital humanities spirit, we embraced the idea of play and discovery, by including a word cloud on the home page that visualizes the words most used in the content and leads the curious user to a set of links to the word’s use. Given that our beautifully designed commentary features go almost entirely unused at this point, we conclude that our users are not yet interested in engaging the publications online. The participatory scholarship is perhaps so new that “users” do not know what to do with it. This is not true, by the way, of online OA journals such as *Hybrid Pedagogy* in fields like composition. Ultimately we hope that our users will form a community that will comment on and discuss the issues in the peer-reviewed content; that asks questions for our professional advice column; that comes back to the site for ideas on teaching; that gives us suggestions for further development; and that shares our essays on Facebook and Twitter feeds. We are aiming to balance the academic authority of peer review with the spontaneity and engagement of social networking. There is still a broad gap between the two, one that hopefully we will bridge in the future.

In reconceiving of our “reader” as a site “user,” we also encounter the problem of expiration dates for online publication. Users differ from readers of bound books by adding content and by participating regularly. Out-of-date



content on the site—a static site, as opposed to a static bound volume—creates distrust. When our participatory community develops, we will have to address the question of how long an online commentary stays valid. Additionally, we are implementing strategies to build our community, to educate people about what we do, to increase interaction on the site and engagement with the essays we publish. The digital humanities community and our new Twitter account have been extremely helpful in pointing out ways to create this future. For example, as more professional pages form on Facebook, we find that our audience is congregating in social media; we post announcements and links through our Facebook page to reach these “friends” and encourage them to visit the site. Twitter works the same way. We send weekly tweets about the content on the site with links so that readers of our tweets will connect immediately with content. These iterations of content enter into networks that continue to build through retweets, posts, likes, links, and so forth. When we begin to have this audience as regular members of the ABO community, we will feel as though we have achieved some definition as an academic enterprise, one that is nonetheless connected to others who are doing similar things in digital humanities. In this way, the journal forms part of a larger movement in higher education and in our culture.

### Scholar Commons

At the University of South Florida, the library hosts an online OA platform called Scholar Commons to which *ABO* will move in 2013. In addition to serving as an institutional repository for OA scholarship of USF faculty and students, this platform hosts a number of online journals edited by USF faculty. The move brings *ABO* added security and legitimation. The Scholar Commons participates in the LOCKSS program (Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe) started by Stanford University Libraries, which enables a network of libraries to keep backups of online repositories in the event of any database failure. Scholar Commons provides a host of important coding, processing, and archiving features that will enable the journal to continue into a stable online future. It also means the journal will be less dependent on the unpaid labor of talented digital humanists who tend to be more junior, including graduate students or those looking to secure full-time academic positions. The work of digital humanities can only proceed through collaboration, and the Scholar Commons is a good example of the collaboration between research



librarians and scholars in different disciplines. The Scholar Commons also issues a weekly site usage report that analyzes how visitors are using the site, which will allow us to understand what work is making an impact. By tracking the links and downloads of articles, we can pinpoint for a scholar exactly how much his or her work is being read, an important subject I will address in the final section of this essay.

The Scholar Commons platform will have the articles available only as PDFs for reading or download, and in appearance they will look much like a printed journal. They will still have comment features in keeping with our mission for interaction, but the editors have decided to spin-off the more dialogic features and editorials from the peer-reviewed content on Scholar Commons. ABO will have a dual identity in the near future with the ISSN content on the Scholar Commons and the more innovative, interactive features on a linked blog site. In a way this separation of content reifies the divide between the traditional authority of peer review with its book-oriented thingness, and the fluid, interactive, process-oriented scholarship of digital modes. For the moment, however, the compromise may alleviate concerns about how user-generated content affects the peer-review status of the journal proper.

### Impact

In closing, it is worth underscoring an important benefit of online open-access publication for early modern studies. If the impact of research in science fields is measured by citations, which are notoriously difficult to ascertain and trust in humanities fields, site statistics might provide a useful measure for scholarly impact. As of 17 January 2013, our site has had 14,586 views (and this does not count the first iteration of the journal prior to 2012). Kate Levin's article "'The Only Beguiled Person': Accessing *Fantomina* in the Feminist Classroom," which was published in March 2012, has the highest number of views, 794. Coming in second with 681 views is Janine Barchas's "Digitally Reconstructing the Reynolds Retrospective Attended by Jane Austen in 1813: A Report on E-Work-in-Progress," also published in March 2012. Surely these numbers mean something about the impact of the scholarship. They are significantly higher, magnitudes higher, than the citations of my 1997 Cambridge University Press book, which was released in paperback in 2005. According to Google Scholar, my book has been cited thirty-six times, which is not too bad. I would not suggest that these measures are commensurate, but the relation between each and

impact needs to be more carefully scrutinized. Pundits are quick to say that humanities scholarship is useless because nobody reads it. Citations are (sometimes) proof that a work has been read and the information used, but this does not necessarily mean the research was valued (the citation could easily be a rebuttal). Hits on an article on a website also suggest that scholarship is being read, and because it is magnitudes higher than citations, it indicates a greater use for humanities scholarship than has been credited before. With the move to Scholar Commons, we will have detailed site statistics including number of PDF downloads per article; downloads correlate more closely to reading and so register a higher degree of impact than a site visit. This case needs to be made for the significance of humanities scholarship, which has been too frequently been dismissed as irrelevant by government and the public.

