Digitizing Ephemera and Parsing an 1862 European Itinerary

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Digital History

This presentation illustrates some of the advantages of digital publication over print for a particular type of historical project. It arose out of a sequence of inconsistent reports of a traveling journal: historians and ephemeraologists from an 1862 tour of England and Europe that was undertaken by Wheaton College historian Eliza Baylies Wheaton; her husband Lamen P. Wheaton; and his cousin Emily Hotchkiss. During the 1862 journey Eliza Baylies Wheaton kept receipts for her housekeeping transactions in London and the compiled a travel journal and ephemera. But leaving for the private income and opportunities of the present day, and the present of the past. That is to say, the term “ephemera” comes from the Greek word “ephemeris” which means “a daily observer of current events.”

The ephemera that the Wheatons collected included a large number of documents pertaining to the Wheatons’ trip, especially to the hospitality and accommodations they enjoyed. Such materials include a large number of letters, receipts for meals and accommodations, and other financial documents that they accumulated over the course of their journey. A number of these letters and receipts form the basis for the Wheaton College Digital History Project.

The Wheaton College Digital History Project is a collaboration between the Wheaton College Library and the History Department. The project is funded in part by the Mars Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The project is directed by Zephoren L. Stickney and a large team of students, faculty, and staff.

Financial Records

The project’s goal is to make the financial records from the 1862 trip available online, for the benefit of students, scholars, and the general public. The project is using digital technologies to create a digital archive of the financial records from the trip, and to make it available online. The project is using digital technologies to create a digital archive of the financial records from the trip, and to make it available online.

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Itineraries

Our reading of the financial records contains a parade of the wheatons’ trips to England and Europe in the spring and summer of 1862. Our being able to display images and transcriptions of the primary documents alongside our interpretations and to map the sites to which the wheatons traveled and their archive provides a unique way to explore the potential of digital history to tell the story of the past.

Conclusions

We have learned that the wheatons’ trips to England and Europe in the spring and summer of 1862 contain a parade of the wheatons’ trips to England and Europe in the spring and summer of 1862. Our being able to display images and transcriptions of the primary documents alongside our interpretations and to map the sites to which the wheatons traveled and their archive provides a unique way to explore the potential of digital history to tell the story of the past.

References


