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What's in a Name? New Vision for ABO

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What's in a Name? New Vision for ABO

Abstract

Introduction to the new vision statements for the journal.

Keywords

History, Technology, Aphra Behn, Intersectionality, Women, Interactive

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What's in a Name?

Much in the world has changed since the brainstorming session in 2007 that launched this journal. Our original title for the journal, now shortened to *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640-1830*, deliberately drew attention to history, and more specifically historical paradox. Aphra Behn Online had a delightfully anachronistic ring that resonated with the name of the then popular internet service [America Online](#). Like the famous parody of [Jane Austen poolside with cell phone and laptop](#), it invoked our early modern patron as a contemporary technological phenomenon. Bringing the barrier-breaking Behn into the digital world felt feminist, too. A group of female academics busting into the male-dominated field of digital media paralleled Behn's entry into the boys' club of Restoration theatre. A collaborative effort from the start, the journal reflected the mission of inclusivity of the [Aphra Behn Society](#) that founded it. The subtitle of the journal clarified the wide scope of that mission. The subject of the journal would not be confined to Behn or her works; rather, we saw her as the guiding spirit for all ground-breaking women in the era. Our chronological scope was defined by Aphra's estimated birthdate through the far reach of her continued influence over the long eighteenth century, boundaries that needed to be stated but also to be understood as porous, conjectural, and suggestive. The journal insisted on historicity even while it recognized the symbolic power of figuration and challenged the facticity and stability of historical truths.

Through social media, technological innovation in personal communication has thoroughly permeated human experience, and in the process identities have become more explicitly fluid and political, resisting traditional labels and confining boxes. Just as Aphra stands in for more than the biographical figure or her works, our understanding of the word "women" has a broad scope. As humanist scholars, the editors want to contextualize and historicize our vocabulary in order to make plain our revised focus on "women." Not only has the word "women" become insufficient to represent the category of historical people and characters we envisioned as our subject, we recognize that gender must be understood as intersectional in multiple senses. In this way, we intend our journal to provide a space for the investigation of the categories of gender as they shape, inform, and deform categories of race, ethnicity, religion, embodiment, status, class, sexuality, age and other vectors of power. Readers and authors should know we welcome articles about women and gender as cultural and historical constructs.

We embrace intersectionality in the content of our articles, and we likewise employ intersectionality in the organization of our journal parts. Given the digital saturation of culture, it becomes difficult at times to decide if an article belongs in digital humanities, scholarship, reviews, or pedagogy. The vision statements that follow in this issue will provide a map for future readers and authors to consider for our journal. We recognize that there is overlap, and we will do our best when the subject is compound to identify the primary focus and assign it accordingly. If an author is not sure in which section to submit the article, the author should make a note to that effect when uploading the document to the bepress system.

If "women" causes political and epistemological problems, the presence of "Interactive" in our title might just raise eyebrows. In 2007, the interactive affordances of the online journal seemed like a feminist utopia where colleagues would engage in public dialogue and encourage the growth of understanding of our subjects to a large and unknown public. That didn't happen. In

part, the comment feature is to blame. In popular culture, the comment feature has become the genre of political posturing, rants, defamation, and in rare instances thoughtful asynchronous response. As a technology, it didn't catch on for our journal. The editors still hope to see the "Interactive" in our title have purpose, but it may be that we turn to newer technologies such as web annotation that have more effective mechanisms for the type of lineal commenting and exchange that scholars actually use.

As the section editors all detail in their vision statement, our journal is reaching a global public, and at this point in our development we want to highlight that and encourage a greater appreciation for the public nature of our work in a global network. Cynthia Richards, our pedagogy editor, invites you to consider our teaching praxis as public scholarship, while Mona Narain, the scholarship section editor, invites scholars from around the world to submit your work, to challenge us to see the eighteenth century in its global diversity, and Tonya Howe embraces the worldwide character of digital humanities and specifically invites the intersectional analysis of DH work.

In 2017 when "el-oh-el" is a spoken word, the assumptions behind our terminology may be passé. Our acronym might easily be mistaken for internet dating slang or texting shorthand. But this, too, may change before we can change our title. We are in an era of rapid and frequently disconcerting change that requires disciplined attention. We invite you to collaborate with us in this ongoing, public, digital, feminist experiment.

Laura Runge
General Editor