Ironically it is just at the moment when the high visibility of our scholarship could do solid public relations work for our fields that scholars seem reluctant to embrace OA and online publication. We both want our work to be read, and we want to restrict the audience that has access. The stance resembles Thomas Gray's repudiation of his popular audience, but there is far more than a solitary scholar's desire for privacy at stake. Scholars of early modern studies have to devise sustainable, respected and trusted means for producing knowledge in a digital age. The OA online, peer-reviewed journal provides one viable means.

#### NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was delivered 24 October 2012 at the University of South Florida, for Open-Access Week. It is available on Scholar Commons [http://scholar-commons.usf.edu/tlar\\_scpub/5/](http://scholar-commons.usf.edu/tlar_scpub/5/). The original manuscript was read by all the editors, with feedback especially by Robin Runia. A much shorter version of the original essay contributed to a roundtable discussion sponsored by CELJ on the Future of Academic Publishing at SAMLA in Raleigh-Durham on 9 November 2012.

2. The *MLA Directory of Periodicals* lists nine titles from 1500–1800 that are online journals, though these vary widely in scope, audience, accessibility, and peer-review status. The DOAJ lists eleven titles (only one repeat) that are mostly Spanish-language journals of interdisciplinary nature. The journals that most completely forward the mission of the early modern open-access, peer-review journal include *Appositions*: <http://appositions.blogspot.com/>; *Early Modern Literary Studies*: <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/emlshome.html> (copyright goes to editors); *eHumanista*: <http://www.ehumanista.ucsb.edu/index.shtml> (copyright not clear); *Librodelcorte.es*: <http://www.librosdelacorte.es/>; *Revista HMiC*: <http://webs2002.uab.es/hmic/>; *Studia Aurea*: <http://revistes.uab.cat/studiaaurea/index>; *Tiempo Modernos*: <http://www.tiempomodernos.org/tm3/index.php/tm>; *Zeitenbliche*: <http://www.zeitenbliche.de/>; *Etudes Episteme*: <http://revue.etudes-episteme.org/> (copyright not clear); *Digital Defoe*: <http://english.illinoisstate.edu/digitaldefoe/index.shtml> (listed in DOAJ but not in *MLA Directory*); and *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640–1830*.

3. I serve as the general editor of what is otherwise an entirely collaborative enterprise, shared by eight editors and an innovative and revolving group of Web builders. The founding editors of the journal were Emily Bowles, Jennifer Golightly, Judy Hayden, Aleksandra Hultquist, Laura Runge, and Kirsten Saxton. Current members also include Anne Greenfield, Robin Runia, and Debbie Welham. Web team has included: Greenfield, Adrienne Wadewitz, Tanya Caldwell, Alaina Pincus, and Leah Thomas.

4. As I write this, opinions, actions, and initiatives on OA have been flying across the Internet in the wake of Internet prodigy Aaron Swartz's suicide and the RCUK's mandates for academic journals to become OA by 1 April 2013. Access is an extremely contentious subject of which many humanities scholars remain unaware.

5. See the MLA Ad Hoc Committee's report of 2002.

6. This tendency among students may in fact be one reason scholars react against on-line publication.

7. The 2012 policy revises the previous UK mandate for "green" OA, which requires authors to post peer-reviewed articles in institutional repositories or the equivalent that make the research OA. See [http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/RCUK%20\\_Policy\\_on\\_Access\\_to\\_Research\\_Outputs.pdf](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/RCUK%20_Policy_on_Access_to_Research_Outputs.pdf). In the US, the bills to mandate OA for all publicly funded research have been introduced as early as 2006; it has met with support and opposition. See <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c112:H.R.4004>. It was most recently reintroduced in 2012. See Scott Collins, Deborah Goldberg, Josh Schimel, and Katherine McCarter, "ESA and Scientific Publishing—Past, Present, and Pathways to the Future," a special report of the Ecological Society of America, January 2013: <http://www.esajournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1890/0012-9623-94.1.4>.

8. For more information, see Harnad.

9. For more information, see Beall.

10. The details of and definitions for Creative Commons Licenses are available on the Creative Commons website: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>.

11. See for example a discussion of peer-review practice in Susan Hunter, "The Case for Reviewing as Collaboration and Response" *Rhetoric Review* 13.2 (1995): 265-72.

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## The Curiosity of Nations:

### Shakespeare and International Electronic Collaboration

SHEILA T. CAVANAGH

The *World Shakespeare Project* (WSP)—[www.worldshakespeareproject.org](http://www.worldshakespeareproject.org)—co-directed by Sheila T. Cavanagh and Kevin Quarmby of Emory University, is crafting a model for global twenty-first-century higher education through an interconnected series of live, interactive collaborations that cross international, institutional, disciplinary, sociocultural, religious, linguistic, economic, and other disparate academic divides. As the recent *Observatory on Borderless Higher Education Report* suggests, traditional conceptualizations of tertiary education are rapidly becoming outmoded, but new educational constellations are often problematic:

Although branch campuses and partnerships with foreign universities are on the rise, they require a level of investment and risk management that can be intimidating, even for universities with big endowments. But investment in online learning will allow universities to benefit from economies of scale and meet increasing demand from developing countries. (Katsomitros par. 1)